

*Honor, Respect and Devotion to Duty --*

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It was joyous news. On April 26, 1995, U. S. Coast Guard Headquarters announced it's choice of Master Chief Boatswain's Mate Jonathan D. McManis as the one who would relieve Master Chief Boatswain's Mate Donald E. Urquhart as the Coast Guard's Enlisted Ancient Mariner. The change would be upon Master Chief Urquhart's retirement on June 30th' but the fifth time since 1978 the award was to change hands from one old sea dog to another. Master Chief McManis was elated and sent out invitations and announcements to what was supposed to be a high mark in his lengthy career.

The sole premise, or purpose, of the award was to "honor the officer and enlisted Coast Guard cuttermen who personify the dedication and professionalism associated who personify the dedication and professionalism associated with long service at sea." The only Coast Guard mandated requirement or eligibility for the award was equally simple, to have held " the distinction of cutterman longer than any other officer or enlisted person" and have ten years of sea duty.' The ten year requirement may not appear a long period but by the mid-1990s only about 25% of Coast Guardsmen went to sea at all. This lack of sea knowledge would play heavily in the upcoming events.

The details of the turnover ceremony were made known to scheduled to take place at Memphis on June 16, 1995. The plaque displaying the names of previous recipients was placed aboard the USCGC Osage for transit to Memphis. The Osage moved toward Memphis over the classically muddy waters of the Mississippi River but few knew of the mud that was being stirred in Coast Guard Headquarters about this announcement at the same time congratulatory letters were being sent to Master Chief McManis and his family. The mud would flow not by river but by telephone.

Just over a month later, Master Chief Petty Officer of the Coast Guard, Rick Trent, sent a message to all the Coast Guard's Command Enlisted Advisors telling them that McManis "Will NOT be honored as the next Silver Ancient Mariner. The reasons associated with McManis' *recent* (author emphasis) relief as OIC [Officer-In-Charge] Afloat are contrary to our core value of **HONOR, RESPECT, AND DEVOTION TO DUTY.**" To enforce this newly imposed criteria that was not part of the Awards and Medals Manual, Trent added the Awards Manual, "is being ammended (sic) to include core value considerations as part of the selection criteria for Ancient Mariner and Ancient Albatross [an aviation award] Awards." With a resounding slap, Trent, who was never assigned to sea duty, said a "candidate that includes *our* (author emphasis) core values" would be identified.

Interestingly was the use of the word "our" and not the Coast Guard's core values. Perhaps there was some personal motive within headquarters for the summary and humiliating notification The method of notification did not display the core values so widely touted at the time. No one from Coast Guard Headquarters, including the top enlisted man, Rick Trent, ever called McManis but instead had the 8th District Office in New Orleans relay

the news of the award's withdrawal.

The "recent" event Trent referred to occurred in 1992 when McManis served as the OIC of the USCGC *Point Swift* in Saint Petersburg, Florida. McManis explained he was having severe family problems including a divorce and a runaway daughter. These problems were compounded by at least two of his crew, one male the other female, who accused him of racism and sexism.' His denial of the charges carried no weight with then 7<sup>th</sup> Coast Guard District Commander, Rear Admiral Robert E. Kramek, USCG, who, in 1995, was serving as the Coast Guard's Commandant. Kramek had relieved McManis of his command and had his Officer-InCharge certification withdrawn without ever filing any formal charges nor were there administrative marks made in McManis' service record, The only statement why he was relieved was that the district commander had "lost confidence" in him and summarily punished without hearing or trial.

Such a set-back could have meant a quick and disgruntled retirement for many, but Master Chief McManis wanted to leave the Coast Guard he loved on better terms. He worked hard to redeem himself . This redemption was the core of the Coast Guard's Work Life program and the key to making productive sailors from those encountering difficulties along the way. And redeem himself he did. He worked hard to regain the "confidence" lost in him. He regained his Officer-In-Charge certification, became a district CEA, nominated by a district commander for the position of Master Chief Petty Officer of the Coast Guard, became a mentor to many young men and women, and while in the 8<sup>th</sup> Coast Guard District was assigned on an emergency basis to again take command of another Point Class cutter. He served there for three months with distinction earning a Coast Guard Achievement Medal of squaring away the cutter. In all respects he could have been the poster boy for the Coast Guard's attitude toward redemption. However, all was for naught. The award was stripped in a hateful and mean-spirited way that had no semblance to the Core Values.

This fact did not go unnoticed within the Coast Guard. A few with some bravery sent their thoughts to Coast Guard headquarters. They were concerned about the manner in which this incident was handled would effect the service's sailors especially the younger ones.

Examples of intra-email showed dismay at the lack of rationale and tact for the summary withdrawal of the award.

