

On our CPO birthday in 2013 I was asked to represent the NAS Patuxent River & all Patuxent River tenant commands as the Master of Ceremonies for the Base's 70th anniversary celebration. In addition, I was asked to give this short speech commemorating our 120th birthday.

ACCM(AW/SW) Gordon 'Flaps' Carlon

At the end of World War II, all the towns and cities across the country were looking for a “Home town boy makes good” person to celebrate the victory with. The city of Los Angeles chose Admiral Halsey, whom it was rumored had done quite well. The ceremony was held on the steps of the L.A. county courthouse, and when it concluded and Admiral Halsey was departing, the city had formed up a group of sideboys, consisting of active duty and retired Chief Petty Officers from all over the country to render honors. As Halsey walked through the ranks, Mr. John Reese, a journalist and novelist who had attended the ceremony, walked apace, but outside the ranks, observing the Admiral. He noticed that as Halsey approached one old Chief – a Chief that Mr. Reese described as being “older than God” -

the Admiral and the Chief exchanged a subtle wink. Later, at a cocktail party, Mr. Reese had the opportunity to speak with the great Admiral. He commented on the “wink” and asked Halsey if he would mind explaining it. Halsey became very serious, and said this: “That man was my Chief when I was an Ensign, and no one before or after taught me as much about ships or men as he did.” He further went on to say, “You civilians don’t understand. You go down to Long Beach, and you see those battleships sitting there, and you think they float on the water, don’t you?”

“Yes, sir, I guess they do,” said Mr. Reese.

“Well you are wrong,” replied Halsey, “they are carried to sea on the backs of those Chief Petty Officers.”

I submit to you that the role of the Navy Chief Petty Officer as explained by Admiral Halsey in this story remains the same today as it did 120 years ago.

The Navy has certainly weathered innumerable changes since its birth in October of 1775, and will necessarily continue to do so, likely for centuries to come. Technology and experience has led to innovations and new developments in ship design, propulsion systems, capabilities, mission...

the list goes on and on. Despite those many changes, however, a rugged and formidable keel of stability was laid 120 years ago, on April 1st 1893, when the Navy Chief Petty Officer was born. Forasmuch as the Navy has transformed over time, the value and importance of the Navy Chief has never wavered nor diminished and their prevalence has most definitely endured.

The standard, after all, is the same today as it was in the early 20th century, when the Blue Jacket's Manual stated, "the tone of the ship and the tone of the service itself must come more directly from the Chief Petty Officers than from any other group of people in the Navy."

Consider also, the words of Chief Personnelman Don Kelso, who said in April 1957, "In the working and disciplinary hierarchy of the Navy, the CPO's position has not lost one iota of its significance."

Now compare those thoughts with what Master Chief Petty Officer of the Navy Mike Stevens wrote in his 2012-2013 CPO 365 Guidance, "The duties and responsibilities of a Chief Petty Officer are for professionals only. We are the

most respected group of enlisted leaders in the world and must ensure that we provide the type and level of training that ensures this remains true today and in the future.”

Like I said, Chief Petty Officers were then, are today, and will remain in the future, the backbone of the United States Navy. For even though our responsibilities go beyond the call of printed assignment; we’re still the unrivaled technical experts in our fields. We’re still expected to use that expertise to train junior officers, like Ensign Halsey, and each and every one of the Sailors we come in contact with and lead every single day. We’re still the Navy’s first line disciplinarians. We continue to see to the basic needs of our Sailors – things like food, housing, and training - and if a problem arises in any one of those areas, we work tirelessly until the problem is solved. We’re still approachable at all times, available and willing to talk over any special problems our Sailors may be experiencing. We’re still expected to know what to do, when to do it and how to do it... Simply stated, we continue to do the things we do, not because somebody tells us to, but because we know they must get

done, and we know what must be done because we have 120 years of experience doing it.

One of our most significant responsibilities lies in the wear and maintenance of the anchors themselves. I, and all of my brothers and sisters around the globe who have earned the right to wear the coveted fouled anchors today, have freely and humbly accepted that ours is a position of great honor and responsibility. It doesn't matter if we're aboard ship or ashore, stateside or overseas, peacetime or at war - each day when we don our uniforms, we look in the mirror and remind ourselves that the anchors on our collars are not ours – no... we possess them on loan, as a time-share, of sorts. We recognize and accept that the exalted position we have attained exists because of the attitude and performance of those Chief Petty Officers who came before us. We wear our anchors proudly, as a direct reflection of our predecessors, and in doing so set a course for those who follow in our wake. This is why, even after 120 years, the CPO fouled anchor continues to hold the same lofty honor it did when it was first donned in 1893.

Still, we must, as they say, constantly look to the future while necessarily keeping an eye on the past. So as we plot our PIM (that's position and intended movement for any non-sea going shipmates in the audience) it will be our responsibility to continuously maintain, and sometimes hone, the rich traditions and heritage of our predecessors, in spite of, and sometimes as a result of the ongoing changes and challenges our Navy will face. We must remain buoyant in both calm and heavy seas while maintaining the consistent rigidness required for the stability we're charged to provide. We must impart the knowledge we've gained and continue to train our reliefs so they can successfully develop into the caretakers of our anchors when we retire, just as our predecessors did for us. Fortunately, the Sailors we're leading today represent a bright and magnificent future of our Navy - they are the best this great nation has to offer and they will succeed.

In closing, Henry Ford once said, "Whether you think you can, or you think you can't--you're right." I'm here to

tell you, that for 120 years, Chief Petty Officers have thought they could, and they've been right... that will never change.

Thank you.