



## Get outside the lifelines

The Navy offers wonderful opportunities to contribute beyond the scope of a simple billet assignment. It's easy to focus enough effort on pleasing a reporting senior to maximize one's FITREP, but that's duty inside the lifelines. I submit that your real focus should be on maximizing your contributions to the Navy and its Sailors, not just your career.

Let me offer some examples of opportunities to serve that I've witnessed over the past several years. By looking outside the lifelines, you will find an exciting and rewarding set of experiences that can and will make a difference.

All advancement examinations for paygrades E-4 through E-7 include a number of questions on professional military knowledge. Every Chief's exam contains 100 of them. Regardless of rating, all Sailors in the same paygrade are presented the same questions to answer. From this concept was born the computer advancement game "Who Wants to be a Master Chief."<sup>1</sup> This tool, originally written as a series of PowerPoint slides, was upgraded to an online application by EMC(SS) Thomas Dickson of NOSC Pensacola and distributed around the world to Sailors. It's remained a living tool, with ETCS Darlene Smith of NOSC Fort Worth working to produce a new question "pack" to prepare Sailors for the 2010 exam cycles.

Active Component (AC) prospective commanding officers attend Command Leadership School, but quotas for Reserve Component (RC) officers are difficult to obtain. For several years, a dedicated team of over 200 senior reserve officers led first by VADM John Cotton then by RADM Gar Wright committed their time to facilitate thousands of students in a two-day distilled course that continues today in part as a component of the Navy Reserve Unit Management course taught to new COs.

Transformational leadership is a consummate executive skill. Under a charter from RADM "Mac" McLaughlin, CAPT Joseph Eagan established the Naval Reserve Force Transformation Initiative (NRFTI), harnessing the combined wisdom of over 100 captains and Master Chiefs to produce 95 recommendations to fundamentally improve the business model of the Navy Reserve.

With AC facing significant manpower cuts in shore infrastructure, CAPT Steve O'Brien led an initiative to establish the first permanent cadre of RC leadership facilitators, and within seven months of formation, this team was teaching over 50 classes per weekend for a combined throughput of over 10,000 students annually.

All of the officers of our Association serve as unpaid volunteers, writing columns, hosting professional development seminars, and doing the work of a member-run organization. AUSN offers progressively increasing leadership assignments, at the chapter, district, and national level, with the opportunity to contribute to the lives and careers of nearly 20,000 members and readers of our magazine.

None of these contributions were part of any primary billet assignment. These were additional contributions "outside the lifelines" because of the level of dedication and commitment of the individuals who chose to go above and beyond the limitations of their job definition.

Emerson wrote that we should work harder than we're paid for, and eventually we'll be paid more than we're worth. Your payment can be the satisfaction of making a positive impact in the lives and careers of literally thousands of Navy Reservists.

ADM Hyman Rickover is said to have a sign over his desk stating, "Heaven is blest with perfect rest, but the blessing of earth is toil." Take the time to commit yourself to doing something extra for our Sailors, whether you're active, retired, or a friend of the Navy. Remember, there are no extra points for crossing the finish line with leftover gas in the tank. Give the Navy 100% every chance you can. You will never, ever regret that choice, and you can make a difference that lasts.

G. Mark Hardy

<sup>1</sup> "Who Wants to be a Master Chief," *NRA News*, December 2004.

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