



Atlantic Ocean (Nov. 4, 2005) The Nimitz-class aircraft carrier USS Dwight D. Eisenhower (CVN 69) is reflected in a set of "Big Eyes" binoculars on the signal bridge of the Nimitz-class aircraft carrier USS Harry S. Truman (CVN 75). U.S. Navy photo by Photographer's Mate Airman Ricardo J. Reyes (RELEASED)

From the Bridge...

Dear USNPAA Membership:

Congratulations again to Rear Admiral Charlie Brown who assumed the responsibilities as the Chief of Information on 23 May. Charlie officially relieved Captain Greg Hicks in a ceremony in the Pentagon press studio. On behalf of the entire USNPAA membership, I'd like to extend Charlie our warmest wishes and know he will be a superb leader for our community and the Navy. Our Navy should feel privileged and blessed to have him in his new position.



Rear Admiral Paula Dunn

We also cannot say enough about the leadership that Greg has provided both the community and the Navy during his tenure. Greg has done a great job and turns over a fully mission capable Office of Information. Well done, Greg!!!

We also congratulate Rear Admiral Paula Dunn on her selection to flag and the Vice Chief of Information. Paula relieves Rear Admiral Roberto Durand as the leader of our reserve community. Paula has amassed a deep amount of experience in a variety of positions, including deployment for multiple crisis contingencies around the world. These experiences have honed her professional and leadership skills to perform in her new role. We're getting closer to our long-awaited reunion in September. In fact, it's less than four months away. We currently have 36 members and spouses signed up to attend.



Rear Admiral Tom Jurkowsky



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Personally, I'm a bit disappointed at the numbers because when we did our survey last summer, there was a tremendous amount of interest expressed in having a reunion.

Remember, registration forms and checks must be received no later than 30 August.

Those who have registered thus far include: Anita & Chris Baumann; Betsy Bird; Deb Burnette; Roger & Mary Copeland; Chuck Connor; Bill & Deborah Edge; Sheila Graham & Steve Epstein; Brian & Nancy Gray; Bill & Rene Harlow; Dennie Klauer; Evelyn Moy & Bill Garner; Joe Mancias; Cate & Dan Mueller; Jim & Alice Noone; Jerry Pape; Bob & Alice Prucha; Mike Schmitt; Timothy Siggia; Mark & Jill Stull; Mel Sundin; George & Barbara Vercessi; Jill Votaw; and Ron Wildermuth & Charlene Hatakeyama.

Finally, my thanks to Deputy Editor Tim Beecher for his role in putting together the current issue of *Sightings*. Joe Quimby has spent the past couple of months focused on family issues. But Tim has put together another substantive issue for our membership.

Highlighting the issue, Jim Harnar has written a very heartfelt piece on mentoring. Jim's article serves as a great complement to CHINFO's (and the Navy's) focus on mentoring. Jim does a wonderful job in discussing the importance of mentorships and how it impacted him professionally. In a way, I also look upon Jim's article as a 'tear jerker' as he brings up so many names from my past, too.

We also include a couple of pieces regarding professional recollections and lessons learned. Duke Smith recounts his tour aboard *USS IOWA* and the ship's visit to New York as part of the 1976 International Naval Review. Duke shares some very important lessons from that event. Bill Collins recollects how, as the COMNAVAIRPAC PAO, he was able to gain recognition for the aircraft carriers that were supporting operations in Vietnam. Very little attention was focused on the role the carriers were playing, and Bill documents how he was able to change that.

And our 'Five Questions' in this issue are with Mike Sherman. You will enjoy Mike's responses, but he saves the best comment for last: "But *nothing* comes close to a life in the Navy...ever!"

We hope to see you in September.

Tom

It's Time To Say Thanks To Your Mentors

By Jim Harnar

Here's the thing: each and every one of us has built our career on the shoulders of others. So, why not take some time right now to remember:

- Who gave you your first break;
- Who passed along some sage advice as you settled into your first public affairs job;
- Who made sure that a stupid mistake became a "learning opportunity" rather than an abrupt end to your promising career?

Try to remember those early days when you first observed men and women who were older, more senior, more seasoned – how they advised flag officers, how they interacted with the press, how they handled themselves in pressure-cooker situations.

