

**Chief of Naval Operations  
Adm. Jonathan Greenert**

**MCPON Retirement**

**28 September 2012**

**Adm. Greenert:** You can really feel the energy in this room. It's just amazing. Pat and I were just talking about how awesome it is to see all these people here. He's either well loved or he owes a lot of money. By the look on some of you, I'm not sure which way it goes.

Mr. Secretary thanks so much for being here today. Obviously it means a great deal to all of us, but it speaks volumes of your respect for the Office of the Master Chief Petty Officer of the Navy, and we thank you very much.

Ladies and gentlemen, thanks for being here today. Obviously on my part on behalf of this office. Bobby, Zack, Nick, it's so great to see you all this morning. What a family that serves. Thank you very much. We're proud of all of you, especially you guys who are going to carry on that great West tradition. Thanks so much.

And the Stevens family. Wow. Terrific. It rolls on. There's so much to do. You and your brother could never deny each other -- It's really astounding how much you look alike. Theresa, thanks for taking one more tour. I know that -- Hey honey, one more tour. But it's in statute so you're safe on this one. Shane, what a pleasure meeting you. And remember, you served too, all this time, and you will continue to serve for your father.

Master Chief Petty Officer of the Navy. It's got an astounding ring to it and it has a tremendous amount of respect. As a junior officer and actually as a mid-grade officer I always thought hey, what's the MCPON up to because that was the person that was going to carry the water that was going to maybe make something get done about this problem. The rest of them, they don't have the guts to go tell the CNO what he needs to hear or anybody else what they need to hear, but we always knew it was going to be the MCPON that would take care of us.

And look at the crowd. Who always knows the name of the MCPON? They don't know what four star admiral retired here or there, but they know the MCPON names. As a former MCPON, that's getting pretty easy to roll off the tongue, actually, I should say. Old Peaches West. Did I say that? Where did that come from?

It's great to have MCPONs Bushey, Hagen, Hurt and Scott. You're all doing something very well and your future here, right in front of your eyes, my good man. Mrs. [inaudible], I've heard so much about you. It's such an honor to see you here today, and I look forward to shaking your hand afterwards, ma'am. Thanks so much. You give him a lot of the wind underneath his wings during his tour and this will continue, I'm sure.

This is a pretty young guy here. He looks young anyway, I should say, here on my right hand side. And it wasn't all that long ago when he, little Ricky West entered the Navy. Doesn't that sound funny? But it's true. What were we doing then? We were listening to the song, "Hit Me With Your Best Shot", remember that one? Pat Benatar, you go whoa, that was a while back. It was. I'm still trying to solve the Rubik's Cube. I don't know about some of you, but that came out the year little Ricky West went to boot camp. MTV, which is kind of passé, was just getting started that year. We were playing Donkey Kong. We had gone beyond PacMan. We were done with PacMan, we were on Donkey Kong then. And I know all of us were working on our Commodore Vic 20 which was the predecessor to the Commodore 64 computer. So we were really cutting edge then. As you were, Master Chief West.

But a lot of changes took place, obviously, during that time. This individual that we take the time to honor today, he didn't want to witness change. He saw a lot of it but he wanted to get involved in change. This is a man that loved the sea, loved the sea, loved going to sea, and he loved sailors like we don't know. He says hey, I'm not a shore sailor, I'm a sea sailor. That's where I believe. And even when he was, the few times that we served together allegedly on shore duty and allegedly on the staff, if you want to find where West is, the little [inaudible] was over at sea. He was always over there and he was out there with the kids.

He made Chief in seven years. That's pretty darn fast. Seven years, and he says nah, I was lucky. I had sailors who took care of me, and pushed me on and led me to make something of myself as I could.

I remember, you have a vision in your mind, you can't forget that moment, I climbed down the ladder, I was Commodore at Squadron 11. I was going down to the good ship Portsmouth which was a good ship, had a lot of -- I kept hearing about the Portsmouth crew and what they could do. There were other great subs in the squadron but I said what is with the 707? I get down to the bottom of the ladder, and as God is my witness I hear hooyah. I'm thinking what the blank is that? This is kind of the late '90s and we weren't hooyahing out there at that point. That was Chief of the Boat West, right there, saying hey, how are you doing. Commodore, shipmate? Now shipmate wasn't a big term. I said okay, got all that, but I want to see facts, I want to see tangible things. And I saw tangible things.

We went to sea for a few days and I was astounded. This was a crew that absolutely admired their Chief of the Boat. It kind of wasn't fair in the squadron. They had a captain who knew, was smart enough to say let the Chief of the Boat run this boat. Same with the XO. The XO's last name was Kelso, so maybe there's a little bit of legacy on that.

But the fact of the matter, this was a boat and a group who used the term warrior, and I hadn't heard warrior before, and we speak a lot about it today. But this guy West gets on the 1MC, that was our internal announcement system, and he said "Good morning warriors, time to clean up the boat," and they believed it. They believed in themselves, they believed they were warriors, they knew they were shipmates, and they knew how to take care of each other. And that was the essence of being a sailor, being a submarine sailor that was embedded and imbued in them by Chief of the Boat West at that time.

