

MERIDIAN



FALL 2008 Magazine of the National Naval Officers Association "Gateway to Success"
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**2008 NNOA
Conference:
Greatest
Attendance**

**A Few
Moments with
Coast Guard's
Admiral Thad
Allen**

**Balancing Work
and Family: A
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NNOA Mentors
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NNOA

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****If you have questions or concerns about NNOA please contact the National PAO via email at pao@mnoa.org ****



Greetings NNOA Members, Family and Friends,

Thank you for supporting the 36th Annual National Naval Officers Association, Inc. (NNOA) Training Conference. The year's conference was a great success with record setting attendance; 452 officers from the Navy (291), Coast Guard (116) and Marine Corps (45) registered for the conference. I am pleased to acknowledge the superb efforts of the conference planning committee led by the NNOA Tidewater chapter.

The conference theme "NNOA, Developing America's Future Leaders to Enhance Mission Readiness and Cultural Awareness," emphasized the importance of diversity in the Maritime Strategy. The importance of diversity was reinforced in the remarks of Admiral Thad Allen, Admiral Gary Roughead, General Amos and Secretary Winter.

Professional Development Common Themes:

* Good leadership is the key to a successful career. Leadership can be learned. Some tenets of leadership principles

are easier to understand and apply than others but every one of them can be acquired.

* Performance trumps everything! This was repeated throughout the conference. Master your profession. Take the hard jobs and do well. Do your homework.

* Mentoring, mentoring, mentoring was a common theme. Organizations such as NNOA, ANSO, etc. help junior officers find mentors.

* Sit on promotion and administrative boards as a junior officer as soon as possible. Sitting on a board will help you differentiate degrees of performance - good versus bad.

* Check your service record. Be a fanatic about your service record; check it often and know what it means to have a good or bad record. Ensure that there are no gaps.

* Never stop learning. Seek residential Professional Military Education, Joint Professional Military Education, and/or a graduate degree programs in your field. Your education should never stop.

* You can have a family AND a career with a significant support system.

* Seek command early and often. Expand your leadership skill set - take care of your people by listening to them and empowering them. Learn to take calculated risks and don't be afraid to fail.

The conference also provided great learning opportunities for family and friends. The spouse

workshop provided an excellent forum for family members to develop a better understanding of our role as Sea Service professionals. Additionally, a "Youth Day" program was held for 155 students (ages 6-16) to expose them to the opportunities available in the Sea Services. USS KEARSARGE served as the host ship for lunch and tours. The college prep workshop presented by Vice Adm. Fowler was particularly enjoyable for the students. The Youth Day program was highly successful and we plan to make this a standard feature of future conferences.

This past year the National Board challenged NNOA Chapters to increase junior officer membership by 25 percent. I am pleased to report that we exceeded this goal which was reflected in the record number of junior officer attendance at the conference. This year I challenge NNOA Chapters with increasing majority officer membership by 5% and we look forward to seeing this focus reflected in attendance at the 2009 conference which will be held July 20 - 24th in Houston Texas,

Thank you again for your support to NNOA and diversity in the Sea Services.

Very Respectfully,

Bernard L. Jackson
CAPT, USN (Ret)
president@mnoa.org

Navy CNO Speaks at NNOA Annual Conference: Calls for Action on Diversity



Above: Admiral Gary Roughead speaks at the 36th NNOA Annual Conference held in Portsmouth, Va. at the Portsmouth Renaissance Hotel. USN Photo ... (Reprinted with Permission)

**By Kate Wiltrott
of the Virginian-Pilot**

Sixty years after President Harry Truman integrated the military, the Navy's top admiral said Thursday that more must be done to diversify the ranks -- especially at the top.

"The lack of diversity in Navy leadership does not allow us to take advantage of varied perspectives, of varied experience. And as a result of that, we are a lesser service," Adm. Gary Roughead said. "The time for talk is over. The only thing that matters now is action."

Roughead, the chief of naval operations, spoke to hundreds of military officers attending the annual conference of the National Naval Officers Association. The association supports the development of a diverse officer corps in the Navy, Marine Corps and Coast Guard, through recruiting, retention, and career development.

While blacks make up about 17 percent of the total force, they are just 9 percent of all officers, according to data obtained and analyzed by The Associated Press.

The rarity of blacks in the top ranks is apparent in one startling statistic: Only one of the 38 four-star generals or admirals serving as of May was black. And just 10 black men have ever gained four-star rank -- five in the Army, four in the Air Force and one in the Navy, according to the Pentagon.

As a result, younger black officers have few mentors of their own race.

The anniversary of President Truman's order this week has led Defense Secretary Robert Gates and other top officials to reflect on how far the armed forces have come with racial integration and what they have yet to achieve.

Best known among the four-stars is retired Gen. Colin Powell, who later became the country's first black secretary of state, under President George

W. Bush.

In a stirring salute in the Capitol Rotunda on Wednesday, Powell said that as a youngster in 1948, it never occurred to him that he could rise to be chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff.

