

The Leadership Summit



Bold and Enlightened Naval Leaders at Every Level
Forging an Empowered Culture of Excellence

Highpoint Leadership Stories

Prepared by:

Dr. Frank Barrett, LCDR Dave Nystrom, LT Paul Tripp and CAPT Mark Zipsie, USMC

An important part of the Leadership Summit process included a deliberate effort to search for and discover examples of outstanding leadership happening in our Navy today. The purpose of this is to highlight what is happening when our people and Navy are operating at their best.

Over 300 leadership stories were collected and submitted in September 2001 by the Leadership Summit Interview Team. A sample of the entire spectrum of the Navy was explored - vertically from seaman to admiral, and horizontally from aviation to surface, sub-surface, specwar, Marines and staff corps.

Seven important themes about great leadership emerged after an intense review of the stories. These themes are presented with examples of leadership stories that illustrate each topic. We offer them to you as potential *realms of expansion*, to ignite our imaginations to consider how we might enliven our entire leadership culture.

Empowerment: Entrusting Sailors with Responsibility

When people feel entrusted by their superiors, it frees them to take autonomous action. The experience of being entrusted with responsibility is often transformative, especially for the younger officers and enlisted. It not only instills a sense of confidence, it also inspires and invigorates them. In many stories, when a senior person expressed confidence in them or put them into situations that were challenging or "over their heads," it actually enlarged their self concepts. They began to see themselves as competent and able to meet new challenges. They tend to remember these experiences for the rest of their careers and often draw upon these influential leaders as models for their own behavior. Below are a few stories that illustrate the benefits of empowerment.

A LTJG submariner was near completion of his underway qualifications. Although he did not yet see himself as "ready" to meet this particular challenge, his CO entrusted him with responsibility and tacitly expressed his confidence in him.

I was a young officer, qualifying as Officer of the Deck on a submarine. The sequence we went through was to qualify as Officer of the Deck Surfaced and then as Officer of the Deck Submerged. I was in the process of qualifying as Officer of the Deck Surfaced. I had already qualified as Engineering Officer of the Watch, Conning Officer, and Dive Officer. I had been involved in this process for some time, and already had many items signed off in

my qualification book - requirements completed. I had stood a number of watches under instruction on the bridge. And one night I was standing the watch with the Engineering Officer, a LCDR. It's 0200, it's the mid-watch. There was a bright moon, and it was a reasonably peaceful surface transit. There weren't a lot of [radar] contacts, though that was an area that usually had a lot of surface traffic. The water was too shallow - it just wasn't deep enough to dive. *The Officer of the Deck, about half-way through the watch, calls down to the control room to look for a qualified relief to come up and give him a break so could go below and make a head call. For some reason, the C.O. was the person who answered the phone. And the Engineer explains to the C.O. that he's looking for someone to come up for a little bit so he can make a head call. And the C.O. says, 'Engineer, turn over the watch and come below.'* And there was a pause - and the Engineer said, 'Turn over the watch?' And the skipper said "Yeah, turn over the watch to your Under Instruction and come on below. He can take it for you for the rest of the night.'" So we did a full turnover and went below, and it's just me and the lookout up there in the bridge, steaming along in the middle of the night...and there I was - Qualified. What struck me was the tremendous amount of confidence the skipper must have in me. He didn't have to do that. He was obviously taking some degree of risk. But he was willing to do that based upon, I assume, my demonstrated performance up to that point onboard the ship.

A First class Petty Officer recalls an early experience of being entrusted to work without being "monitored" or "micro managed." This inspires him to mentor others and shapes his view of leadership.

While onboard USS Oldendorf, I was an ET3 at the time. A Leading Petty Officer had a huge impact on my approach towards leadership. I was the only radar technician onboard at the time. The ship was called into duty for the Persian Gulf War. *I recognized my LPO's "make it happen" mentality and I felt empowered by the idea of being able to work on equipment without being monitored all the time. Each day the LPO would tell his people what he needed done, and he would let them do it without micro-managing the task. The LPO instilled in me the idea that I just had to work hard and take care of my equipment, and that I would always receive support from him. This made me want to mentor junior personnel and increase my responsibilities early on in my career.*

This is a story from a young aviator discussing his first deployment in a squadron. His CO entrusted him to make a briefing to the entire Wing as a representative of his squadron. His CO insisted that this young man be stretched to meet this challenge even though he had no prior experience. He could feel the CO's confidence in him. 28 years later it still stands out as a high point in his life.

I can remember [it] 28 years ago as clear as I can remember it today. I finished the Training Command and went through the RAG. I had done well. And, because of that, I was selected to go to a deployed squadron. It was pretty challenging for this old farm boy - strapped my seabag to my back and flew over to WestPac. I flew into Clark [AFB] and took the jeep down to Cubi. I was met there by a couple of JOs and we jumped into the jets and flew out to the USS Ranger that was on station in the South China Sea. I happened to be replacing the fellow who flew with the skipper of the squadron. That was kind of an intimidating experience. Once again, it was one of those opportunities. It provided me with an opportunity like I never would have imagined. First of all, there were a lot of Roll Aids because I was young, new, and inexperienced. The C.O. had a gift of making you feel truly a part of the team and giving you an opportunity to grow. We finished up the deployment and we came home. But the real event was probably two months into the turnaround. There was going to be an all Air Wing meeting. We were stationed in Whidbey and the meeting was somewhere in California. We were going to discuss new war-at-sea tactics. We were just getting into the war-at-sea business. Our squadron had done a little bit of work [on war-at-sea] during the deployment and we were going to give a

presentation to the entire Air Wing. And I'll never forget the day when the skipper came in and said, 'you are going to give the presentation.' At that stage of my life it was a pretty big event to stand in front of the Ready Room and brief a section or a division. And here I was going to brief the entire Air Wing. It was certainly a nervous moment in my life. I worked hard. I studied. I knew that I knew the material. But what that C.O. did was....he was so supportive despite the fact that I was a little peeved at him for making me do this horrible thing. He had the vision to know that young people had to stand up and grow. He worked with me; he critiqued the briefing; and, he never wavered an inch. To see his confidence and lack of concern that I would fail in front of the Air Wing - he was completely confident that it would do just fine. Of course, during the briefing, he was up there in the front row with all the C.O.s. And there were a couple of times that I glanced at him - he was as calm as could be. You know at some point it begins to rub off on you. If your boss has that much confidence in you, and you respect him like I did this person; well, maybe you are doing O.K. And of course it went fine. At the end, there were a couple of tough questions that came up and I was able to answer them. There was some discussion at the end. But I'll tell you what - at the end of that I felt like King Kong. I couldn't believe that I had this opportunity. I succeeded and it was because the C.O. believed in me, empowered me, worked with me, and he showed unwavering confidence that I was going to be successful. What an empowering tool that is.