Everybody wanted to be on the Portsmouth. They used to say 707 -- seven days, seven night and nothing in between them. Serving all the time. A great, great ship.

You always wonder when you serve, when you spend so much time in an institution, how did I do? All you really want to do, I think, if we all look deep inside, did I make the place better? And you did. You made the Navy better and I thank you for that.

This is a guy who was willing to listen and one who was willing to learn. He was fully connected to the sailors. And I watched as I served with Master Chief Petty Officer West on the Pacific, then at Fleet Forces Command. Then I watched from Norfolk as he was up here. I watched up here as Vice Chief, and then of course for a year we had the honor, I had the honor to serve with him. And he had the heartbeat of the fleet.

When he came in, the door is always open. Always let the JAG in, always let the Public Affairs Officer in, always let West in. Not necessarily in that order.

He had the heartbeat. He was upon social media before it really became a thing. He was Tweeting before Tweety Pie was out there. He was on Facebook. He said I'm beyond Facebook, and he moved on.

And kids communicated with him because they knew he'd either answer them and they wouldn't get a bunch of bull and they wouldn't say I'm going to take care of you. He'd say I'm going to challenge you. Did you look at this? You can do it. Stand up. Be a man. Be the lady you should be. Be the sailor. Be the shipmate. And he challenged sailors. And they loved it. They loved it.

Going to All Hands Calls, I sometimes would go in there and say they're not going to be happy, but I had him with me and we were able to talk it through. He made a difference.

And he led by example. A few things.

He instituted the Senior Enlisted Continuation Board. He said look, we've got to continue to look at ourselves and we have to be responsible leaders and we have to be eligible and we have to be worthy to lead in the Chief Petty Officer's Mess.

He implemented the CPO-365. That means hey shipmate, you haven't just made it. You need to look at yourself all the time. What's your boss think of you? What do your people think of you? What do your peers think of you? Take that on board and make yourself a better person.

He says warrior, he means warrior. All of us should have a warfare designator, and he made that happen.

That's tangible improvement, and that's not often that one gets to do that, something you can point to. A lot of insight and a lot of wisdom. But he always said hey, it's not about me. Other people made me do that and did that for me.

And of course he had Bobby by his side all this time, all during his career. And MCPON admits, he admits it himself, "Bobby squares me away." And in typical fashion we said hey, Master Chief Petty Officer West, give us three words that might describe Bobby. He says, "Super Woman". We go okay, that's two. He goes that's what you get. Super Woman. Typical, right? You wouldn't expect anything else.

Bobby, our nation owes you a great deal of gratitude, and on behalf of the Navy and on behalf of a grateful nation I thank you very much for what you've done for Master Chief Petty Officer West. He's yours now. I know you've been looking forward to that. It's not everything it's going to be cracked up to be, but I know you're up for it.

So MCPON, would you join me up here? We'd like to give you a small token of our appreciation for your service.

[Distinguished Service Medal presentation; Letter from the Secretary of the Navy presentation.]

Thank you. I wanted to read that and they said you know, the voice is the MC today. And I said all right, I will defer. Nicely done.

The good news is, as was alluded to before, we have a new Master Chief Petty Officer of the Navy and this is an extraordinary man. The condensed version of his qualities would just take way too long.

I would tell you that I was honored to pick him and it was not an easy choice. There are a lot of qualified candidates out there, I think as we all know, those that serve. And he has a wonderful leadership team there that I am very fortunate to have and I look forward to serving with.

In short, he's a proven and effective leader, from A school to the Harvard JFK School of Government. He's been educated in all kinds of things. A lot of OJT. A lot of scar tissue. This is a guy who is ready to lead our Navy, very much so. I look forward to your insight and your perspective. Theresa, thanks again for joining us. It's a great team.

Well MCPON, former MCPON, Ricky Peaches. I've just got to give you a few pieces of advice as I look out on all your former compatriots. Some are doing the Blackberry, some are -- They've got their reading glasses on. You say that's never going to happen to me. Well, I'll tell you, we got the [ties] [inaudible] down, so that's good, we're good to go, but I need to give you a couple of other tips. You can take it or leave it. A few things have to change.

Number one, this has got to go. This is not executive material. And we drink, whatever that is, and just say oh, do you have any microbrews? That will work where you're moving in the PAC Northwest. Or say, I'll have a premium please. A lager would be fine, or an ale, a pale ale. I know you can do it. And you consume it out of this.

Lastly, I guess, the backpack. It's gone, right? Get one of these. It's called a briefcase. You can go to LL Bean if you want, or Eddy Bauer, et cetera. But Coach is okay. Be careful if you go to Singapore, Hong Kong, or 5<sup>th</sup> Avenue. Watch what you get -- not that that's ever happened

to me. So Coach is good, something like that. But you'll need this. Right Herb? This is -- He told me to maybe give you a few tips.

In the end, I just want to say to you and Bobby, thank you very much. We can't say thank you enough, so we'll just do it once. Your nation thanks you, your Navy thanks you very much. God bless you both. Ladies and gentlemen, thank you. God bless you and God bless this great country, the United States of America.

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