But when he joined the military 10 years later, "they no longer cared whether I was black or white, immigrant kid or not," Powell told the crowd, which was dotted with the red blazers of Tuskegee Airmen -- the first group of black fighter pilots allowed into the U.S. Army Air Corps that flew in World War II. "The only thing my commanders ever told me from 1958 for the rest of my career, is 'Can you perform?' And that's all we have ever asked for."

Much progress has been made since 1948, Roughead said, when less than one percent of Navy officers were black. That figure is now about eight

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CNO: Speaks at NNOA 36th Annual Conference **Continued**

Above: Admiral Gary Roughead answers questions from the audience at the 36th NNOA Annual Conference held in Portsmouth, Va. at the Portsmouth Renaissance Hotel. Photo by Lt. Karen E. Eifert

percent, he said. But the Navy's senior leaders need to better reflect the U.S. population, which is about 13 percent black and 15 percent Hispanic.

Roughead described various ways to bring more minority officers into senior leadership positions, none of which are quick solutions.

He stressed the importance of mentoring junior officers by steering them to posts that will help them ascend the ranks.

Another important facet: bringing in officers through the Naval Academy and university commissioning programs. Roughead talked about expanding preparatory school slots for potential Naval Academy students.

Roughead said 16 historically black colleges, including Hampton University and Norfolk State University, have naval reserve officer training programs, and the Navy is working to add programs at seven more.

"If you do not seek out students who are at historically black colleges

to share with them opportunities that the U.S. Navy has, that is an opportunity missed," Roughead said. "It's an opportunity missed for the young men and women who attend that school, it's an opportunity missed for all of us."

Roughead wouldn't wait until college to attract potential officers, however.

"We need to look younger," the gray-haired admiral urged the audience, drawing a roar of laughs. Roughead chuckled, then rephrased the statement: "We really need to look at the younger demographic: middle schools."

When students are applying to or visiting colleges, it might be too late to interest them in a military career, he warned.

The four-star admiral said he doesn't envision recruiters canvassing middle schools. Rather, he wants ordinary sailors to tutor students, get involved in after school or summer programs, and talk about their experiences on submarines and ships.

"This is not a hard sell. This is not recruiting. This is simply sharing with young men and women what we do, what is possible and what the opportunities are," Roughead said.

The chief of naval operations would not comment on another personnel issue in the news recently: the "Don't Ask, Don't Tell" policy that bars gay and lesbian from serving openly in the military.

On Wednesday, a congressional committee heard testimony on that policy for the first time in 15 years.

Asked whether the policy affects recruiting, retention and readiness, Roughead replied: "We've seen the numbers vary for a variety of reasons.

"The position I have on Don't Ask, Don't Tell: It's the law of the land. We abide by the law of the land."



NNOA Marine Corps Day



Above: General Amos and Maj. Gen. Walt Gaskin pose with USMC officers who attended the 36th Annual National Naval Officers Association Conference held in Portsmouth, Va. at the Portsmouth Renaissance Hotel. Photo by Lt. Karen E. Eifert

Four Star Advice for Life
2nd Lt. Jake Owens, USMC

The National Naval Officers Association (NNOA) Conference was held in Portsmouth, Va. where General James Amos, the assistant commandant of the Marine Corps, spoke on the impartiality of the service and life in general during the Marine Corps Day Luncheon.

He began by telling us about a company of Marines that recently graduated from boot camp. He explained that even though 13% of these recruits were African

American, that fact would have no bearing on their starting point, nor would it place limits on their ability to ascend through the ranks. Only in the American armed forces will someone find this rare form of opportunity. An opportunity to excel based on individual performance with no respect to skin color or economic class distinction. Everyone enters on the same footing; their merits will decide the rest.

The bulk and conclusion of his speech centered around five life lessons to live and lead by.

1) Dignity ... never remove it! At the core of every injustice enacted lies the removal of someone's dignity. We can not afford to lose perspective and devalue the dignity of another human being, or we may be found guilty of intolerable cruelty.

2) Everything in life has a way of changing. "Be careful what you are willing to die in a ditch or fall on your sword for." Policies, perspectives often change and even people PCS. Our reputations as

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FALL Awards and Presentations 2008

(We were extremely honored to have the Secretary of the Navy, Donald C. Winter, join the NNOA National President Capt. Bernard Jackson, USN (Ret.) in awarding NNOA members for their significant contributions that directly support the goals and objectives of NNOA.)

Distinguished Service Award

Bayou chapter:

Lt. Allison B. Cox

Bethesda Chapter:

Lt. Richard Gilliard, Jr., USN

Ens. Nicole Cuthbertson

Washington, D.C. Chapter:

Capt. Edward W. Gantt, USN (Ret.)

Rear Adm. Mack Gaston, USN (Ret.)

Capt. Jerome Davis, USN

Cmdr. Stan Cunningham, USN (Ret.)

Lt. Cmdr. Janet Cochran, USPHS

Lt. Cmdr. Stephen Williams, USN (Ret.)

Cmdr. Connie Greene, USN

Lt. Cmdr. Beulah Henderson, USN (Ret.)

Quantico Chapter:

Capt. NaTasha McEacin, USMC

Maj. Michael Williams, USMC

Capt. Melissa Chestnut, USMC

Lt. Col. Hugh Elmore, USA

Lt. Col. Gregory King, USMC

Lt. Col. Michael Pitts, USMC

2nd Lt. Askia Toure, USMC

2nd Lt. Kerrissa Torres, USMC

2nd Lt. Jake Owens, USMC

Joseph Johnson (Civ.)