Risk Taking: Treating Errors as Learning Opportunities

Since influential leaders stretch people beyond their comfortable reach, they know that mistakes, discrepancies, and miscues are inevitable. They have a sense that if they are going to encourage people to take risks then they need to treat errors as a very important source of learning. In these stories, leaders seem to have a sense that embarrassment, shame, and humiliation are not conducive to learning, growth, and development. People who have experienced leaders who supported them to take risks and did not punish failures, were deeply impacted by these leaders. Later in their careers, they are more confident to seek innovative solutions.

This story describes a young OOD who crashes a ship onto a pylon while getting underway. The CO used the incident as a learning opportunity. He comes away with a new sense of the meaning of accountability, responsibility, and leadership. Being outside my community on the PC, it's a big ship... big ship life. I think it's a big ship of course, everyone else coming from a real ship they think it's small. Anyway, I had the opportunity to qualify for officer of the deck underway. We got a new CO we were unsure of him at first because our previous CO was great. At the change of command we didn't know if he was going to change everything around on us. What he did for me personally, he gave me the opportunity to pull the ship out, no real big deal. We were in Costa Rica and I'm pulling away from the pier and all of a sudden there's this on setting wind that came blowing in on us. Just as I was going by this pylon and it blew us over and I scraped the pylon. It hit the side of the ship. There was a crowd of people on the pier watching, you know the entire local's come down to see the U.S. Navy ship leave. I looked at my CO; he was standing there looking at a five-foot nasty gash in the port quarter. After the hit we got away from it and continued out to sea. I was expecting to just get my but slammed right there. He looks at me and goes "What are you going to do now? " I'm like, "transfer control to the pilothouse" because we were getting out into the channel. So, I left my station out on the bridge wing where you drive the ship when you get away from the pier. On the bridge I looked at him, he was looking at me just waiting. I could see it in his eyes by the way he was looking at me. He was thinking, "So you messed up, continue on". I'm thinking... I just waxed his ship hard and he still showed me he had the confidence in me to

continue on with the job. Then he debriefed me afterwards. Then he gets on the 1MC and tells everybody he owes everyone a case of beer because he hit the pylon. Even though I was driving, he's the one that's responsible he was standing out there with me. I tell you what, I learned a lot from that, the accountability of a CO, I trust him. Out of all the SEAL's and all the boat guys I have worked with, this is a regular SWO officer who has his entire stuff in one sock. I'll never forget him.

A former Department Head on the LEYTE GULF describes a CO whose approach enabled people to learn from both their successes and mistakes.

I can think of two people that always operated in a way that enforced the idea of empowerment and leadership by example. I don't know for sure if they realized it or not, but they ultimately were the reason why I tried to operate day to day in that same fashion. One was the CO of the LEYTE GULF. He gave us the authority to carry out the job in the way that we thought it should be carried out. Even sometimes when we were wrong in our decision making, and he even knew we were wrong in some cases, he still allowed us to continue on with our processes, and see the problem through. I feel that is the only way you can really learn is to make mistakes and see the real results of those mistakes. It's possible to correct too early, or to correct by giving the typical "shotgun blast in the face" that most of us are in some way familiar with. If someone is tracking every little move you make in your job, how do you learn or grow to make your own decisions? As a result of this method, I can easily say that I learned the most from this CO. We also knew that whether a decision was good or not, we knew we would come out with a lesson learned, and without the fear of retribution for any mistakes made.

This story describes a situation that could have been the end of someone's career, but that person has since gone on to make Rear Admiral. It highlights tremendous empowerment and bold risk taking on the part of the individual's CO at the time.

Yeah, I can think of a CO of a DGG that I was on... At the time I was transferred to Hawaii and at that point in time probably every two out of three Engineers were getting fired. We were at time where in the early seventies where Engineering got away from us in the Navy. We are now going through the nuclear mentality of getting things back together and establishing the Engineering boards and so forth to come and inspect you. It was a significant element of the CO's reputation if one of these boards came aboard and gave you a bad grade and so what often happened the CO's would turn around and fire their Chief Engineers in some cases as scapegoats and in other cases just because they were not up to task of getting through these, they were called PEB, Propulsion Examining Boards. At that time they were all done by the nuclear community and were very, very stringent inspections. We were getting ready for ours in Norfolk, oh excuse me Hawaii. About a week and half before we had ours, I had a young enlisted man that lined up the educator system backwards and flooded out the Engineering space! As I remember there were upwards of twenty electric pumps that were all ruined because of the flooding. The flooding in and of itself was enough for the CO to fire me and that was what was happening at that time. But not being able to make the operations propulsion examination test would surely make a black mark on the ship. So the CO called me up to the his stateroom and instead of telling me that I was fired, which is what was happening to a lot of people at that time, he said I want you to go down to the Engineering space and I want you to come back and tell me, and give me a plan that will get this ship through OPE on time. In other words get those 20 pumps fixed and back on track in a week and half. And I went down and did that. We needed this much done by the tender; this much done by the shore activity and it is going to cost this much money, so on. And he took the plan and went and over defended it on the waterfront. To make a long story short we got all the pumps repaired and we got the OPE on time and we passed with one of the

best inspections of the year. It is all because of the way the CO handled the situation. Instead of firing me he used the situation as a way of turning it around and making it a positive situation by bringing a positive outcome.

