**ANCHORS AT MY SHOULDER**

I arrived at boot camp after a three day train ride. I was tired, confused, and not sure what was next. HE walked into the compartment, wearing anchors. Others yelled orders, HE gave direction. HE showed me how to carry the flag and myself as a United States Sailor should.

I arrived at Hospital Corps School almost a sailor. The HM1 and the LT were filling my head with facts and procedures. I did not have the skill or judgement to apply them. I was sure my incompetence was going to kill someone. HE walked into the room and his anchors had two stars on them.

HE made me laugh, HE made me cry and HE made me try with every fiber of my being. HE showed me how to carry the flag and myself as a Hospital Corpsman should.

I arrived at Operating Technician School, Field Medical Service School, Naval Hospital Charleston, National Naval Medical Center, Naval Education and Training Command Newport. THEY were there. Male and female, khaki and sateen, THEY were always there. Service before self and the meaning of shipmate. THEY showed me how to carry the flag and myself as a Petty Officer should.

I arrived at Operating Room Technician School as an instructor of junior corpsman. So much to teach. Not enough training aids, not enough classroom time. HE showed me to give my charges clear instructions, clear expectations, fair evaluations and an unwavering belief in their ultimate success. HE showed me how to carry the flag and myself as a mentor should.

I arrived as a LTjg. My enthusiasm was only matched by my lack of judgement. HE watched and listened. HE would pull me aside and made suggestions. I will never know how many times I was not devoured by a senior officer because HE covered me. HE let me stumble so I could learn to walk, but he never let me go aloft without a safety harness. HE showed me how to carry the flag and myself as a junior officer should.

I arrived at the Marine Air Wing. Intelligence stated that the first units would be over run and not return alive. It was my task to pick the medical staff who would go first. I could not share with them, or their wives, that their likely fate was death. I could not sleep, I could not eat, I could not accept that I was the one deciding their destiny. HE put his arm around my shoulder and showed me how to carry the flag and myself as a leader with a heavy burden should.

I arrived as the Officer In Charge. It was my unit, I was almost a Commanding Officer. We were under staffed, under resourced and over tasked. HE showed me how to make them a team. HE showed me how to push them to excellence without pushing them too far. HE helped me develop the judgement to carry the flag and myself as a leader should.

I arrived as a senior leader in a command requiring ten years of growth in two years. The Department Heads were junior, the Corpsman were junior, the Civil Service new and the staff turnover was extreme. SHE reminded me that I too, once needed time to stumble before I could walk and that I did not have the authority to order executions. SHE showed me how to carry the flag and myself as a senior officer should.

I have no end to this story. As long as the sailors and officers of the United States Navy have Chief Petty Officers at their shoulders, we will weather the storms, battles and trials that loom over distant horizons.

As I receive this flag upon my retirement, I take great pride in saying, well done Chief, you have taught me to carry it well!"

LCDR Terry Murray, MSC, USN  
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