Maj. Nadrian McGill, USMC

Pamela Wilson (Civ.)

Maj. Jonathan Loney, USMC

Maj. Stacey Taylor, USMC

Maj. Ty Walls, USMC

CWO4 John Hawthorne, USMC

Outstanding Chapter Award:

Quantico Chapter (President Maj. Dave Everly)

Outstanding Newsletter Award

Quantico Chapter

Outstanding Chapter Program

Washington, D.C. Chapter (President Edward Gantt)

Established Chapter Membership Award:

Group A: 1st place: Tidewater Chapter

Group A: 2nd place: Washington, D.C. Chapter

Group B: 1st place: San Diego Chapter

Group C: 1st place: Camp Pendleton Chapter

Group C: 2nd Place: Bayou Chapter

New Chapter Growth Award:

Group A: 1st place: New England Chapter

Group A: 2nd place: Miami Chapter

Individual Membership Recruiting Award:

Capt. Joel L. Parker, USN of the Bethesda Chapter

Outstanding Chapter President Award:

Maj. Dave Everly, USMC

Capt. Salle P. Kafer Mentoring Award:

Capt. Wanda Richards, USN Bethesda Chapter

Golden Pen Award:

Lt. Maria L. Roerick, USCG Bayou Chapter

Dorie Miller Award:

Lt. Col. Dawn L. Harrison, USMC, Quantico Chapter

Capt. Edward R. William Award for Excellence

The 2008 recipient of the Capt. Edward R. William Award is Lt. Richard Howell, USCG. This awards is bestowed upon those who go above and beyond what is required to achieve, value and manage diversity. Lt. Howell devoted himself to improving diversity through active recruiting and diversity relations throughout the Coast Guard.

Lt Howell also mentors about 20 junior officer and enlisted personnel, spearheaded the establishment of a mentoring network dedicated to the unique concerns of female and minority officers and negotiated cost-effective advertising in several publications catering to minority and female audiences resulting in the second highest minority and the seventh highest female recruitment rates in Coast Guard history.

Lt. Howell's work with the leadership and diversity advisory council has highlighted policy changes that will increase the career success of female and minority coast guard personnel. Congratulations, Lt. Howell!



Behold how good and pleasant it is for brethren to dwell together in unity (Psalms 133:1)

David is credited with writing this particular Psalm. He realized the peace

and serenity that comes upon a community when they live together or spend quality time together. He also realized dwelling together in unity makes ones' community stronger and more productive. Creating opportunities for like-minded communities to come together and fellowship is a premise that we should apply to our lives.

This summer our annual conference was an awesome experience! It was a great opportunity for us to come together, renew old friendships and create new ones. Nevertheless, our coming together was a planned event with the sole purpose creating unity. Our conference was an occasion for military officers serving in the sea services to spend quality time together with the expressed purpose of strengthening our existing diverse officer corps and creating avenues for others to join our ranks.

Although this was a well planned event, I see how God blessed us this summer. Our speakers were from various parts of the country and represented different cultural backgrounds, yet their individual presentations emphasized the same points and were empowering.

However, one speaker in particular, Chaplain King, who spoke during our combined Prayer Breakfast and CAPT Parham lecture series, captured the essence of why we come together each year, and what it will take for the National Naval Officers Association to achieve its established goals as well as the vision set forth by each of our service chiefs. In summary: CAPT Parham felt that his life was rich and fulfilled if he could be credited for helping one person during the span of his life.

Chaplain King's challenge is for each one of us to help one person during the course of our careers. Helping others achieve success in their lives allows us to dwell together in unity.

Peace and Blessings
Chaplain Phillip Ridley
 Chaplain@nnoa.org

Teens Courted in Visit aboard Navy Assault Ship



Above: Ensign Weston Murray, at top of gangway, welcomes Hampton Roads Teens aboard the USS Kearsarge (LH3) for Youth Day. Photo by of the Virginian-Pilot)

(Reprinted with permission)

The Virginian-Pilot

By Greg Gaudio

Andrew Mebane decided to become a doctor the day his mother revealed a secret: She'd almost been pressured into having an abortion.

"Ever since that day, I felt like I wasn't really supposed to be here," the 16-year-old said. "So the one thing I want to do with my life is save other people's lives."

Mebane, who lives at the Westhaven Boys Home in Portsmouth, said he's trying to decide whether he should go through the military to accomplish his goal. He was one of about 120 Hampton Roads teenagers who climbed aboard the amphibious assault ship Kearsarge on Friday for a youth program day sponsored by the National Naval Officers Association.

"We reached out to the inner-city kids," said Lt. Cmdr. Michelle Layne, who chairs the association's youth committee. "It's very important to expose them to something positive."

The NNOA promotes the Navy, Marine Corps and Coast Guard in minority communities and schools, and supports the development of a diverse officer corps. It held its annual con-

ference this week in Portsmouth.

The teens began their day bleary-eyed, with some rising as early as 4 a.m.

