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# The Right Stuff

*The acme of achievement in a Naval Reserve career is making flag. Less than one percent of captains will ever reach this level. I am fortunate to know six of the ten officers selected this year for rear admiral. Shortly after the board results were announced, I asked them, "What's it like being promoted to admiral?" Five offered responses. I think you'll find their stories interesting, insightful, and possibly entertaining.*

Greg Timberlake is this year's new medical flag officer. Like most physicians, he has an answering service, which managed to garble the message: "Call Joe Cotton at the Pentagon." Just as he was returning the call to VADM John Cotton, he received the e-mail from the Defense News Agency with the flag list, confirming his selection.

RDML(Sel) Timberlake says that he's tried to do three things over the years: train the mission, develop tomorrow's leaders today, and leave it better than he found it. His response to being selected for flag was characteristically humble. "This is an incredible honor, and it's hard to believe they selected me. It's more of a reflection on my shipmates who helped me and challenged me and made me what I am today. They deserve the credit."

Norton Joerg is this year's new JAG flag officer. He was at the Providence airport on his way home from attending the two-week National Security Decision-Making course at the Naval War College when his cell phone rang. It was Admiral Cotton. He asked, "Are you standing at attention?" RDML(Sel) Joerg stopped just short of security, came to full attention, and stood there while he received the message about

his promotion. He got some curious looks from other passengers, but fortunately didn't attract the attention of the TSA security staff.

"As a flag officer, don't become someone different," he advised. "You were picked for who you are; it's a mistake to become someone else." He considers this opportunity a "matter of a solemn trust." He went on to say, "the best use of our positions [as flag officers] is to get things out of the way for others, and then to stay out of the way ourselves."

Wendi Carpenter was on her way home from duty in Dam Neck, VA, when she pulled off the road to check her voice mail. There were several messages from VADM Cotton's office, but her cell phone died before she could return them. Borrowing a phone, she was finally able to get through and receive the good news.

Her favorite mantra is "think strategically and act deliberately." A trusting and encouraging leader, she expressed gratitude to a number of parties – to the Sailors in her commands who made such great contributions, to her family who offered encouragement and sacrifices, and to mentors who have made an enormous impact on her life and career.

Jamie Barnett is on recall as the Deputy Director of Naval Education and Training in the Pentagon, taking on a significant role in leading the Navy's revolution in training. His feelings on being selected were those of elation, combined with true humility. He stated that living up to the expectations of a flag officer seemed particularly daunting, considering that we are a nation at war. He went on to emphasize, "the importance, as a leader, of really listening, really hearing what subordinates and peers are saying."

His words of wisdom: "Commit time and value to Navy responsibilities, and I

mean really extraordinary time and value. Honor your spouse, family, and work by making them first; but find or make time for mission accomplishment."

Robin Watters was recalled to active duty last year to serve in Bahrain. During the first Gulf War, he was recalled to serve as the XO of a deployed minesweeper. Throughout his operationally-focused career, he has endeavored to "always make the active duty command my master." That philosophy has served him, and the Navy, well.

He, like each of the other officers I spoke with, share the credit with his Sailors. "People perform well for you, but you end up getting the credit for it." As a result, he has worked hard to take care of his people by writing FITREPs carefully and providing appropriate awards and recognition.

Each of these new flag officers felt that the greatest challenge we are facing is the total integration of the Reserve force with the Navy. It's no longer Navy requirements and Naval Reserve requirements; it's one Navy. There is no place for the old mindset of "us vs. them." In the past, we may have been able to exist as a separate culture, but that must change as we become a total force. There is little doubt that each of these officers understands this objective, and it behooves each of us to work toward that goal as well.

Few of us will ever get that special telephone call notifying us that we've been selected to flag rank. But my knowledge of the character, integrity, and professionalism of this year's selectees reaffirms that our promotion system does work, that we do create great leaders from among our ranks, and that the Navy is putting the right men and women at the helm.

*Next month: How to write really great FITREPs.* ⚓