Now ask yourself this: have I told my mentors lately just how important they were to me and to my career?

I'm not talking about the clever toast you made at a mentor's retirement party – or the heartfelt Facebook post you made last week when you learned of a shipmate's illness or death.

I'm asking this: When's the last time you mailed a handwritten note to someone who saw some promise in you when no one else did? How long has it been since you looked a mentor in the eye and described how his or her guidance made all the difference back when you were just starting out?

I'm ashamed to say that I haven't done either for a long, long time.

This sad fact came crashing home this winter when I learned that one of my earliest mentors unexpectedly passed away as he and his family were returning home from a European vacation.

Four decades ago **CDR Jack Mayo** took me under his wing when I was badly in need of some direction in my career. Frankly, I hadn't thought of Jack for many years. But memories of working by his side came back in an instant.

In my mind, I'll always see Jack at 40 years old in his wood paneled 11th Naval District office across from the Broadway Pier in San Diego. He's puffing on his ever-present pipe, knocking out a press release on his trusty government-issued, haze gray manual typewriter. Or he's carefully choosing his words while being interviewed by retired Navy Chief Journalist **Kip Cooper**, the tough-as-nails military correspondent for the *San Diego Union*.

Armed with my University of Missouri J-School degree and three years' experience as a reporter, I was a 26-year-old Ensign when Jack decided I might be a good addition to his staff. Despite my civilian experience, I didn't seem to have much to offer, having recently discovered that the Surface Navy and I were not, shall we say, a good match. For reasons I still don't understand, Jack saw some promise in me. He gave me a job, a title (Assistant Public Affairs Officer) – and an education in what it meant to be a PAO.

Jack had a lot to offer. He was a consummate professional. Smart, focused and articulate, Jack was an exceptional writer, a strategic thinker and a natural teacher. He also was a calm presence when things hit the fan. I was (just) bright enough to pay close attention to Jack's work – how he functioned as an Assistant Chief of Staff for Public Affairs, how he blended together media relations, community relations and internal communications and how he managed people in a way that brought out the best in everyone around him.

The basics stuck with me my entire career: every phone call is returned the same day, no matter how late; every letter (remember letters?) gets a written response; memos, press releases and statements are clear, precise and thoroughly checked for accuracy; news conferences are painstakingly planned; no playing fast and loose with the facts; surprises are minimized; and, everyone is treated with dignity and respect.

I'll never forget Jack's reaction when – as an Ensign – I was quoted by name for the first time as a Navy spokesman. In a *Los Angeles Times* article promoting public visits to ships on San Diego's Broadway Pier for an upcoming holiday weekend, I said: "Everyone's invited to tour the ship. In fact, it'll solve the problem of what to do with Mom on Mother's Day!"

Jack walked into my office holding the Times, pointed to the story and just rolled his eyes. Nothing was said, but his message was received, loud and clear: "Everything you say to a reporter is fair game, so don't be stupid." Even for a slow learner like me, a critical lesson was driven home.

By the time Jack retired and was succeeded by then-**CAPT Jack Garrow**, I had been thoroughly schooled in the fundamentals. I was ready to take on more responsibility under the man who would soon be named Chief of Information. Working for **Jack Garrow** was like enrolling in a Master Class in public affairs. I watched him operate at the highest levels, always strategic, forceful and effective. He ensured that public affairs was not just at the table, but absolutely integral as senior decision-makers tackled complex and sensitive issues. Despite the demands of his job, I saw Jack carve out time to mentor younger officers such as **Kendell Pease** during lengthy phone calls, always with an eye toward the future of the public affairs community.

Looking back to the late 1970s, I can't believe how fortunate I was to be surrounded by an exceptional cadre of PAOs and enlisted journalists and photographers in San Diego.

There was a tremendous sense of camaraderie. We had regular lunches and multiple daily phone calls to coordinate our responses to media queries. We ironed out the details of VIP visits and commiserated over the latest direction and guidance from Washington.

Long before email and the internet, we spent hours each day on the phone. And in those pre-computer days, draft documents would be typed and retyped and typed again until they were spotless. Huge chunks of time were spent clipping newspaper articles and faxing them around the world. The "new" fax technology was impressive – it only took six minutes to transmit a single page!