"Oh, they were sleepy, yes," Layne said. "But you had plenty that were bubbly and ready to go." After a galley breakfast at Norfolk Naval Station, the teens embarked on a tour of the 40,500-ton Kearsarge, a large-deck troop and helicopter carrier. The ship maintains a regular crew of 1,200.

On the flight deck, Lt. Clint Ceralde pointed out the surface-to-air missile system. "That one up there that looks like R2-D2, it can fire 4,500 rounds per minute," he said.

The teenagers stopped in the combat information center - "the brains of the ship" - and the sick bay before heading to the mess deck for lunch and a speech from Vice Adm. Jeffrey Fowler, superintendent of the U.S. Naval Academy.

Fowler talked about the broad range of military careers, the importance of studying math and science, and the differences between enlisting right out of high school and waiting until after college.

"I think you should set your dreams on going to college," he said. "The goal of the Navy is to get everybody a college education either way."

Keon Moore, 15, said he plans to enlist when he graduates from Booker T. Washington High School in two years.

"I don't want to live paycheck-to-paycheck," he said. "I weighed out all the options. With this one, I can travel the world and get paid."

Sixteen-year-old Alyssa Jessup, a junior at Bayside High School, said she's keeping her options open.

"My main reason for going into the Navy is they pay for college," she said. "Based on what I've heard today, it could get me a lot of places."

Workshops later in the day touched on issues such as peer pressure, health and staying out of trouble.

On Thursday, Adm. Gary Roughead, the chief of naval operations, spoke at the NNOA conference on the need to increase diversity in the military, particularly in the upper ranks. Data show that blacks make up about 17 percent of the total force, but just 9 percent of officers, the AP says.

Today marks the 60th anniversary of President Truman's executive order to integrate the military.



Senior Officers Give Advice on Balancing Career and Family at NNOA Conference



Above: Capt. Shirley Bowen, USN; and Capt. Rod Walker, USCG are amused as Col. Doarin Lewis, USMC shares unique ways he balanced his family life and career. Phot by Lt. Karen E. Eifert

By Lt. Karen E. Eifert, USN

Service members from the Navy, Marine Corps and Coast Guard attended a workshop entitled "See you at the top: Balancing Career and Family" on July 25 at the National Naval Officer Association's (NNOA) 36th annual diversity conference held at the Portsmouth Renaissance Hotel in Portsmouth, Va.

The session was one of approximately 20 held from Jul 23-25 that featured leadership from each of the sea services to include the Chief of Naval Operations, Admiral Gary Roughead; the Commandant of the Coast Guard, Admiral Thad Allen; and the Assistant Commandant of the Marine Corps, General James F. Amos. More than 400 minority officers attended the NNOA conference, which is said to be largest minority officer attendance to date.

The Balancing Career and Family session, which consisted of a six-person panel of senior officers from each of the sea services, was geared toward offering guidance to junior officers and assisting them in achieving balance between life issues and better navigating their military careers.

"I have asked my wife to follow me around the world," one Navy lieutenant began. "I have no worries that she will leave me, but I work long hours, am constantly away from home on deployments and don't have the time I would like to spend with my kids. You can only push a person so far. My question is, 'when is enough, enough?'"

The response from the panelists came with a mixture of firmness and compassion as they generally agreed there were no easy answers, only strategies and tactics.

Responding to the lieutenant, Navy Commander Anthony Gordon, a surface warfare officer, quoted from the Bible, Luke 12:48 when he said "To him whom much is given, much is expected."

Marine Corps Colonel Adele Hodges, who describes herself as "single by career, not by choice," seemed to agree when she said "I dedicated myself to my career."

Hodges, who is in command at the 1st Maintenance Battalion at Camp Pendleton, later acknowledged that after forgoing marriage and a family, she felt something was lacking in her life.

Coast Guard Captain Rod Walker, who is the commanding officer of the National Strike Force Center, shared that he was

used to working long hours during the week and frequently volunteered to work weekends. He suggested that doing so demonstrated his commitment to the organization and his determination to achieve. On a gentler note, he acknowledged that he took note if he saw a junior officer demonstrating that same level of commitment.

"If that particular officer wanted to be a captain or a flag officer, I would do what I could to at least make sure that record was such that it he could compete," Walker said.

A Navy ensign shared that she perceived a stigma attached to her current pregnancy.

"It's as though, because I am an ensign I am not allowed to be pregnant. A lot of women tend to wait 10 years before getting pregnant so they can get established in their careers, but not everyone is going to do that."

She said she felt her superiors did not feel she could get the job done and plainly asked the panel how she could be a mother and a naval officer without having a nervous break-down behind the scenes.

A female Navy lieutenant seemed to second the notion when she shared that

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General Amos Speaks at the NNOA Conference



Above: General Amos speaks at the 36th Annual National Naval Officers Association Conference held this year in Portsmouth, Va. Lower Top: General Amos takes time to help NNOA National President Capt. Bernard Jackson (USN Ret.) present an NNOA leadership award to Maj. Dave Everly. Bottom: Maj. Gen. Walt Gaskin talks to junior Marine Corps officers at a break-out session held at the conference where he re-iterated some of General Amos' guiding principles for success. Photos by Lt. Karen E. Eifert .

officers are more valuable than the current fad.

