

Cross-Rating, It's more than a Job, It's a Transition

By
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I am originally from Kent, OH. After graduating from Field High School, I joined the US Navy and reported to Great Lakes, IL, on 4 November 1968 for basic training.



My first duty station was NAS North Island, CA, 17 January 1969. I was assigned to the Aviation Maintenance Department. Honor Guard was a collateral duty, but soon became primary. The training encompassed parade marching, rifle maneuvers with bayonets, change-of-command, riot control, base security and funerals. It was not uncommon to perform 20 funerals per week. It truly was an Honor.

I was a member of a four-man Honor Guard ribbon cutting ceremony with Governor Reagan when the Coronado Bay Bridge opened on 3 August 1969. Governor Reagan was kind enough to bring the Honor Guard detail to the Hotel Del Coronado for the official luncheon. I still remember what I ate...squab, which in culinary terminology is a young pigeon.



My next duty assignment was VA-25 NAS Lemoore, CA. 2 April 1970. I was trained as an A7-E plane captain. I completed A-7 Familiarization (FAM) and Shipboard Firefighting. I made 2 combat cruises in the Gulf of Tonkin aboard the USS Ranger. While deployed to Vietnam, I worked the flight deck. If my plane was on deck, so was I, working 12-14 hours a day.

The aircraft carrier flight deck has the distinct title of being "one of the world's most dangerous workplace environments." Twice I had tow-bars pop off the nose landing gear with the plane free-wheeling across the flight deck. And twice, I was able to engage the emergency break before the aircraft made a swift exit over the side. I was knocked unconscious, burned by jet exhaust, and dragged down the flight deck by a 500-pound bomb cart. And to make life a little more exciting, we worked night operations where tie-down chains created thousands of trip hazards. But the heat and humidity in the Gulf of Tonkin topped the list, often times leaving us dangerously exhausted.

The Carrier Air Group (CAG) was flying combat missions around the clock, dropping millions of pounds of ordinance and mining Haiphong Harbor. The period between 1970 and 1973 was one of the most intensive levels of combat flying in the history of Naval Aviation. The cease-fire in Viet Nam went into effect on 27 January 1973 and the war (conflict) was over. I reenlisted 5 February.

My tour with VA-25 brought me to places like NAS Fallon, MCAS Yuma, Lake Tahoe, San Francisco, San Diego, Oakland, Philippines, Hong Kong, Hawaii, and Japan. The tour lasted through 19 March 1973. I transferred as Aviation Structural Mechanic Second Class.



My next set of orders was to VR-24, NAF Naples, Italy with enroute FAM and Airframes and Hydraulics training on the C-2A aircraft, COD (Carrier Onboard Delivery) in San Diego, CA. I reported to VR-24, 29 June 1973. Working on the C-2A was short lived and I was selected to attend CT-39G factory school in ST. Louis, MO. and sent back to the states on 22 September 1973. While there, I was lucky enough to ride the Gateway Arch!



Upon return to VR-24, I was a member of the T-39 crew and a Plank Owner. I volunteered to fly due to a shortage of qualified personnel and received my wings on 25 November 1974. During my tour I got to visit Rome, Copenhagen, Athens, Brussels, London, Rota, Souda Bay, Bandirma, Cairo, Sigonella, Nice, Paris, Pisa, Venice, Gaeta, Rock of Gibraltar, Palma, Wiesbaden, Stuttgart, and Chievers. This was a VIP billet, and I met several Admirals and Dignitaries.

From there I reported to VT-2 NAS Whiting Field, FL, 28 July 1975. Here I maintained T-28 aircraft for the training of future naval pilots. Being the 200th anniversary of the signing of the Declaration of Independence, many planes were painted in patriotic colors. This was a busy one-year billet.

Next, I reported to VP-40 NAS Moffett Field, CA, 29 October 1976 and completed the following schools: NATC Career Counseling, P-3C FAM, Corrosion Control, P-3C Hydraulics and Flight Controls, and Leadership and Management for Petty Officers.

I was night check supervisor for airframes, responsible for fixing all discrepancies that affected the next day flight schedule. When VP-40 deployed to NAF Misawa, Japan, 9 February 1977, I was assigned as a courier and qualified on .45 caliber sidearm. I accompanied all classified material aboard a C-141 aircraft. The flight crew confiscated my gun.



I visited Pusan and Taiwan. Later, I was sent to Dallas to remove and replace the leading-edge wing due to a massive bird strike. I was promoted to Aviation Structural Mechanic First Class 15 April 1977.

They say the grass is always greener on the other side...**not always**. After considerable deliberation, I decided to take a break from the US Navy and was honorably discharged on 3 February 1978. Packed the car and left San Jose, headed to Boston. No sooner than I left, Dad became ill. I returned home to help mom ready the house for sale as dad recovered.

16 June 1979, I reported to HS-1197 South Weymouth, MA for reserve duty. Here I worked on H-1 Helicopters. I lived in New Hampshire with my brother, a retired Master Chief and his family, while working as a sheet metal fabricator and attending New Hampshire College.