This describes an example of an LPO who stood up and supported a young sailor who had made serious mistakes. Because he was willing to stand up and act as an advocate for him, this young sailor is afforded another chance.

When I was a first class petty officer I had a young third class that worked for me, he had some problems, he was a young kid that worked his tail off, busted his butt. He was a great operator on deck; it was on an amphibious ship that had cargo booms, boats, and different things. Very busy and a work demanding ship. This young kid was very motivated to work hard he did a great job but he had a little problem with drugs. This was just when zero tolerance started, this kid had been to an admin separation board and the admin separation board basically turned the case back to the command. And said, "It was up to the CO". It was his decision whether this kid stayed in the Navy or got out. *I went to the CO and I shared some of my personnel experiences in life with him and what I had overcome, and what I thought this kid could do if he were able to overcome his problems. I asked if he could give him the opportunity to try that, the CO did. The CO listened to what I had to say and he gave that kid the opportunity to do well and he did. The kid did a great job, he overcame his problem on the ship, actually his problems were not the ship but on liberty. He over came those problems and exceeded everybody's expectations. I kind of look at the fact that if there were not people looking out for me when I was a young man in the Navy that I definitely would not be where I'm at today. This is not a one-man show, there's nothing about the military that's a one-person deal. It's about people trying to take care of people. When we say take care of people it's not about babysitting or hand holding, it's about saying, "hey, we are all human beings". Not everybody can go through life without having some challenges and difficulties but if we can provide guidance to people maybe they can possibly overcome some short falls. We should do that, so that's my deal.*

This story describes a CAPT who was working for a future CNO. She and her team were tasked with a short fuse requirement. The response she got her from the Admiral was unexpected and a valuable lesson.

The whole time that I served as the enlisted planner, the Admiral was the CNP. He had a very different approach to staff assignment from almost anyone that I have ever worked for. I remember that we had a budget mark that came from NEH shop and typically it came Friday night and they had to have it answered by Monday or they take the mark where they wanted to take and so we crunched over the weekend. And one of our going in assumptions was that we would never repeated the things that happened in 1988 and all of us who happened to be in key positions at the time, had come into the jobs in 1988 and in 1988 the Navy froze promotions. So that people who were on promotion list were waiting 18 to 20 months to actually pin on their rate. We froze promotions because we did not have money to pay for the full personnel accounting. That was one of the actions that we chose to balance the books. We just froze promotions of both enlisted and officer personnel, with the exception of Flag Officers. *And so we had as one of our rules that we would not repeated one of those kinds of very visible personally very negative actions as a way to balance the books. So we worked all weekend to propose to the Admiral a series of options, which would not require anything as visible as delaying promotions. And we were very proud of this product, we had it hand carried to his home on Sunday night. He came in to work on Monday and called us all into his office and lined us all up and said, I asked my best people to do this and you failed me. Which is a pretty devastating thing. His issue was that he intended to fight this. And he did not expect people who were responsible for the health of officer and enlisted populations of the Navy, simply to have rolled for a budget cut that meant that you were going to undo a personnel strategy that we had put in place and had*

sold to the CNO and he did not expect us to come forward with the arguments to accommodate this, he expected us to come forward with the arguments as to why we could not accommodate this. And we quickly turned that around. But I think that you get so much into the budget mindset in headquarters that you forget that there are outcomes that your suppose to be worrying about. And you get so involved in making the books balance it is sort of like a siren song to just kind of get clever at how to make the books balance instead of being worried about at the end if you are accomplishing what you set out to do and whether there are bright lines that you should draw and not let a budgeteer or a policymaker push you over that line and whether you should be pushing back. And I think that any anybody who was in the team at that time, most of us went to major command from there, I think that we went to major command very differently having worked for him then you would have otherwise.

Promoting Learning and Supporting Development:
The Experience of Being Mentored

People remember and value leaders who support their learning, development, and advancement. People are deeply impacted when they experience leaders who take the time to notice their potential, who deliberately select them and mentor them. These mentors often guide them through obstacles and challenges. When people experience mentors who invest time and energy in them, they are touched by these experiences and often a strong camaraderie and loyalty develops.

An E-9 Cryptologist recalls a Chief who took him under his wings, saw his potential, and guided him. This level of personal mentoring helped him build self-confidence and a sense of professionalism.

I'll tell you - the transformation in my career... I was in Guam. It was my second tour. I was still a Third Class, which was indicative of how poorly I was doing, because most of the CTMs by that time were Second Classes. I was in trouble, XOIs, the whole nine yards. This young Chief - he'd just been frocked to Chief - brought me into his office and goes, 'I'm going to make a sailor out of you.' My attitude at the time was not very positive. For 90 days, the guy started with my haircuts, went to my uniforms, then my personality, and definitely molded me into a sailor. He didn't do it in a manner that was belittling. He was compassionate, but very forthright about where I was messing up. The way he handled that situation, or that transformation was the way I feel that every Chief needs to handle the problem [sailors] within the organization. I'm a firm believer that if it can work for me, it can work for others. And instead of just seeing a troublemaker who worked hard, he saw someone who could be successful." " His approach - he never let up. The guy rode me hard. You know it can be frustrating for a young guy with my attitude at the time. But it was just the way he handled every situation. You know, 'Go get a haircut Penick.' The next day I'd come in and I wouldn't have a haircut. He'd say, 'Well if you don't want to go get a haircut, let's talk about EMI and let's talk about Regulations this afternoon.' And at the end of that little session, he would say, 'Go get a haircut before tomorrow afternoon, or we can spend more time discussing regulations.' Honestly, by the time it was all over, I knew the uniform regulations very well. But it was just that constant mentoring. I started trying to make a change - got my haircut, squared away my uniform, shoes shined - the superficial part. Then he started on the professional part where he would take me into the Department Head or Division Officer and have me address issues about equipment, or what was going on in the calibration lab. So he started making that transition - making me more professional. Being an old southern boy from the back woods, I had that attitude that I didn't need to be professional and all that. *He helped me through that by mentoring. It was a hard road. . . I think when I got the superficial part squared away; I started carrying myself more professionally. I was more proud of my appearance, and that led to more*

professionalism on my part. This transformation didn't take place in those 90 days. I actually saw the benefit of it in my next tour.