Of course I didn't know it at the time, but nearly every PAO was a role model in one way or another. They were smart, capable, focused and hardworking – full of fun and always ready to share a slightly off-color joke and a crazy sea story.

The San Diego PA community in those days seemed close knit and highly capable. There were my very first Public Affairs bosses, **Pete Litrenta** and later **Mark Baker** at SURFPAC; there were **John Baker**, **Mike Sherman** and **Joe Ciokan** at AIRPAC; **Doug Strole** at Fleet Hometown News Center; **Ken Mitchell** at NAS North Island; **Julie Swan** at Naval Station San Diego; **Ed Darrow** and **El Ahlwardt** at Balboa Naval Hospital. Up the road in Los Angeles was cigar-chomping **Dale Patterson** and at the other end of the phone at CINCPACFLT were **Don Dvornik** and **Mike Doubleday**; on the CHINFO News Desk were many young officers like **Tom Jurkowsky** who were destined to go on to important leadership roles. **Allen Sherwood** masterminded the very first Fleet Week in San Francisco and later arranged for me to join him on a sunset flight over the Golden Gate Bridge on a Goodyear Blimp. Another highlight was joining **Mark Baker**, **Mike Sherman** and the White House press corps as **President Reagan** was choppered out to **USS Constellation** off the California coast. Often, PAOs such as **Dan Davidson** and **Greg Slavonic** would pass through town, sharing experiences, comparing notes, beginning what became lifelong friendships.

It was a special privilege to work closely with some of the more colorful characters in San Diego – **Herman Schroeder**, a salty retired PHCS who ran the photo lab at 32nd Street. Herman spent a lifetime helping young officers like me be successful. And there was speechwriter **John Vandegrift**, a former Marine aviator who had lost one of his legs in combat in World War II. Sporting a pencil thin moustache and an immaculate crew cut, “Van” was a walking encyclopedia of U.S. Navy history – and a master at maintaining what’s now called work-life balance. He enjoyed nothing more than piloting his big white Cadillac convertible around San Diego with the top down year around. Under the dashboard clock, Van had placed a stick on-label that read: “Who Cares?”

Thinking back over the years, I clearly remember advice and encouragement given to me by each of the professionals who helped shaped my career. Some of them – like **Pete Litrenta**, **Doug Strole** and **Ken Mitchell** – died way too young.

I never took the time to properly thank them for all they taught me.

No single PAO had more impact on me than **Mark Baker** at SURFPAC and later at CHINFO when I was a reservist. Whip smart, passionate, a professional’s professional, in my mind Mark embodied all that made our profession so important – and so special. He always spoke with confidence and was a fierce advocate for the Navy. A clear and direct communicator, Mark never attempted to gloss over things when he had to explain or defend something that had gone wrong. He knew how to inject just the right amount of humor into the atmosphere when tensions ran high. A former Atlantic Fleet “ship driver of the year,” Mark oozed credibility and was the single best PAO I ever knew.

Years later when I became a nonprofit CEO, I realized that my own leadership style was one part Jack Mayo, two parts Mark Baker and a mix of what I had observed from a long list of PAOs and senior officers and enlisted leaders.

In 1982, just three years after walking into a public affairs office for the first time, **Mike Doubleday** called from Hawaii to tell me I had been selected as a 1650. Soon after that I received orders to be the PAO at Commander, Patrol Wings Atlantic in Maine, working directly for a two-star. Thanks to my many mentors in San Diego and beyond, I headed east filled with confidence and excitement, knowing that the public affairs community had my back.

This year I’m beginning to work my way through the newly-updated USNPAA directory, with the intention of writing to as many of my mentors as I can track down.

Why don’t you join me?

Captain Jim Harnar retired from the Navy in 2003 after 25 years of active duty and reserve service. Now living in Santa Fe, New Mexico, Jim spent 30 years as a nonprofit healthcare executive in Maine. Before retiring from his civilian career in 2015, Jim was a founder and long-time executive director of the Daniel Hanley Center for Health Leadership in Portland, Maine.