3) Bloom where you're planted... In our service, we may not get the assignment or duty station we want. The mark of our character is determined by what we do in times of discomfort. If we strive for excellence in what we are given, we will find that where we are is exactly where we need to be.

4) Develop your instincts and learn to trust them. We must train our intuition through reading, practice and reflecting on lessons learned from experience.

5) Set your priorities in life... Gen. Amos recommends that your service should not be the number one priority in your life. You can be successful and have balance. By his

own example he encourages us to make sure our kids, our wife, and our creator know how much we love them.

As a second lieutenant, Gen. Amos' speech reminded me of what is truly important. What impacted me most is that he spoke with authority from experience more than rank. He did not present information in

an "I said so manner" but in a way a father shares his life's struggles, successes and the wisdom gleaned from both.



Senior Officers Give Advice on Balancing Career and Family Cont'd from Page 8

she voluntarily truncated her six weeks of post-partum convalescent leave, which is given to each mother following the delivery of a child, to three weeks.

"I may have been overly paranoid, but I felt I was being treated as though I was less competent than my peers because I took leave or had to tend to a sick child. I also felt my fitness reports were suffering because I was now also devoted to being a mother."

Retired Navy commander Ruby Miller responded by saying she had once been in that same situation. She said she chose to put the Navy and her job first, then her son, then her marriage, then herself. Miller said both her relationship with her son and health suffered as a result of her choice in priorities.

"If I had it do over again, I would not make that decision," Miller said, almost as a warning to the listening audience.

Captain Shirley Bowen, a nurse practitioner, agreed that making the right career decisions has much to do with managing competing priorities effectively.

"Sometimes your priorities will shift," she suggested. As an example, she said she once opted for a recruiting job over a command tour at a time when she felt her family needed her to be at home more.

In making this decision, Bowen seemed to suggest two things. Firstly, a person might reconsider accepting a command tour if they do not have adequate the time to dedicate to the position. Secondly, a

family does not consistently require the same amount time and energy. For example, since children become more independent with time a person might consider delaying a command tour.

Marine Corps Colonel Doarin Lewis, who currently serves as a chief of staff, said officers should marry well, someone who understands the demands of an active duty service member's career, as well as their goals and aspirations.

"You cannot strive for command without your spouse's buy-in," Lewis pointed out.

A retired male Coast Guard warrant officer sitting in the audience agreed with Lewis.

"If you take the time to explain to your spouses the military culture so they understand the importance of

attending command events, the military fitness reports and the promotion system early you'll get the buy-in that you need," he said.

However, Coast Guard Rear admiral Jody A. Breckenridge (upper half), who is the director of the Coast guard's Strategic Transformation Team and responsible for aligning and synchronizing the efforts to transform and modernize the Coast Guard, verbalized what she felt was the underlying issue with respect to recruiting more junior officers.

"In my generation we identified with work. Work was our identity," Breckenridge said. The generation coming into the military today recognizes that about us and does not want that for themselves. If we do not address this, we will not retain them."

The NNOA is an organization sanctioned by each of the sea services to promote the recruitment and retention of quality minority officers. The organization has been in existence since 1972 and holds conferences annually to further its goals and objectives.

(In an effort to promote open and honest communication, the names of the junior officers speaking during this break out session have intentionally been omitted. All attendees were made aware of service-specific assistance with balancing family and career such as the Navy's Task Force Life website and specific initiatives the Coast Guard is implementing with their Strategic



Above: Cmdr. Anthony Gordon and Cmdr. Ruby Miller exchange amusing stories related to balancing work and family related to their military careers. Photo by Lt. Karen E. Eifert



Above: Admiral Thad Allen attends the NNOA Conference where he served as a keynote speaker and receives an NNOA polo shirt from NNOA National President Capt. Bernard Jackson (Ret.). Photo by Lt. Karen E. Eifert

A Few Moments with the Coast Guard's Chief: Admiral Thad Allen

(Interview conducted by Lt. Karen E. Eifert)

Admiral Thad Allen currently leads the U.S. Coast Guard, the largest component of the Department of Homeland Security, comprised of about 40,150 men and women on active duty, 7,000 civilians, 8,000 reservists and 34,000 volunteer auxiliaries. He serves at the helm of an organization that serves the American people by saving lives and property at sea, ensuring the safety of thousands of professional mariners and millions of recreational and commercial vessels, protecting our ports and maritime infrastructure from terrorism, securing our borders, maintaining aids to navigation, responding to natural disasters, defending our Nation, conducting humanitarian operations, protecting our

marine environment, and keeping shipping routes in the Arctic and Great Lakes open and clear of hazards. He recently spoke at the NNOA annual conference in Portsmouth and later took time to share his vision for diversity.

LT Eifert: I've been hearing a lot about this website that you've launched called "I Commandant." Can you please tell me something about it? I understand that after posting the NNOA speech, you got 20-something comments. Can you speak a little bit about that?