Early in his career, a Special Warfare E-7 was surprised to be mentored by someone who came from a very different background and appeared to be an unlikely mentor. However, he made a deep and lasting impression on him.

I had been on the ship about four months. I was 17. There was an air crewman, an E4, who was named Marlin Smith. He was across the aisle from me in the three-stack coffin-racks on the ship. We didn't actually work together but we shared a berthing area. One evening he just started talking to me and asking where I was from and the like. I was impressed because he was from the south. I wasn't the stereotype black person he was expecting. And he wasn't what I was expecting for a white person from Georgia. I didn't really think we would get along but we did. *He took me under his wing and showed me how to work within the Navy was -- the things I could do and the things I couldn't do, and the things I should strive for while I was there. He took me under his wing because he said he liked me. This mentoring was a good experience for me very early in my Navy career. I could always rely on Marlin. He lived by his code and told me it was important to set your standard and to live by it throughout your life. It wasn't so much what he said as it was the way he acted. He was reliable. He was the rock. He was consistent. Whatever he said today was the same thing he said tomorrow. He had an honor code. If we set a time, he was there. And if for any reason he couldn't be there, and it had to be a major reason, he would call you. He didn't have debts. He didn't go around drinking and partying and carrying on. He wasn't a religious person -- he was just a very fair and dignified person. He came from a really good family and took me to his home for a visit. I saw Marlin years later and told him how all the things he told me, the things he had helped me with, had influenced me as a person -- to be fair and to have integrity. He had invested time in me and he had no idea where I would end up. I've carried the things he taught me as a young sailor with me all my life. It was good.*

A Lieutenant SWO was deeply impressed when a new CO empowered his people to make their own "leadership decisions." He watched people in the wardroom grow and develop under this mentoring style.

I was forward deployed to Bahrain as Operations Officer onboard USS DEXTROUS (MCM-13). The MCM community had previously operated with Rotational Crews where a crew would take a ship for 6 months in Bahrain, and then be relieved by another crew. My crew was the last rotational crew and would assume duties as permanent crew DEXTROUS in May of 2000. Our CO, a commander, would soon be relieved by our new CO, an LDO LCDR with 25 years service. Our former CO was very hands on and wanted to be informed of EVERYTHING and of every decision that was made down to the smallest detail. Our new CO however, had a completely different style. The beginning of his tour was very frustrating for him because he was tired of his officers coming to him to request permission for the simplest of tasks. He wasn't frustrated with his officers, he was frustrated with the idea that his officers didn't feel comfortable making leadership decisions without his permission. *He sat down the whole wardroom one day and explained his philosophy behind leadership. He empowered each of us to make decisions because as officers, that is what we're paid to do. He still wanted to be kept in the loop, but he didn't want minute by minute updates on things as they happened. We saw a growth in our wardroom that was unparalleled as a result of this shift in leadership thinking and we were more effective as a result.*

A Petty Officer experienced a CO who took a personal interest in his crew, was eager to get to know them personally and provide mentorship. The Petty Officer recalls him as an outstanding influence.

I had this Captain on the USS FOX (CG) whose father was also previously the captain of the FOX. He honestly believed that the USS FOX was the best ship in the fleet. He believed it was the best ship because of the crew. He conveyed his pride and belief in the ship in everything he did or said. I was a chief at the time. *He was so interested in knowing the crew that he decided to set up a one on one lunch program. He wanted to eat lunch and talk with at least one chief or one junior officer a week. He then placed a sign-up sheet outside of the wardroom. At first, no one wanted to sign up. Everyone was intimidated or scared to eat lunch one on one with the Captain. I finally signed up. That was the last time I signed up and got to see him quickly. The next time I went back to sign up, the list was so long that it would have taken months to get a one on one with the Captain. Everyone had quickly caught on. The Captain had established his belief in the ship and was intent on being a mentor to all of the junior officers and chief petty officers. He always spoke his mind and was always firm in his belief that his crew and his ship were the best in the fleet.*

Providing Opportunities – The Experience of Mentoring Others

Leaders sense that some of the most important (and rewarding) contributions they make in their careers are the moments they invested in others development, learning, and growth.

This story describes a Commanding Officer who saw potential in someone whose “play hard” approach apparently got the better him occasionally.

I was on my way out of the Navy. Don't get me wrong, I enjoyed my job, I was good at it; but I did not believe that the organization, on the whole, was for me. More to the point, I was a poster child for the idiom work hard - play hard. It was the play hard that got me in a little trouble here and there. *Somehow my CO saw something beyond the immaturity and cynicism. Over my tour with him, he reassigned me to new positions in all three departments each time, dramatically increasing my authority and responsibilities in the respective department. My final transition was to assume the billet of Chief Engineering Officer. Though I never truly thought I would fail, for the first time, I had my doubts. He showed a lot of faith and confidence in me the day he called me to his office and said, the Cheng will be leaving us, and I have chosen you to take his place. After the fact he told me that it was the first time he saw a glimpse of humility in my face. Needless to say, the CO had brought me up right. He was a gifted mentor. I had a lot of exceptional people working for me, and I was lucky time and time again. But the remaining time I served as Cheng was a turning point in my life as a company man. Its what made me decide to stay in the Navy.*

A Chief tells a story about a Command Advancement for one of his people.

One of the biggest impacts I made in a person was when I CAP'd a guy here at the command...he was a third class at the time. His name was Johnny Smith he was working in training. He was working way above the third class level. He should have been second class, even a first class. We were able to have him command advanced and it was just amazing the impact it had on him. It just seems like it motivated him beyond his already high efforts, and he just took off and kept going. He turned out be our best second class and when he left the command he was a first class. I wanted to do what the other chiefs that I used to work for did for me as far as “taking care of the guys.” I think that's one of the most important things we can do, it brings benefits in the end. When your people know that your taking care of them they will be motivated to get the job done for you. It's one of the things that I feel the chain of command for people need to follow threw on, and use those tools that the Navy has available to help our people. Weather its MWR, Family service center, or command advancement program. These are the quality

of life issues that actually help people. It made an impact on me, and now I want to make an impact on them.