Special Report: *Fleet Week and Other Special Events*

Lesson Learned:

Liberty Weekend and the 1986 International Naval Review Aboard USS IOWA

By CAPT Charles D. “Duke” Smith USN (Ret.), public affairs officer, USS IOWA, 1985-1987

Naval service affords all kinds of experiences. If you sit back and close your eyes, I’m sure memories of ports you visited with their different skylines, smells, native people in colorful garb, historic sites, and vibrant sunsets quickly come to mind.

My underway time in six ships in various oceans, seas and ports enriched my life tremendously. In a way, they made the world my backyard. As a result, I have oodles of “Lessons Learned” to share, but one stands out for how we “missed-the-boat.”



**Poster for the U.S. Bicentennial Naval Review by
LT Bill Ray, NIRA Print Media Division**

So please close your eyes and picture yourself in your service dress white uniform, standing tall as you “man-the-rail” of the battleship USS IOWA (BB-61). It glides effortlessly into New York Harbor on a bright and sunny morning, July 4, 1986, Liberty Weekend and our Nation’s 210th birthday. The weekend includes the Centennial Celebration of the Statue of Liberty and an International Naval Review of 250 ships from 30 nations, in a “Parade of Sail” past Lady Liberty, the Grande Dame of New York Harbor.

You are fully aglow knowing that you are part of something really special. Thousands of people are lining the harbor and millions more are watching you and the events of the weekend unfold on network television. You are arms-length from embarked dignitaries on IOWA’s transit up the Hudson River: President Ronald Reagan and his wife Nancy; Secretary of the Navy John F. Lehman, Jr.; Chief of Naval Operations ADM Frank B. Kelso II; CBS News anchor Walter L. Cronkite, Jr.; Navy, government, and corporate guests, and, of course, a passel of reporters keen on getting a story from dignitaries and the crew.

After IOWA anchors in the middle of the river, an outdoor barbeque was staged. Boats filled with cheerful guests arrive, first for the feast, then a concert by the Beach Boys, followed by fireworks after dark. A few New York Mets players want head-of-the-line privileges at the barbeque, but they were assured there would be more than enough food for them when their turns would come. You too enjoyed yourself while you watched the visitors delight in their free-range exploration of the ship, loving every minute of it.



Beach Boys perform aboard USS IOWA while anchored in New York Harbor.

front-end analysis” in planning an event, but in this case, we didn’t do the back-end analysis very well. One solution could have been having larger boats and more of them in a queue awaiting the passengers.

Now, nearly 33 years later, my hope is that the guests who visited IOWA that day remember the swell time they had, and that the memory of anxiously waiting to get ashore that night has now faded. For me, a lesson very well learned.

After the lively and enjoyable Beach Boys concert and fireworks, a gloom falls over the happy crowd when everyone wants to get on the next boat headed ashore. Needless to say, that did not happen. The bulk of the guests were vexed because they could not leave immediately, and a few of them had to be restrained. Neither we, nor the event planners ashore, thought deeply ahead of time about a potential bottleneck that might occur, and how it might have been prevented. My brother Michael normally would have said, “You must do your



July 4, 1986 -- Beach Boys Bruce Johnston, Carl Wilson, Al Jardine and Mike Love under Turret One, Battleship IOWA, at anchor in the Hudson River. Later that evening, the group performed for guests on the ship in a culminating event of the International Naval Review and Liberty Weekend



Barbeque aboard USS IOWA anchored in New York Harbor, July 4, 1986



Fireworks as viewed from the deck of USS IOWA, New York Harbor, July 4, 1986

Captain Duke Smith retired from the Navy in 1997 after more than 26 years of combined active and reserve service. He was the public affairs community detailee and was assigned duties aboard two amphibious assault ships, three aircraft carriers, and a battleship. He directed the Navy's advertising agency BBDO, and was a member of the early complement of officers assigned to the U. S. Transportation Command. After retiring, he worked for two non-profits, a marketing communications firm, and as a contractor in U.S. Army Headquarters Public Affairs.

Fleet Week, New York City, 1982:

Saipan Loves New York

The following account of Saipan's 1982 July 4th Weekend in New York was written by Navy journalist IS2 Ric Nicholas.