ADM Allen: I sure can. Actually it's been an

evolution. First of all, I have on our dot-mil website, and I post all my speeches there, and we also try and put them on You-Tube. The NNOA speech received a lot of feedback from both of those mediums. What we did yesterday was launch what we call "I Commandant" which is a link inside the new Commandant's Corner 2.0 that actually goes to a blog site and we're using a commercial dot-com blogger, a Google blogger capability to actually have a blog site for the Commandant which will enable anybody, no matter where they're at, to be able to write comments to me on the postings that are placed on there. It's just another way of

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Interview with Admiral Allen Continued from Previous Page

expanding the conversation, making everything more transparent, and trying to make us more accessible to our workforce.

LT Eifert: In terms of reaching minority officers, what are you specifically seeking with these outreach initiatives? Are you seeking numbers? Are you seeking quotas? What are you seeking?

ADM Allen: We're not talking about quotas or numbers. What we're talking about are finding people who can make us more diverse and participate in the Coast Guard and provide their skills and talents, and we can provide them opportunity and access for careers in the Coast Guard. To do that, I think it's a mistake to go out thinking quotas because there are a lot of legal issues associated with that. You have to go to the areas where there are populations that are more representative of the United States, and do your recruiting there.

LT Eifert: Diversity is one of Admiral Roughead's, Chief of Naval Operations, key priorities. As such, we have a diversity directorate over here. But they're soon to put in a full time officer instead of a part time reservist who is actually going to be charged with traveling around the United States to different pockets, different sectors, trying to access minority populations. How do you feel about that initiative? Do you have anything like that in mind for the Coast Guard?

ADM Allen: I think connectivity and outreach is very important. What we're trying to do in the Coast Guard is a multi-level approach. First of all, I've asked every flag officer in the field to become affiliated with a minority serving institution to establish a

long term relationship. But we don't want to go in looking like we're headhunters looking for people to hire. We want to establish long term relationships that bring the value of our service to their campus and allow us to understand what they're doing. I think that's the first step. The second step is to take a look at our officer and enlisted recruiting programs and make sure that we're focusing on the right area to produce the viable candidate to do the Coast Guard operations we need in the future, to also offer opportunities for a diverse workforce for the country. I think after that you have to look at the retention programs and how to decrease attrition, and keep both enlisted and officer, whether they're minority or majority people in so they can be potential senior leaders in the Coast Guard. That's really what the goal is.

LT Eifert: Let's talk a little bit about the millennial generation, which a lot of people see as being extremely self-centered and self-absorbed and desiring immediate gratification. How do you think we, the military, can help this group of people transfer from a perspective of self to a perspective of service to the world?

ADM Allen: If you're visiting Walter Reed and Bethesda, I will tell you this is not a self-absorbed generation. They have a way they want to serve this country and they're more than willing to do it. They're sacrificing their bodies and their limbs and their lives every day for this country. There's no doubt in my mind this new generation is capable of doing everything this country asks of them. We just need to understand how they communicate, how they deal with each other, how they network, and just because they communicate differently than we do doesn't mean

they're self-absorbed, in my view. This is a very self-sacrificing generation. Again, it would take one trip to Bethesda to tell you that.

LT Eifert: Do you see the minority flag population as being representative of the best mix in terms of the Coast Guard's operational goals? Are you satisfied with the current numbers?

ADM Allen: I am not. But you can't start talking about diversity at the flag corps when you realize it's going to take 26 to 30 years to produce a flag officer. You have to start very very early. The cohort group we're dealing with now in flag officers and the distribution of our flag officers was created 30 years ago. Unfortunately, every step we take and every success we have may not be visible until 10, 15, 20 years from now. But somebody has to make the commitment. Somebody has to start. Somebody had to keep the faith.

LT Eifert: Absolutely. Are there initiatives in place to bring along these high performing mid-grade to senior officers to ensure that they are competitive for flag?

ADM Allen: We always look at the demographics associated with our selection panels for every grade of officers, and to the extent that we get feedback from the selection panels on how the officers perform and how they're considered, that gives us feedback on how to mentor and deal with these officers. But the fact of the matter is every officer should have the opportunity excel and succeed. career specialists who work with these folks, and that's what we're trying to do in the Coast Guard.

LT Eifert: The Navy has created a plan, I'm sure you've heard of

it, the 2037 plan which speaks to the desired racial statistics to reflect the national demographics in the flag ranks by the year 2037. For instance, 10 percent African Americans, 13 percent Hispanics, and 13 percent Asian/Pacific Islanders. Sir, do you have a similar vision for the Coast Guard?

ADM Allen: I'm not sure at this time we have hard statistics nor do I think from the Coast Guard's standpoint that would be entirely what we want to do. I think what we want is a representative work force recruited from areas that have a propensity to serve, that want to stay in the Coast Guard, that we provide them fulfilling work to do. that will shape in the long run a flag corps that is diverse and representative of America. You need to start with the fact that you want to give [equal access] to everybody and everybody has the opportunity to succeed as officers. Then if you go to the right population to recruit, I think you'll get where you need to be.

LT Eifert: Sir, in an effort to increase female retention, the



Above: Vice Admiral Vivien Crea, USCG, takes time to read an issue of the Meridian. Photo courtesy of USCG.