One surmised (each message was written in standard message format capitalization),

"I BELIEVE THAT THE MCPO OF THE CG HAS LOST THE RESPECT AND MAINLY THE CONFIDENCE OF THE CHIEF'S IS CORPS. THIS DEFORMATION OF A MCPO IS NOT IN KEEPING WITH THE CORE VALUES AS DIRECTED BY THE COMDT. [COMMANDANT]. WHERE IS THE MCPOCG [RIM TRENT CORE VALUES?"

This person, who does identify himself as a chief petty officer, response was concerned of the fall-out from such a decision noting it will be very difficult to impress the core values on other if

"THE PEOPLE WE PUT OUR TRUST IN TO DIRECT OUR PEOPLE AIM MISSIONS, DO NOT BELIEVE IN WHAT THEY PROMOTE. JUST WHAT END OF MSG [message] DID HDQTRS SEND??T0 ALL OF THE COAST GUARD."

The message continued;

"I CAN'T IMAGINE HOW I WOULD FEEL INSIDE KNOWING THAT THE MOST SENIOR ENLISTED PERSON IN THE COAST GUARD JUST TOLD ME I HAVE DISGRACED MYSELF AND THE COAST GUARD FOR PAST ACTIONS AT PAST DUTY STATIONS, FOR WHICH I REALIZED MY WRONGS, CHANGED MY WAYS AM CONTINUED ON AS THE PROFESSIONAL'S WE ARE. THIS SITUATION CAN NOT GO UNADDRESSED, THERE SHOULD BE SOME INVESTIGATION AS TO WHAT THE PURPOSE OF THIS NOTIFICATION."

Despite the calls for an investigation all would be ignored. Another also placed comments to the MCPO Rick Trent but used a different vehicle to launch this protest. This person investigated the requirements for the award and found that the Coast Guard's published Core Values were no part of the award's criteria. The author also alluded that MCPO Rick Trent may have violated regulations himself with his May 30 public censure. The Coast Guard Awards and Medals Manual specifically mentions that "Personal award recommendations and supporting documentation should be considered privileged information and made available only to those with a need to know. Failure to observe this rule may result in embarrassment to either the nominee or management, or both."

The use of the word "management" instead of 'service' was not unusual in the era of change to a total quality system of management. Ironically, it was that same system that gave birth to the Coast Guard's Core Values. A step to implementation of TQM was the deployment of the "Command[']s Vision" that included "the command's mission, vision, and *values* (author emphasis)" to bring all "employees" into the fold.' Considering that the values were manufactured as part of an employee control system, they were not widely accepted as being an actual part of the service's core character. The U. S. Navy also found that its core values had little meaning to its personnel and, unlike the Coast Guard, suspended them until it could access just what its values were and what they meant to the Navy as a whole. The Coast Guard continued blindly on ignoring that it already had the essence of core values in it's near hundred year old official motto, Semper Paratus, and it's unofficial motto, " You have to go out, but you don't have to come back."

It appears, from his actions that MCPO Trent did violate a regulation by making public releasing the censure and not holding to the concept of the Core Values. However, there was no questions raised within Coast Guard Headquarters about MCPO Trent having violated either the regulation nor the core values. The responder closed this short, to-the-point, missive summarizing the severe disrespect shown the McManis family and with, "I hope that CMCP0 TRENT will have the courtesy to issue as a minimum, a return E-MAIL apology. Does the way BMCM MCMANIS was treated follow our so called greatest asset WELFARE OF OUR PEOPLE?"

An officer-in-charge of a Point Class cutter emailed MCPO Trent that he was "dismayed" over the message Trent sent out. This MCPO asked a question about the requirements for the Ancient Mariner Award being changed to include the Core Values. He asked, 'Does this mean that adherence to the new core values must be observed when we award the cutterman's pin? A practical seaman, this respondent was under no illusion that the Ancient Mariner's Award should be presented to someone who all would place on a pedestal to inspire the younger members of the service. Rather, it was to honor a long career at sea.

Another MCPO was blunter in his comments, "This decision [to summarily remove the award] only shows that the same values we stand for are not carried out by the ones preaching them." He continued noting the Coast Guard did not reduce MCPO McManis in rate nor process him out of the Coast Guard. "His core values must have been good enough to retain him in rank and in the Coast Guard." However, Admiral Kramek was not the Coast Guard's Commandant at the time and would have had a difficult time explaining to then commandant why he would discharge a Master Chief Petty Officer for no reason other than loss of confidence.

The letters and Emails of support for MCPO McManis continued to arrive placing pressure on MCPO Trent to issue an apology that would never materialize. The decision made reflected negatively on Admiral Kramek's therefore the entire Coast Guard. One YNCM Emailed MCPO Trent with a series of questions,

'Did your advice to the Admiral show and exemplify the core values we are espousing too?'

, 'Did you advice to the Admiral take into consideration how this sudden change in criteria would impact the spirit of the award as opposed to the letter?'