If one tries to think of the perfect way to spend a Fourth of July weekend, New York City always seems to pop right to the top of the list for places to be. The crew of USS Saipan (LHA-2) got a bird's eye view of the "Big Apple" this Fourth of July as the 40,000 ton amphibious assault ship moored to pier 92 on the West side of Manhattan, Friday morning July 2nd.



USS Saipan (LHA-2) Fleet Week, New York, 1982 -- The amphibious assault ship entering New York Harbor, passing the twin towers of the World Trade Center, and heading up the Hudson River to its mooring.



USS Saipan (LHA-2) Fleet Week in New York, 1982 -- USS Saipan (LHA-2) Fleet Week in New York City 1982. Manning the rail and heading up the Hudson River to its mooring at Pier 92 on Manhattan's West Side.

A participant in New York's Harborfest '82, Saipan hosted well over 25,000 guests during three days of general visiting, 3-5 July.

With helicopters, landing craft, medical exhibits, and Marine Corps equipment on static display, New Yorkers who toured Saipan left with a better understanding of today's modern amphibious warfare arsenal and its capabilities.



USS Saipan (LHA-2) Fleet Week in New York, 1982 -- Crowds enjoy the rare thrill of strolling on the flight deck of an amphibious assault ship.



USS Saipan (LHA-2) Fleet Week in New York, 1982 -- Crowds get to see a CH-54 Sea Stallion heavy-lift helicopter up-close.

After arriving the morning of July 2nd, "bunnies" from New York City's Playboy Club came onboard for a tour and special "raffle." During the transit from Norfolk to New York, Saipan sailors bought raffle tickets for the bunnies to draw upon arrival in New York. \$275.00 was raised from the raffle with the proceeds

going to the Navy Relief Society. All prizes were donated by the New York Playboy Club, with top prize being an all expense paid dinner at the club.

July 3 was a big day for Saipan runners as a group of 25 participated in the "Pepsi Challenge 10 kilometer run." Out of a field of nearly 5,000 runners, Lieutenant Steve Frisk of the Amphibious Group Two staff embarked in Saipan finished 40th and Yeoman Seaman David Lukasavage of Saipan's engineering department finished in the top 100.



Fleet Week 1982 -- Nearly 5,000 runners participated in the 1982 Pepsi Challenge in New York City, including 25 Saipan Sailors and Marines.



Fleet Week 1982 -- LT Steve Frisk and YNSN David Lukasavage finished among the leaders of the Pepsi Challenge.

Also on July 3 a group from Saipan attended the afternoon matinee of the Broadway play, "Woman of the Year," starring Raquel Welch. As if the play wasn't enough to impress Saipan sailors, the trip backstage after the show was enough to give a few "heart failure." Ms. Welch took time between shows to meet with Saipan Sailors and pose for a few photos.



Fleet Week 1982 -- Shipshape "CPO" Raquel Welch welcomes admiring Saipan Sailors to the Palace Theater where she had recently taken over the "Woman of the Year" role from Lauren Bacall.

On July 4th Saipan's honor and color guard drill team took to the streets of New York City and gave New Yorkers a look at a crack Navy marching unit. The 36-man unit participated in the city's Fourth of July parade. RADM William A. Kearns, Jr., Commander Amphibious Group Two and Captain John W. Renard, Commanding Officer of Saipan were invited to the reviewing stand for that event.



Fleet Week 1982 -- July 4, Saipan's honor and color guard drill team took to the streets of New York City and gave New Yorkers a look at the crack Navy marching unit. The 16-man unit participated in the city's Fourth of July Parade, during which RADM William Kearns, Jr., COMPHIBGRUTWO and CAPT John W. Renard, Saipan CO, were honored guests in the reviewing stand.

Winding up a very eventful and enjoyable weekend Saipan Crewmembers took to the ballpark Monday night July 5. Before a crowd of over 40,000, Saipan's color guard marched onto the field for the national anthem, as the sports announcer declared it "Saipan Night at Shea Stadium."



Fleet Week 1982 -- Saipan's Color Guard stands at attention for the national anthem.