Earning His Wings



Above: Capt. Ed Gantt (USN Ret.) poses above with a fellow ROTC instructor and some of his ROTC students from Frederick Douglas High School (F.D.H.S.) in Maryland. **Below:** Capt. Gantt promotes one of his ROTC student. Photos courtesy of F.D.H.S.

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Story by Drew Bratcher

Ed Gantt paces in front of a dozen students at Frederick Douglas High School in Upper Marlboro. Gantt's Junior ROTC class has been asked to perform colorguard duty at Andrews Air Force Base.

"Is there anyone willing to take this responsibility?" he says, his wrinkled hands clasped behind him. The Navy captain is dressed as he has been for 40 years, in uniform. He turns and faces his students, who eye one another and the clock.

"Nobody?" Gantt says. "I thought we had a bunch of people who wanted to be leaders. Getting out of bed on a Saturday morning to do something worthwhile-now,

that's leadership."

It was on a Saturday in 1969 at an Army recruitment station in DC that Gantt boarded a bus for Fort Bragg, North Carolina. The Prince George's County native, who grew up scraping pennies together to buy model airplanes, was hooked by the promise that he'd be a pilot shortly after his 18th birthday.

At boot camp, Gantt suffered through pushups and indignities to try to earn his wings. When assigned to lead draftees older than he was, he was uncomfortable and gave up the responsibility-only to have his drill sergeant punish him by making him work late into the night digging a coffin-size ditch in the pine woods.

By January 1970, he was a door gunner on a Chinook helicopter flying mis-

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School Named For Nation's First Black Vice Adm.



Above:Alma Gravely said that her husband faced difficulties as a black admiral but that he had a lifelong affection for the Navy. The Samuel L. Gravely Jr. Elementary School in Haymarket, named in his honor, officially opens Thursday. Photo by Dominic Bracco II

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Story by **Ian Shapira** of
the Washington Post

Alma Gravely said that her husband faced difficulties as a black admiral but that he had a lifelong affection for the Navy. The Samuel L. Gravely Jr. Elementary School in Haymarket, named in his honor, officially opens Thursday. Alma Gravely, 86, of Haymarket was a bit incredulous when someone told her a while ago that Prince William County officials were considering naming an elementary school after her late husband, Samuel Jr., a Navy man.

"Someone in Gainesville who was active in the community called me and said, 'What would you think about Prince

William naming a school after Sam?' " Gravely recalled with a chuckle. "And I said, 'Well, I think that's a great honor, but there must be other people who lived here longer, or people who were born and reared here, instead of my husband.' And she said, 'Yes, but they were not Navy admirals.' "

But her husband was not just an admiral. He was the nation's first African American to become a vice admiral, one of the Navy's highest-ranking positions.

On Thursday, after months of anticipation, planning with Navy officials and a ceremonial groundbreaking, the Prince William school system will cut the ribbon to open the Samuel L. Gravely Jr. Elementary School on Waverly Farm Drive in Haymarket.

The school has a capacity of more than 800 students and is intended to relieve some of the crowding that has emerged in the Gainesville area in the county's western section.

The ribbon-cutting will feature the president's Navy honor guard, which will present colors, as well as speeches by Prince William Superintendent Steven L. Walts, School Board Chairman Milton C. Johns (At Large) and Navy Rear Adm. Julius Caesar. It will also include the whistling of a boatswain's pipe.

Caesar explained his reasons for attending the ceremony via e-mail: "I'm coming to the ribbon-cutting out of great respect for Vice Admiral Gravely, and his widow, Mrs. Alma Gravely. The Admiral was a role model whom I

admired from afar. I met him on a few occasions after he retired. He was a striking figure who commanded respect with his towering character and intellect yet he was very humble. He opened the door and inspired a generation of African-American Navy Flag officers. Many are on active duty today."

Philip Molter, a Navy spokesman, said the event will be meaningful. "I don't think Navy people go through that many school ribbon-cuttings," he said. "This is a very significant event from the Navy standpoint."

The ceremony will also include a short speech by Alma Gravely. In an interview, she described the difficulties that her husband faced helping to command ships and other seamen.

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Above: Capt. Ed Gantt (USN Ret.) poses above with some of his ROTC students from Frederick Douglas High School (F.D.H.S.) in Maryland. Photo courtesy. of F.D.H.S.

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sions in Vietnam. To Gantt, soaring over dark waters in the Mekong Delta with the doors off was like speeding down a country road in a sports car with the windows down.

By day, he fired a machine gun into the jungle, clearing the way for troops to resupply American and South Vietnamese forces. By night, he bunked with a Kentuckian who hummed Merle Haggard songs and a fellow gunner who'd been in a shootout with Los Angeles cops. This was

Vietnam, and it was also his first real taste of America.

Returning from his year's tour, Gantt enrolled at Howard University, where he played football. But the pull of flying planes was too strong. He entered the Navy to fly carrier-based jets as a copilot, and in 1985 he helped capture the hijackers of the Achille Lauro cruise ship.

Gantt went on to command the Navy's boot camp in Great Lakes, Illinois, but in 2004 he returned to Prince George's

County to teach. Teenagers are more unruly than midshipmen, and the 57-year-old wonders if he's making a difference in their lives. But nothing shakes him of his faith in the military to teach responsibility.