A CO recalls the traits he saw in excellent leaders and illustrates them with a good sea story.

I worked for a number of excellent leaders. They all had similar traits: they are tolerant of errors, they believe in letting junior people try to explore new roles and responsibilities. They give people a chance to fail and learn from that...to fail, in ways that does not hurt them or the command, opportunities to grow but at the same time keeping an eye on them. These leaders are confident enough in themselves to let their junior people flex their wings. Once during "National Week" in the '70s, on an auxiliary vessel, our CO let two people in the wardroom work out a battle plan against the USS AMERICA (the auxiliary ship played the role of a Soviet vessel) that allowed them to maneuver in such a way that they surprised the carrier and completed a mission against it. Once, during this exercise they were at top speed when a destroyer detected them. The destroyer was surprised and could not catch them (the destroyer only had one boiler lit off), they blew past it going 30 knots! The CO did not interfere, though he was a bit nervous about the plan. Still they pulled it off. The CO gave them the opportunity to do things like that...an opportunity to surpass themselves.

A First Class Petty Officer describes the chance she was given to step up to increased responsibility and how much she learned from the experience professionally and personally.

About a week after being frocked as a Second Class Yeoman I was given the opportunity to go TAD to fill a YN1/YNC independent duty billet at sea that had been gapped for over eight months. *The most significant factor of this experience was the fact that my LPO and department head believed that I would be a success filling this challenging billet. My hard work ethic and quick learning ability contributed to their decision to send me. I view this assignment as a good learning experience that challenged me to succeed - for myself, my LPO and department head. That give me the opportunity as a junior second class with only three years in the Navy to prove to myself and to my superiors that I have what it take to step up and succeed. I receive my first Navy and Marine Corps Achievement Medal for that assignment and out of the three NAM and one NCM I've earned, I am most proud of the one I received for that assignment. I admire and respect my LPO and Dept Head for having me prepared. Both my LPO and Department Head instilled in me the value of being prepared to take on any challenge within my rate. They allowed me to get involved with every aspect of the office so I would learn my rate and be able to take on any assignment in case of their absence. Once I proved I could work well with little supervision, they gave me the freedom to take on most projects on my own.*

Opportunities to Excel

People value the unique opportunities that the Navy provides in their life. When people have opportunities to excel and a chance to make a difference, this contributes to a higher individual sense of purpose and meaning. This sense of belonging to something larger than oneself creates commitment to each other and the Navy. This raises intrinsic standards of excellence and motivation to "not let one's shipmates down." With higher successes comes an increase in self-confidence, and a personal sense of achievement.

A LTJG describes a defining moment for him when he is suddenly given a position of significantly increased responsibility.

I was on my first tour onboard LHD-1 (USS WASP) as Main Propulsion division officer. This is a steam plant so there's a lot to learn both technically and administratively. I had been

onboard for about 18 months and had just received my SWO pin. I worked directly for the Main Propulsion Assistant who was an O-3E with 22 years in service. He was a former Machinist's Mate Senior Chief so he knew an awful lot about steam plants. Our Chief Engineer had just turned over to our new Chief Engineer, a 27 year LDO LCDR who in his own rights "knew everything there was to know about steam plant engineering." We were on our way to New York for Fleet Week '99 and things were going very well in the department. Without any indication, our DCA, a fairly senior LCDR fell ill to epilepsy and had a serious seizure onboard. He ultimately had to be medically discharged. *Two nights prior to pulling into New York, the CHENG called the MPA and me into his stateroom to inform us that I would now be the MPA, and the MPA would now assume duties as the DCA. His reasoning for the change was that I was the most knowledgeable steam officer onboard and that he liked the way I ran my division. I had suddenly inherited another division of 45 people, plus an Oil Lab of 8 personnel. I went back to my stateroom in shock and in fear of taking the job. However, after a few hours of terror, I realized what an honor it was to be chosen. I went on and did very well in the job for my last 6 months without incident. I later told the CHENG just prior to rotating to my next command that his decision had meant a great deal to me in my career. It gave me the confidence that I previously did not have.*

A Supply Officer describes a chance he was given to become an instructor, despite not having a favorable recommendation from "the system." He later went on to discover that the CO who gave him the opportunity was a superb leader who initially saw something special in him.

When I transferred to the Navy Supply Corps School, my arrival was not exactly what you would call a welcome one. Due to some differences I had in my past in the Submarine Community a bias had been communicated to Captain Ron Thomas, the CO of NSCS at that time. The CO was told not to take me onboard as a staff member. The CO disregarded this advice and took me anyway. I guess he wanted to develop his own opinion of me. When I checked on board and had my initial interview with CAPT Thomas, I expected the same kind of interview that I had received so many times in the past. The quick 5 minute hello, do a good job until you leave type of interview. *When I sat down with the Captain, however, I received the most comprehensive welcome infused with history of the command and instantly made to feel a part of the command vision. I walked out in complete amazement and that great feeling I had lasted for the rest of CAPT Thomas's tour until he retired. Captain Thomas, with the help of the command developed his vision of the Navy Supply Corps School into a dynamic, living breathing vision that reached from the top of the command all the way to the most junior enlisted on base including civilian personnel. The base felt alive. From the time I walked onboard I felt it. When I walked out of that welcome interview I knew exactly why. From day one I felt like an integral part of a great team and empowered to act as the officer that I was. Throughout the next year or so until CAPT Thomas retired, this living vision was supported by everything we did on base. We tailored our actions to support the command and in essence, the Navy. During our monthly vision update meetings, the CO would articulate his proud feeling to the entire command and detail how we were tracking towards greatness. We truly felt a part of a great team, and indeed we were!* The CO's, and thereby command's, vision was uplifting and positive. The CO would comment on how great it was to be in Athens. His comments such as "The speed bumps were put on the base streets to slow me down as I come in to work in the morning" and "If you can smile until ten o'clock in the morning in Athens, the rest of the day just seems to take care of itself," were inspiring as we went off to do our daily work. The CO's actualization was being translated completely into the members of the command. I can honestly say it was the first time I had really felt a complete team concept and a command moving forward in concert since I had been in the Navy, twenty-four years, that in itself was moving. When I would see the CO on base just walking about checking out progress and other things, he would stop and chat and ask those questions about family