'Did you or the Admiral, call MCPO McMannis(sic) prior to going to all the CEAs, command, etc. ?'

The answer to all was apparently no. The YNCM then encouraged Trent to apologize to McManis and his family.

An apology or not, the insult weighed heavily on the McManis family, MCPO McManis' brother, Richard, a HMC in the U. S. Navy, wrote an impassioned letter calling the way his brother was treated was a "slander and humiliation" not only to his brother to his family as well. He, too, called for a public apology and noted if the "Coast Guard truly puts emphasis on Work Life, and believes that someone who has rebounded from mistakes deserves to be treated with more respect, this whole fiasco is a very poor way of showing it."

Others agreed and sent similar letters of support including the Miami Chapter of the Chief Petty Officers Association. Many members of this association had intimate knowledge of MCPO McManis and the events surrounding his loss of command. This chapter called upon the commandant to issue a formal apology. They asked that procedures be put in place to prevent a like incident in the future and to show their disappointment and to close the "bleeding wound" caused by the ill advised decisions. The national leadership of the Chief

Petty Officers Association simply begged off as noted by then association president Jon Shipp, " Unfortunately I had to respond, there is nothing we can do except pass the word and hope that everyone who is concerned about this issue will call or write [Coast Guard] HQ's." The most affirming remark came from a non-rated person who worked with MCPO McManis who noted that if they, the Coast Guard's senior leadership, can do this to a Master Chief what can they do to me.

The E-mails and letters, as well as articles in the Navy Times, put pressure on MCPO Trent, however, he did not budge. In response to a letter by a retired master chief who accused Trent of breaking faith the enlisted corps, Trent angrily noted, "Our core values are neither nebulous or transplanted from some officer like program Honor, Respect, and Devotion to Duty" was the foundation of the seventy-five years of Coast Guard Chief Petty Officer leadership and tradition."

Neglecting to say that the Core Values were only in existence, as tools of punishment, for a few months, he said, "I have not broken trust with junior enlisted people, fellow Chief Petty Officers, or the Coast Guard. I have supported a decision that does send a strong signal; Honor, Respect, and Devotion to Duty are important character traits we want in all our people." Although important character traits appeared to be for the people in the field; the Coast Guard's most senior leadership, officer and enlisted, failed to meet the same high level of character.

Trent went on to say that the Silver Ancient Mariner provided an opportunity to "call attention" to the ideals that he wanted others to have and warned that, "There is no way we can tell people how much we value Honor, Respect, and Devotion to Duty, and then honor someone that has recently displayed disregard for these very core values." ' This high sounding speech demonstrated just how deep in the mire this situation had caused him to become. It is ironic, that within the same year the Coast Guard chose the 19th century U. S. Revenue Cutter Service captain, Michael Healy to be the namesake of its newest icebreaker. Healy had been convicted at a hearing courts-martial of drunkenness and un-officer like conduct and suspended from duty for four years; yet he was perfectly acceptable to most and met the character traits desired by the mid-1990s Coast Guard.

No one in the Coast Guard ever apologized to Master Chief McManis and it raised a flag to the enlisted corps as a whole that the words the Coast Guard wished them to live and work by had become punitive and inconsistent. They now saw that its leadership could not be trusted. The entire affair was grossly mishandled. One has to wonder that had the leadership been people of extensive sea-going experience would these mistakes have been made. No one knows for sure, but Master Chief McManis, as Samuel Coleridge's Ancient Mariner,

"He went, like on that hath been stunn'd  
And is of sense forlorn:  
A sadder and wiser man  
He rose the morrow mom

Master Chief McManis continued out his career displaying the character traits that the Coast Guard truly wanted, a man who admitted to his own mistakes, a man who recovered and went on to succeed as a Master Chief ; as a Coastguardsman.

Notes:

1. Coast Guard Commandant Notice 1650, ALDIST 077/95 26 April 1995.
2. U. S. Coast Guard. Medals and Awards Manual, Commandant Instruction M1650.25B, 25 March 1995, Chapter 8, Operations Awards, D. "Ancient Mariner Award." It is important to note the date of this manual. It was promulgated just a month before the announcement.
3. Message from MCPO-CG Rick Trent (ID: C-0000215145) to CEA, May 30, 1995.
4. *Navy Times*, June 19, 1995, 20.
5. The names of the respondents have been sanitized from the message traffic to protect them from possible reprisals. This internal messages are dated from June 5 to June 6, 1995.
6. U. S. Coast Guard, Medals and Awards Manual, COMDTINST M1650.25B, Chapter 1, Chapter 1, para. 2. a.
7. Hanks, James J., Implementation of Total Quality Management in the United States Coast Guard: A Case Study. MA Thesis, Sonoma State University, May 23, 1995.
8. Letter dated 21 July 1995 from Rick Trent to GMCM W. R. Wells, II.