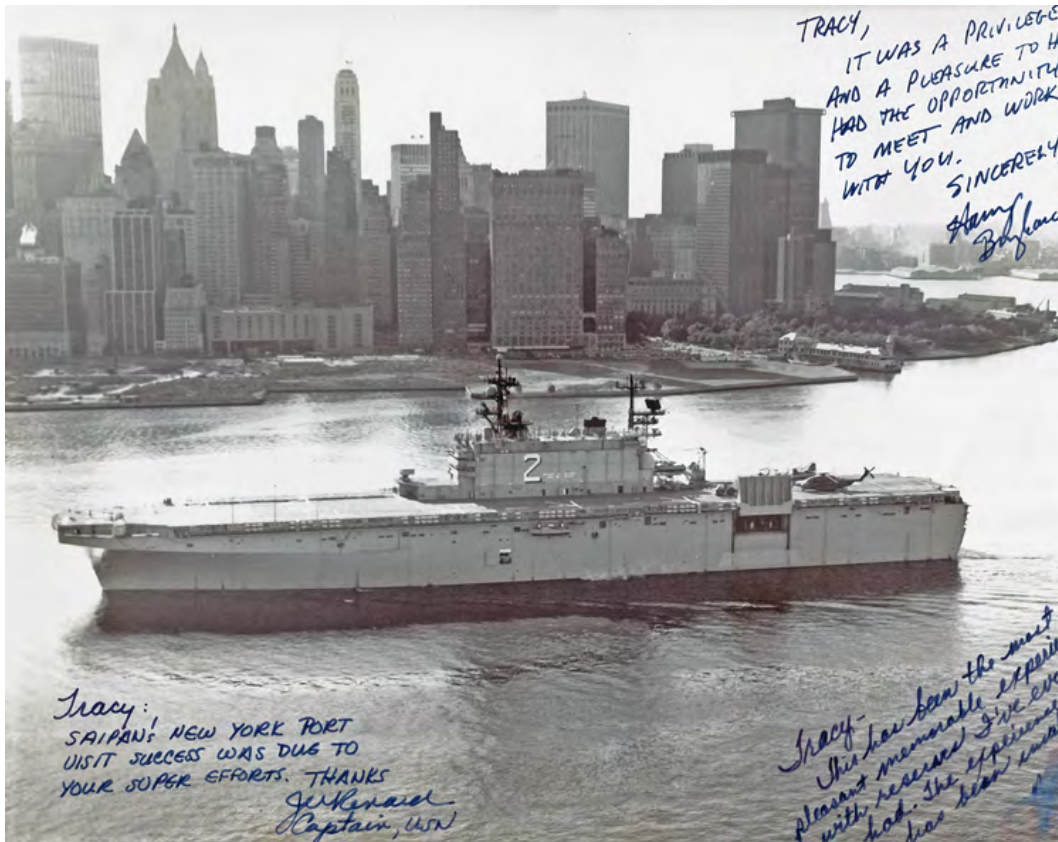
Fleet Week 1982 -- Saipan Commanding Officer, CAPT John W. Renard USN talks with NY Mets Manager George Bamberger, before throwing out the first pitch at Shea Stadium.

Captain Renard threw out the first pitch of the game and hundreds of Saipan Sailors settled back and watched the world champion Los Angeles Dodgers and the New York Mets go at it for nine innings. The game was followed by a spectacular fireworks show that rivaled Macy's show from the night before.

While waiting in line for a Broadway show, a Saipan crewmember was overheard in earnest conversation with a veteran sailor of World War II. The old salt was telling the young sailor from Saipan about his days in the "gator Navy" aboard an old Infantry Landing Craft (LCI). When the Saipan sailor told the old salt that Saipan could carry four of its modern day replacement, the LCU, internally, the old salt could only smile, shake his head and reply, "Wow."

New York City impressed Saipan and likewise Saipan impressed New York City. The memories of the 1982 Fourth of July weekend will linger in the minds of Saipan sailors for years to come.

Some will never experience the flashy lifestyle, the hustle and bustle and culture of New York City. But one thing is for certain ... Saipan loved New York.



Fleet Week 1982 -- USS Saipan (LHA-2) arrives in New York Harbor in June 1982.

Evocative photographs such as this one were often signed by participants and shared as mementos.