and job that just make you feel a part; valuable. Captain Thomas's attitude and behavior were the perfect model of positive energy and supported completely the vision of the command. Needless to say, the next year came and it was time for a change of command at NSCS Athens. We had a traditional Hail and Farewell to bid our CO a fond farewell as he was retiring the next month. We did the usual mingling about the party, all avoiding the culmination of the slightly happy yet somber occasion, when you are about to lose someone whom you have grown to count on, respect, and emulate. *I made my way over to Captain Thomas and bid him my farewell. He accepted and then pulled me aside. I will never forget the words he said to me and will probably never feel as much a part of a team or organization again. "Gene, I wish I had spent more time with you. I learned a lot from you and could learn so much more." We actually broke down and expressed our thanks that our paths had crossed at all. After all, I was not even recommended for a job at NSCS Athens. I was glad I had decided to come to Athens despite what others said about me. I think that Captain Thomas was glad he did not follow the advice of his fellow senior officers. I can say that I learned a lot from him and with pride say that I taught him something too, although I didn't even know it!*

An E-2 reflects on getting through a challenge at Boot Camp that shaped his confidence for working at his current command.

During battle stations in boot camp we were getting near the end of the training evolution. We were on the second to last thing, which was the obstacle course. I was on the first team of two teams, one team would go one way and the other team would go the other way. The instructors would make up scenarios as you go threw on the course, you would put to use everything you learned in boot camp to make it threw the scenarios. The person that was leading the group was having trouble getting everybody past a certain obstacle, so the instructor told that person, "You have 30 seconds to get the people threw or your dead." 30 seconds came and went and we were still standing there so the instructor pointed at me and said, "you! your in charge," and I stepped up and got us threw the obstacle course. *The influence that I think I had was to step up and take the challenge and getting us over the hump that was keeping us from finishing the obstacle course. We eventually ended up being the only group that finished the course that day. Being able to step up under pressure and making the right judgment and think through the problem. That was something I learned that day, that built my confidence up and at the time that's what I needed.* [Now talking about his current command] I really admire warrant officer Jones, when I first got here he asked me, "what would you like to do? What classes would you like to go to? What do you want to get from this command?" You're not going to get it unless you ask for it. He's given me the opportunity to take classes that I might not be able to take at other commands. Him and Senior Chief Smith are working to help me improve in the IT field. He is one of those guys who is on the ball, and really takes time out to help me when I need it. *I'm one of only five E-2's at the command, and when I do a good job he's always there to say "Good job". He lets me know when I did a good job and that gives me a lot of incentive.*

A first class Petty Officer describes coming back from deployment, and his feelings of pride and sense of accomplishment.

But I think the moment when I felt the most alive and really just a visceral tangible sense of accomplishment had to have been coming back off deployment on the ENTERPRISE. We deployed in early 1996 thru June 1996 through December, and at the beginning of the deployment, before the deployment had happened, I had managed to qualify as engineering officer of the watch. I was a second class petty officer at the time; I had qualified as a engineering watch supervisor for the ENTERPRISE, an extremely rare thing to do on a nuclear power plant, and then I was designated as the watch supervisor for our operational

reactor safeguards exam, which would take place at the end of the cruise. I also became the leading petty officer for my division, which in all reality was the leading petty officer's position, because of the other things that the LPO was doing. So I had operational control of my division, 30 some odd people - throughout the entire cruise. And I remember as I pulled back off deployment, I had just put on first class, I'm standing on the deck of the ENTERPRISE, we're manning the rails, dress blues, it's December 20th or 22nd, just before Christmas, we had just come back off deployment, and I'm thinking back as we're pulling into Norfolk after a long transit. You're standing there on this amazingly large ship, you're in dress uniform, fresh first class crow on my arm, and you can't help but reflect on the 6-month deployment you just did. And I remember thinking, I had accomplished everything that an enlisted nuclear operator could have ever hoped to accomplish. I had run a division of some of the most highly, technically competent people you could have ever imagined. We had been resoundingly successful, and it had been great in my opinion. It was very much my accomplishment to have gotten our division through what we did. I had come through as a second class petty officer through an operational reactor safeguards exam, where I'm in a room with chief petty officers taking exams, going through interviews, standing watches and going through drills, and I had done it, and not just done it enough, but well. I had made rate quickly, I was finally, I felt, getting paid for the job I was already doing, and I just remember the sense of pride I had. And that included accomplishments that the command had had. We had been on station in the Adriatic, flying missions over Bosnia, when there was a call to transit to the Gulf at best speed. And the ENTERPRISE on that cruise, set a record for the speed of transit between the Mediterranean and the Red Sea, and it had been done under extremely intense pressure. Some of the worst watch standing conditions you could imagine - 140 and 150 degree temperatures in the engine room, people rotating in and out. I remember, we came through the Straights of Hormone, and we were proud of the fact that as we cleared the Straights, we hadn't even secured from the Detail, that we began shooting planes. We were ready, we were On Station, we were there. And everyone onboard the ship felt a sense of pride, and I know as I came back off of deployment, it was just that visceral sense of "Look What I Did." I've done everything you could have expected, and more. It felt great!

Appreciation and Recognition

By appreciating individual strengths and recognizing accomplishments, leaders advance the potential of people. At this level of personal attention, leaders build relationships with the people around them. For some, a sense of family develops. Emotional support, such as caring and compassion, become important behaviors that leaders provide.

This story describes the interaction of a young sailor and his Department Head about a recent family tragedy. It was a very important moment for the sailor and defined the character of the leader he sought for consolation.

