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Last night, I spent the evening with an old shipmate I hadn't seen in over 20 years. He's doing great. A commander when I was an ensign, he made captain while I was onboard my first ship and went on to make rear admiral, retiring after 34 years. He'll start collecting social security next month, but he's anything but retired.

Jack is at the center of his universe. He and his wife of 30+ years live in downtown Norfolk, walking distance from everything. He's the executive director of the Battleship Wisconsin Foundation, responsible for the care and feeding of the former battleship now tied up at the downtown waterfront. Jack knows everyone. We met for dinner at a swank seafood restaurant, where he introduced me to the owner, the owner of a new restaurant opening up in Virginia Beach, the president of a commercial lighting company (who graciously provided us with box seats to watch the Admirals' hockey playoff game that night). Jack pointed out the mayor, another man some think will be the next governor, and half a dozen other VIPs. Plus, everyone knows Jack. He's a celebrity; people walked up to us saying hello just for the chance to shake his hand. A couple of times, some referred to him as "Captain Jack," although others were quick to point out that he's an admiral. Jack would add, "but Mark's a captain . . . in the reserves."

He never said the word "only," but it was apparent. Nothing against Jack; he's a tremendous naval officer and a great gentleman, but he's a product of our

"Only" a Reservist

legacy culture of the Naval Reserve.

My first exposure to reservists was in November 1983, when our newly commissioned ship set sail from San Diego, transited the Panama Canal, and pulled into port in Saint Thomas, Virgin Islands. There on the pier among the spectators were four middle-aged men (okay, to me as a LTJG, they looked middle-aged) in Hawaiian shirts waving and generally looking like a bunch of ugly-American tourists. After the brow went over, they proceeded up the ladder toward the quarterdeck. As the CDO that day (I always seemed to pull duty the first day in any

reservists and 10,000 full-time support are performing operational support somewhere in the world. Our RE-servists are at the front line in the war on terrorism, sometimes taking fire and sometimes sacrificing their lives for our nation. We are integrated into every staff and every echelon working side-by-side with our active component (AC) equivalents to accomplish our assigned mission. Many have set aside businesses, private practices, and careers to accept a recall to active duty. To paraphrase the car commercial, "this is not your father's Navy Reserve."

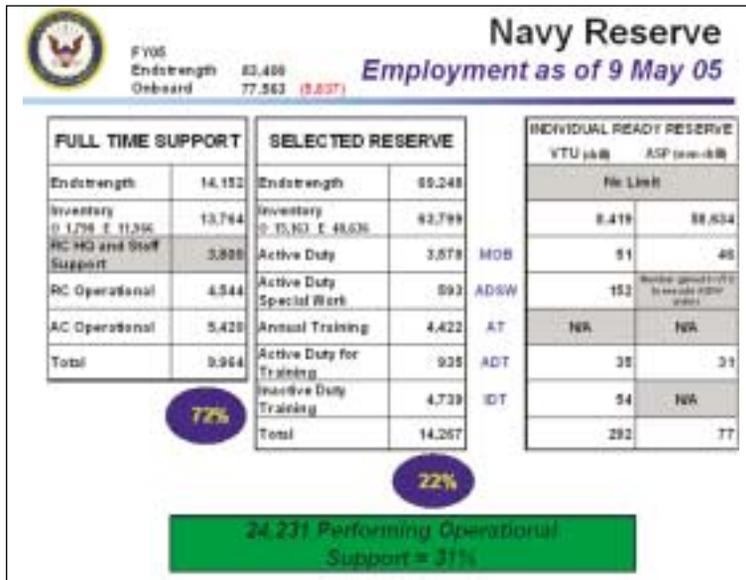
This got me to thinking, do active component members still think of reserves

the old way? Are we perceived as golf-club toting per diem hounds looking for adventure in exotic ports of call, or are we considered hard-working professionals that add unique value to the commands we support? Is it "reservists and dogs keep off the grass," or "thank God, the Reservists are finally here?"

Each of us can make a difference in the way the active component perceives us. Are you a drilling reservist? Look sharp, stay fit, don't allow yourself to become overweight, learn your job and deliver above

and beyond expectations every single time. Learn the mission of your supported command inside and out, and stay "in the loop." Are you retired? Reach out to those on active duty and share your wisdom and experience. Exude a sense of pride and professionalism like my shipmate Jack that makes others think, "wow, he's a naval officer. I want to be like him."

Culture is the most difficult thing to change in any large organization; failure to change has been the cause of decline of entire civilizations. Our leadership is working hard to earn parity with the AC, but each of us has to deliver on that promise. Earn the respect and admiration of your AC counterparts, not just for yourself, but for the entire Naval Reserve force. Be part of a culture change that someday people will say, "not only are you a naval officer, but a reserve officer." Ⓝ



port), I met them and politely informed them that we weren't providing tours. "Oh, no," they replied, "we're the commanding officers of your reserve units. We're here for our two weeks of active duty."

Hmm. First of all, I didn't know we had any reserve units. Secondly, I wasn't familiar with the tropical dress uniform for reservists on active duty (Hawaiian shirts). "Why are you here?" I inquired. "Because we have to do 14 days of duty and didn't want to spend the last week in Norfolk in December. So we got here six days ago and will sail with you back to your new home port."

Well, right then and there, I decided that if I ever left active duty, I would have to look into this "reserve" thing; it sounded like a pretty good deal.

We've come a long way since then.

On any given day, over 12,000 selected