"Now, is there anyone who wants to take this color-guard duty?" Gantt asks again. One by one, hands rise.

Captain Edward Gantt serves as the NJROTC instructor at Frederick Douglas High School in Maryland.

School Named for First Black Navy Vice Adm. Cont'd from page 14

She also recalled how his overriding affection for the Navy symbolized his life. He died in 2004 at the age of 82.

"There were people who didn't want to be on a ship with him. There weren't many blacks in the Navy," Gravely said. "One time, he was taken to jail in Key West, Florida, for impersonating an officer. He was an officer, and he was in an officer's uniform."

Born in 1922, Samuel Jr. enlisted in the Navy Reserve in 1942 after two years of college. In 1944, after

more training at the University of California at Los Angeles and Columbia University in New York, he completed midshipman training and became the first African American to be commissioned as an officer from the Navy Reserve Officers' Training Corps, according to the Navy.

The couple married in 1946. They spent a lifetime traveling from duty to duty, from California to Rhode Island and later Hawaii. They had met through a mutual friend in college in the 1940s.

When we were married, I had only seen him three times. It was the fourth time he came to marry me," she recalled, laughing. "I said, 'Listen! I don't know you!'"

"But I loved him. I used to call him Sammie the Sailor. We got married in Roanoke."

Gravely went on to work as an agricultural extension agent. The couple had three children. The oldest, Robert, died in a drowning accident. The others, David and Tracey, live in Manassas Park and Fredericksburg, respectively.

Admiral Allen Interview Continued from page 12

Navy has implemented a pilot program where for two to three years females can do anything they want, whether it be start a family, go pursue a degree, or just take a break. That sabbatical would allow them to return to active duty where they were without losing step. Does the Coast Guard have a plan like that? We're doing it because we feel it will help retention.

ADM Allen: The Coast Guard has an authorized temporary separation program not only for child birth, but to pursue educational opportunities and we liberally grant that and look forward to officers returning and serving.

LT Eifert: The Coast Guard currently has the highest retention rate for females. Do you think that has anything to do with that plan?

ADM Allen: I think we are accessing more female officers and our percentage at the Coast Guard Academy is higher than other Academies, so we start with a larger cohort group to begin with. But we like to think we're creating career opportunities, equal access to command and also an opportunity to take a break if you think you need to for education or for family purposes. But we're trying to support these folks over their mid-grade years to make sure that we have a suc-

cessful officers.

LT Eifert: Sir, I understand your father served in the Coast Guard, so you're just kind of carrying on the family profession. I'm just wondering what advice your father gave you before joining that you'd like to pass on to other Coast Guard officers that would ensure they have a successful career.

ADM Allen: He had an opportunity to address the Chief Petty Officers Association in Houston a couple of weeks ago. We can have Tony send you the transcript. But basically he felt he was given an extraordinary opportunity coming from a fami-

ly that the profession to become a leader and to have an impact on people. He had broken service. He got out of the Coast Guard and came back in. Because of that he was older than many officers, his peers, and it made him a natural mentor and a leader. He felt it was his responsibility to bring younger people up, make sure they were successful in the Coast Guard. The best thing he passed on to me was that.



Surgeon General Speaks to NNOA

Navy Surgeon General Vice Adm. Adam Robinson and Rear Adm. Christine M. Bruzek-Kohler attended the NNOA conference in Portsmouth where they conducted a break-out session geared toward the medical community. The two issued some words of caution to the listeners.

1. Anyone who is a medical professional must demonstrate how they stand out in their profession.
2. Officers should look closely at their fitness reports to ensure key words pertinent to their communities are present. Leadership ability is always desirable.
3. Future promotion boards will likely have an increased focus more on clinical expertise.
4. While it is important to practice esoteric medical research, those who do so may have difficulty achieving the rank of O-6 (Captain).

The Surgeon General and the Rear Admiral also shared some statistics:

1. The Nurse Corps currently enjoys above-goal recruitment numbers at 128%. The Corps is,

- however, looking to attract more African Americans and Asian Pacific Islanders.
2. Statistics show commander and captain female officers decide to forfeit a family for career.
3. Dental Corps has lowest diversity numbers.

Vice Admiral Robinson went on to speak frankly on a few key issues. He acknowledged that while the Navy has not had the best reputa-

tion regarding diversity, the Navy is committed to improving in this area. He aid officers should not try to go it alone in the Navy; they should looking for mentors who are loyal and demonstrate high integrity. Mentors do not necessarily have to be the same race as the mentoree. The Vice Admiral finished his talk on a positive note reminding listeners that if appropriate action is taken today, the Navy can grow the number of senior minority officers.



Above: Navy Surgeon General Vice Adm. Adam Robinson and Rear Adm. Christine M. Bruzek-Kohler pose with members of the Nurse Corps and Medical Services Corps.

Network News is for female Navy Surface Warfare Officers!

Network News is a publication designed to acquaint female Surface Warfare Officers with other SWOs who have similar backgrounds, valuable experiences, or useful information to share. Its goal is to promote a positive and informed career, camaraderie within the community, and retention within the Navy. If you would like to make submissions to this bi-monthly newsletter please email: NetworkNews@navy.mil or LT Kimberly Thompson at kim.thompson

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