Returning from Yankee Station

When the Carriers Came Home

By Bill Collins, CDR USN(Ret)

The Vietnam conflict was in full swing when I started my first tour at COMNAVAIRPAC 1967. Thirteen carriers were making extended deployments from San Diego, Long Beach, and Alameda, and families were anxious to welcome them home.

The families felt that they were not receiving the kind of credit either the Navy men or their families deserved. So I set out to remedy this shortcoming. I presented my ideas at a staff meeting, and



USS Constellation (CVA-64) entering San Diego in 1968.

received enthusiastic support from the Admiral and the staff to do whatever it took. My team of willing workers had contacts and resources. Commanding Officer NAS North Island agreed with our plan and gave us free rein with his public works department, dock crews and security force.

Public Works gave me several hundred wooden slats to attach "Welcome Home" messages on poster board. San Diego's Navy League funded hundreds of posters and paint. I enlisted my son and some of his high school friends as sign painters. They would always come a couple of hours before carriers docked and as families

and well-wishers arrived, were ready to take orders for custom-made signs.

Several days in advance of a ship's arrival I would contact the mayors of cities surrounding San Diego Bay, as well as representatives from the very active Navy League chapters, and invite them to sit in the reviewing stand. I would book the band, which would arrive early enough to entertain families and guests as they waited anxiously for their loved ones. I met with base security and the top manager to lay out the dock and arrange for the reviewing stand, bandstand with chairs. A special section in front was roped off for mothers with babies that had been born during the deployment and who their fathers had yet to see. The presidents of the officers and enlisted wives clubs were seated on the VIP stand with the wives of the ship's CO and XO.

Excitement grew as the ships, with sailors manning the rails, hove into sight. This was well before cellphones, and many of the wives used semaphore to send messages to their husbands. The rest just waved, cheered and waggled their freshly painted signs. We often had a welcoming flyover by planes from the ship's airwing that had flown to NAS Miramar the day before.

Docking completed, the brows were set, and the new fathers were first off the ship.

Each carrier brought back hundreds of Japanese motor bikes in their empty ammunition lockers. I provided the California Highway Patrol with the dates when the ships would be in Hawaii on their trip home, and we flew two CHP officers empowered to give California drivers' exams and issue licenses to Pearl Harbor. Sailors brought their bikes off the ship and could legally ride them out the gate.

I invited the PAO from NAS Alameda to come to San Diego to see the show, and he designed a similar welcome for Alameda's carriers, with a wonderful extra. His friend owned a Chinese cookie factory in San Francisco, and sailors there were welcomed home with fortune cookies holding messages tailor-made for the event.

CDR Collins has lived in San Diego since retiring in 1978. He entered flight training after graduating from University of Texas, Austin with a degree in broadcasting. He served a squadron tour and a tour as instructor pilot in Super Constellation radar planes, both with public affairs as collateral duty. He requested a tour in CHINFO, where he headed the community relations division. He then became the CINCLANT PAO, then the COMNAVBASE GTMO PAO, still with a 1310 Aviator designator. After a short squadron tour in San Diego he was ordered to his first tour as COMNAVAIRPAC PAO, where he changed his designator to 1650. This was followed by a year in Vietnam as operations officer for the American Forces Vietnam Network, two years as COMNAVAIRSYSTEMS PAO and finally, four years San Diego as COMNAVAIRPAC PAO.

Five Questions for CAPT Mike Sherman, USN (Ret.)

1. How did it happen that you became a 1650?

Every PAO has a good story... mine is no less interesting. I reported on board USS Providence (CLG-6) in Yokosuka, Japan, fresh (really fresh) out of OCS and on the first day met with a world-weary XO who asked if I was going to make the Navy my career (!) I didn't even know where my bunk was. I



Stefanie, Zachary, Katherine and Mike at a tree dedication in the Philippines recognizing work by Project Handclasp.