I have a friend. He is a retired Rear Admiral who is now teaching at the war college. He was a LT and my Department Head onboard the USS Henderson DD-785. In those days, the Navy was a little different - that it didn't care too much about people - it didn't seem like it. Our ship was unusual and I thought he was an unusual person. I thought that he was too nice of a person to succeed in the United States Navy - I thought you had to be a real jerk in order to be a successful naval officer because I seen a lot of them. Our Executive Officer was one of those JERKS!!! *My mom had died and we were somewhere near Japan and I was not able to go home for various reasons and it didn't matter anyway - there wasn't anything that I could do. My department head was the one I wanted to talk to -he was a NICE person!!! So first of all he was professional and said, "Gooch I'm happy to talk to you but you should inform your division officer." - so I did so.*

My department head and I was sitting there talking and making me feel better. I'm only a third class petty officer and 19 years old and he was an "OLD man" - 27 years old who was utterly superior. Anyway the phone rang and it was the Executive Officer who was yelling at him. He said, "I'll be there in a little while - right now I'm talking to Gooch." And hung up the phone! It happened about 40 years ago but I've never forgotten it because he was attending to something that he thought was important - namely my grief and was willing to take the time to do that despite other stuff that was going on. I never forgot that and revered him. I tell this story to LTs in the intermediate officer leadership course because some time small acts like that will do it.

A LT talks about a time when he chose to critique and debrief the positive aspects of an inspection vice his peers' traditional negative only approach.

This is a short story, but really shows the effects of positive thinking. I felt good that even in a normally negative environment a positive thought can bring the right perspective into view and help to realign people's thinking. I was the staff supply officer for a submarine squadron. We were running drills on one of our boats during REFTRA. Generally, during the drill debriefs most comments are angled towards deficiencies: He did this wrong, didn't follow procedures for doing this or that. That kind of stuff. Well, as we were debriefing and it came to my turn to speak about the drills I had witnessed I felt that the person whom I was following during drills was actually doing quite well given the circumstances and his nervousness. I made my comments in a positive light; focusing on those things which he did correctly. The other officers on staff were surprised and confused. This was not how a traditional debrief went in the high-tech, nuclear powered submarine world! They asked me to tell the things the sailor did incorrectly. I said he did do some things wrong, none of which were even significant in the larger spectrum of the drills so I chose not to focus on them. I thought he carried out his actions correctly and could hone his skills, but in reality if he spent the time to correct them then those skills he already had mastered would slip. I felt he was a good watch stander and the things he needed to improve on would develop in time. *The others started to argue as I broke down their deficient-focused style of debriefing. The argument continued moving from the ships drill set to the principles of leadership and quality and all kinds of things. The Commodore was sitting in the room listening to all of this and allowed the officers to go on for some time before he spoke. When he spoke, he issued a simple statement. He said, "Why can't we do that more often?"* As the silence fell over the room, I felt that someone had actually listened to the voice of reason.

A high point for one Senior Chief in the Surface Community occurred when he was personally recognized as having the best work center on the ship.

The first time I felt that I had contributed and made a difference would have been right after I made First Class Petty Officer. The LPO (Leading Petty Officer) at the time was a twenty-year TM1 who did not seem to care, in fact I remember the joke about him being on the ROAD program (Retired On Active Duty). We had no CPO and a Division Officer that had washed from flight school and blamed the Navy for all of his problems. The Division was responsible for the cleaning and maintenance of approximately 30 spaces. With 30 E6 and below personnel you would think that this would be an easy task. One of these passageways that we were responsible for was used by the CO numerous times throughout the day in his travels around the ship. The CO had had expressed his dislike with the condition of the passageway to the Department Head on what seemed to be a daily basis. Finally the Department Head laid down the LAW to the Division Officer who in turn laid it down to the Division. He said that he was going to replace TM1 as the LPO, and if the replacement did not get the job done he would continue down the line until someone could. *The Division Officer called me in to his office where he told me that even though the*

Division was not thought that highly of, my work center was, and probably was the best work center on the ship. He then asked me if I could handle the LPO position and help keep the CO off the Department Head's back. I eagerly answered 'yes' and set out on my task. I accomplished the mission, but what made this so special for me was that the CO personally sent me a hand written letter on command letterhead stating how he was impressed with the change in the Division and to keep up the good work.

This story describes a hard working seaman who had been stymied by the Navy advancement process, and is finally recognized in a very dramatic manner.

When I took over the reigns as First Lieutenant, I found I had a leading seaman who was about to burst with untapped potential. He was smart, articulate, squared-away in appearance and knowledge, and had all the makings of a fine petty officer. He wanted to go to IT A School, but I found out that he had been denied this opportunity for reasons I considered unjustified. After a few months, he finally received orders to this school. It was the happiest day of his life. However, after three years in the Navy, he was still an undesignated seaman. This was decimating his self-esteem. Some peers originally in Deck with him were already second-class petty officers. *Luckily, the command recognized his outstanding qualities and on the day before he checked-out, bound for Great Lakes, the Captain promoted him to third class petty officer in the Command Advancement Program. He broke down in front of the whole crew, an emotional display of pride, joy, and the indescribable feeling of overcome frustration.* He was a whole new person. For the little time he had left with us on HIGGINS, he didn't stop smiling. *I knew his family back in Georgia was very important to him and that separation from them was aggravating, so I wrote his mother a letter. In this letter, I thanked her for raising such an outstanding son. I told her of his accomplishments and their importance to himself, the ship, the Navy and even the United States. I told her she should be proud.* I'm not sure what has become of Petty Officer Morgan or my letter, but I hope he never forgets the high regard in which my command and I hold him. It was wonderful to see a command recognize such a great Sailor when he needed it most.

Theme: Teamwork

Teamwork is a powerful aspect of the Navy experience. Leaders working side by side with their people enable high quality teams. Personal interaction, respect, and honesty create conditions where traditional boundaries of rank and rate are transcended. Team accomplishment leads to an increased sense of personal achievement, meaning, and contribution to a higher purpose.

The "Shooter" on an Aircraft Carrier describes his division and their success in dealing with a potentially major setback shortly after deploying for Desert Storm. At the end, he observes the difference in the leadership approach that made him, his division, and the ship successful.