answered with a shrug, was assigned as Assistant Navigator, shown to my bunk, and accosted by an old mustang lieutenant named "Frenchy" Lafevre. Frenchy handed me a cardboard box and said, "you're the ship's PAO because you studied journalism in college. I'm relieved." PAO? In the box were old copies of Navy instructions (SECNAV something), Fleet Hometown Newsletter forms, old copies of command info, etc. So, while becoming a naval officer, a Division Officer, a watch stander, JOOD, OOD, Sea and Anchor Detail OOD, and finally SWO, I waded through those. In my off time, I created a monthly magazine (The Privateer), set up a radio station, wrote most of the cruise book, and worked with the embarked COM7THFLT PAOs, including Captain Dick Wade – Himself - The Seventh Fleet PAO. It was from Captain Wade that I learned there was a real designation called PAO. After 23 wonderful months filled with gunfire support (our 6-inch guns took down the walls at Hue during TET), port visits, and making both ship's company and embarked staff happy, it was time for a new assignment. I thought a PAO tour would be fun. "No", NAVPERS said, there were no PAO billets, but how about Destroyer School? That info was passed to Captain Wade (by now Deputy CHINFO) whose return message said, "Tell Mike he'll be getting an

assignment soon, and he'll love it." It was COMNAVBASE LOSA/LBEACH working for LCDR Bill Graves ... and so it began in earnest.

2. What would you say was your most formative assignment?

I think my tour at CINCPACFLT was most important to me. Watching and working both sides of the war in Hawaii (Washington got us up early and Vietnam kept us up late) allowed us to experience what we do best, handle fires, make things work, and learn to think both strategically. But working for such superb PAOs as Bill Stierman, Dale Patterson, and Jack Garrow was invigorating, never boring and always educational. At one point, I was sent to Guam to assist with Operation New Life, which

provided lessons that stuck with me my entire life, and were instrumental in setting up the JIB in Dhahran. When my assignment to become COMNAVPHIL PAO came in, I asked Stierman if he thought I was ready. His simple response, “yes,” was all I needed. Isn’t that what mentors do, instill confidence, instruct and send you forth?

3. Who were your mentors and what lesson did you learn from them?

Starting with Captain Wade, Tom Turman, Bill Graves and the aforementioned PAOs, I think then-CAPT Brent Baker, way later in my career, was another. It was educational and tiring (ha) watching him “work” the Pentagon as OI-2. You’re never too old to learn, that’s for sure.

4. What was your toughest challenge as a PAO? Your most satisfying?

Some might think that creating the JIB and working in Dhahran might be the answer. That was great, doing



The JIB in Dhahran, Saudi Arabia

what we were designed to do and my childhood relationship with the Saudis was comfortable (son of an oilman living in Saudi Arabia for 20 years). Plus, there was an entire career to look back on. In truth, I think relieving Erv Sharp at COMUSNAVPHIL was the hardest. Erv had a unique familial relationship with his admiral and then I arrived. I’m sure the admiral felt as if he’d been divorced! So, first independent duty, new country emerging from martial law, AFRTS advisor, new admiral, new staff, as well as being the senior PAO in the Philippines by benefit of serving the senior flag officer. That was a steep learning curve.

5. Where are you today and what’s next? Personal/family details?

I am totally retired after 17 years working at Visa International as Vice President of Corporate Relations. It was fun to be able to put all the Navy skills and lessons to work in a different environment. At Visa I was responsible for communication strategies and applications for Visa’s global sponsorships and partnerships, the Olympic Games, the Rugby World Cup, FIFA World Cup events, and Visa’s global member meetings. That meant coordinating all of Visa’s international PR programs for seven Olympic Games, from Atlanta through Beijing, the last three Rugby World Cups, and on-site PR consultation for the Vancouver 2010 Olympic Winter Games.



Today, I’m just a grandfather and enjoying a comfortable life living on the coast just 40 minutes south of San Francisco. Kathy and I travel a lot – three trips to Europe this year, mostly to Italy seeking my roots (on my mom’s side) and enjoying wine and pasta. I’m also racing Porsches and have become the Membership Director of the largest Porsche club in the U.S. with 3,400 members. My California license is “CAPTMKE.”

But ***nothing*** comes close to a life in the Navy...***ever!***

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An Adobe Reader reunion information and registration form that includes hotel reservation instructions is available at:

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For further information, email us at: usnpaa@gmail.com

Sightings



If you have any *Sightings* (photos) of members and or yourself involved in something of note please send your stories and photos to Tim Beecher at beechert@icloud.com or Joe Quimby at cvn70pao@gmail.com.

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