I was working as a catapult and arresting gear officer. I was sitting at home a few days before Christmas and we are supposed to go on deployment in 3 or 4 months. We get the call that our aircraft carrier is going to Desert Storm and we're leaving two to three days after Christmas. We went out there and this ship of people just clicked. Everybody had a job, we were very focused on what we had to do. The paperwork went away. The political stuff that I don't enjoy very much went away. It was go out, work 18 - 20 hours a day, you did your job. During that time, I had worked my way up to division officer in charge of all of the catapult and arresting gear. It was a big job. There were 150 people and they were all young kids. They just did their job, they worked hard, and they didn't get in trouble. They knew what they were supposed to do. And that's when I felt like I was serving my country and doing what I was trained to do. But more importantly, everybody on that ship felt that way and they did their job. Morale was high. The events on the ship went smooth. The first day, we lost the arresting gear wire - it broke. We needed that arresting

gear wire; it had to be fixed. Usually it takes a special team of professionals including civilians to come out and fix it, and my guys fixed it in five days working 24 hours a day. I had never seen anything like that. In other communities, if we had had an accident, we all would have stopped, we would have had safety stand-downs, and we would have talked about it for a while. But 5 minutes after this accident, we were launching and recovering airplanes; it was kind of an amazing thing. These were all very young kids that probably didn't have much of a choice on what job they were going to do. It's a hard job; it doesn't take a lot of smarts, but it takes a lot of brute strength. And they just needed somebody to kind of watch out for them and protect them. *And I think that it wasn't just me, but all the "shooters" (catapult and arresting officers) watched out for these guys. And they played hard and they worked hard and we recognized that. And I think we were successful because we just kind of watched over them and protected them. But what I noticed that was different about the air department, were the khakis (the chiefs and officers) worked and stayed up and we were with our guys - out there getting dirty with them. Whereas anywhere else I had been, the officers and the khakis, you land your airplane and the officer leaves and the enlisted guys stay out there and work for another 2 or 3 hours on your airplane. And I never really like that, but that was just the way it was. But on the ship it wasn't that way. You worked side-by-side and I think they appreciated that. The guys that didn't do that - and there were a couple of "shooters" that didn't do that - they weren't as successful, their divisions weren't as successful. Their guys didn't work as hard for them. And that was true for the air division. And there's lot of divisions where the officers and khakis were, in the eyes of their men, up to the task, so to speak, had proved their metal in terms of how hard they were willing to work and what they were willing to do.*

Despite a dramatic setback, the crew of this ship – lead by the CO – came together to make a bad situation a successful, positive, learning experience.

Before my second West-Pac aboard the COMSTOCK, we were in the middle of work-ups and the ship failed our CART II inspection. Life suddenly changed and our working hours were now 0530 to 2000 Monday-Friday, and sometimes on Saturday. As much as this made a damper on our lives, we all were highly motivated and never once cursed the fact that we gave up our time with our families and friends. *What was even more significant about this was that the Captain kept the same hours as we did, and was out there with us working the drills we had previously failed. It was a joint ship effort, which paid off to the extreme. I was just a seaman at the time, and seeing the CO actively participate with us, that was teamwork.* My personal qualities were, and still are, if there is a specific reason or a mission critical experience that has to be done, then there are reasons to change your life around to make time for the Navy. We all kept each other's spirits up, and motivated one another throughout. *Everyone played a certain role, whether they were a 04 or an E-1, everyone had a part.*

A LCDR aviator describes the great team effort his whole squadron made to prepare their new “home” upon arriving in Aviano, Italy for the air war over former Yugoslavia

I was part of a tremendous team effort that left a lasting impression on me. My expeditionary EA-6B squadron showed up in Aviano, Italy to participate in the Kosovo air operations. We were shown a broken down, unfurnished, uninhabited hangar and spaces that were to be our temporary home. There were a million things that needed to be done in a short amount of time. *Everyone in the squadron jumped right in and began to transform our situation and spaces into a useful, productive, performing experience. The squadron CO and XO did not try to manage every little situation, action or event. They intervened when asked or when they perceived they could help knock down barriers.* It was amazing how proactive and resourceful squadron members became when allowed to perform their jobs

with the full trust and support of their leadership. *People want to be part of great teams and to know that their input is valued and vital.*

The interviewee in this story, a Surface Warfare LT, describes a training team that he led. Although he points out the qualities of the team experiences, what he is really describing is *his own* good leadership.

I was a Chief Engineer and I was leading the Engineer Casualty Control Training Team of Senior and Junior enlisted. I had a great team. Our job was to train the other watchstanders and basically conduct drills on them. *Our team was good in that, when we sat down, even though I was the senior guy, we took off our rank when we sat down and discussed things. And we weren't afraid to discuss what went wrong or who screwed up. We wanted to learn from the mistakes and move on. It was a great team in that we were honest with each other, and we did show respect to each other, but also, respect didn't get in the way of giving an honest opinion of what we were there to do. They didn't tell me what I wanted to hear. They told me what they saw.* I thought I had a real good team and this helped us when we went through our Operations Propulsion Plant Examination. For the first time, we finished the exam in about 30 hours. It was a 3-day exam and we were the first ship in a couple of years to pass it right off the bat and do it that fast. A lot of that was because of not just the team, but also the entire engineering department.

Acknowledgements: We would like to thank the following members of the Interview Team who volunteered their time to be a part of this important effort. The insights we gained from reviewing them would not have been possible without the extra effort they made to find and submit these great leadership stories:

NC1 Zak Carpenter
ET2 (SW) Christopher Clarke
LTjg David Cullasi
CMDMC (SS/SW) Kevin Davis
CAPT Rick Davis
PNSN (AW) Joey Evans
MS1 Wilbur Fifield
LTjg Donald Freeman
Mr. Roderick French
LTjg Mike Kalinski
LCDR Yancy Lindsey
LT Jose Marrero
MM1 (SW) James Meagher
LT Keith Moran
Mrs. Carol Newell
LT Benjamin Nguyen
LT Jason Parkhouse
Mrs. Daira Paulson
AE2 Chris Pohlson
YN1 (SW) Chris Reed
LT Mark Reyes
NC1 Paul Stewart
LCDR Harold Valentine
Mr. Michael White
YN2 Amie Williams
CAPT Wayne Young

Thank you very much