One night after school, I stopped for a drink and met the woman of my dreams, Patti. Things do happen for a reason. After falling in love with my soul mate, I decided to return to active duty. I had to explain to Patti...the Navy does not take girlfriends.

The TRANSITION begins.

To my surprise, I was no longer qualified to work on aircraft due to a medical issue, color vision. After a long heated and unproductive discussion with the Navy recruiter, I was allowed to enter the Navy as an Aerographer's Mate. The days of being a Structural Mechanic standing night check and dealing with the smell of hydraulic leaks, metal fasteners, drop checks, and dirty fingernails, became a thing of the past.

I received orders 4 May 1981 from AFEES Boston, MA to Naval Station Norfolk, VA. I was assigned to Master at Arms Department. I had the pleasure of handcuffing and delivering convicted sailors to Norfolk's Brig while awaiting orders.

11 June 1981, Reported to Chanute AFB, IL. Patti and I married 4 August.

28 August, I graduated "A" school (432 hours) and was now officially an Aerographer's Mate.

16 October, I graduated Rawinsonde school (232 hours).

As an Aerographer's Mate, my new duties consisted of taking observations, analyzing meteorological and oceanographic data, plotting synoptic surface charts, preparing and presenting flight weather packets, forecasts, warnings and advisories. The list goes on and on and on. **WHAT THE HECK IS AN ISOTHERM?**

TRANSITION – The Early Years



Reported to NOCD Adak, AK on Veterans Day, 11 November 1981. My new family and I were greeted by AGCS Harry Hale and his wife Jeanie. They took us to housing where the beds were made, food in the refrigerator and lasagna in the oven. There was even chocolate cake! Harry was a great sponsor, and the experience is one we have never forgotten.



After many hours of hard work and studying I qualified for the following positions: Rawinsonde (Upper Air), Observer/Supervisor, Synoptic Land Weather Observer, Airways Surface Weather Observer, and Site Waiver Forecast Duty Officer.

I completed several military and college courses: Mid-Latitudes, Navy Regulations, Standard First Aid, Human Behavior and Leadership, Aerographer's Mate 3&2, Aerographer's Mate 1&C, Uniform Code of Military Justice, Mathematics Vol 1, Ocean Systems Mod 2, Sonar Technician, and Naval Orientation. I attended the University of Alaska and received my Associates Degree in General Studies from Mohegan Community College through the Navy College Program. I was ready for "C" school.



Upon departure from Adak, we had our old Chevy Blazer shipped to Seattle, WA

and started our trip to Chanute, IL AFB 3 December 1983. Patti and I had a quick stop at the Comstock Casino in Reno, NV, for a long-overdue honeymoon.

The TRANSITION continues.



I reported to "C" school at Chanute AFB, IL, on 5 January 1984. The school was long and extremely tough and I graduated on 2 AUG 1984 (984 hours). **I finally figured out what an isotherm was.** Officially I was a Naval Weather Forecaster. It was now time to enter the weather world and prove myself. Next duty station was Naval Western Oceanography Center, HI.

Enroute, we traveled from Chanute AFB to Ohio and Virginia to visit relatives. The road trip continued on to Graceland, the Painted Desert, Grand Cannon, Hover Dam, Las Vegas, Tijuana, the San Diego Zoo and Los Angeles. On the Hollywood walk of fame, Patti discovered her feet were the exact same size as Marilyn Monroe. Patti and her daughter, Kim, were selected as contestants on "Let's Make A Deal"! Do you remember Monty Hall? Kim won the big prize behind door number 3.

We traveled the coast highway, Route 1, to Monterey and visited Defense Language Institute, the school Kim was scheduled to attend. Last stop was Naval Base Oakland where the Blazer was shipped to Hawaii. I reported to NWOC, HI, for shore duty 2 September 1984.

Due to limited base housing, we were placed at the Hale Koa Hotel for six weeks. A very tough time for Patti and the kids living on Waikiki Beach.

While stationed at NWOC I qualified for Ship Enroute Weather Forecaster, Environmental Watch Officer, Quality Control, and Hurricane/Typhoon Analyzer. I went TAD to Midway Island for P-3 support 1-14 November 1984. I was TAD to USS Enterprise from San Diego to Subic Bay 6 February 1986. I arrived in the Philippines the same day President Marcos was being expelled. I was transported by bus from Subic Bay to Manilla airport through street riots that included a sea of burning cars and buildings, a very scary moment! While waiting for my flight, I actually saw President Marcos in the terminal. It was a day to remember.

Reported to Mobile Environmental Team (MET) Pearl Harbor, HI, (Plank Owner), 13 January 1989. My final tour of duty kept me busy with the following schools and deployments:

- 1989 FEB 10 Tactical ASW Environment for Oceanographers and Aerographers (80 hours) in San Diego.
- 1989 FEB 24-MAR 7 USS Cushing Oceanography Support.
- 1989 APR 26-MAY 17 USS Brewton tailed Russian Research Ship, Marshal Nedelin, below the equator. Here I became a SHELL BACK, not recommended for sailors over the age of forty.
- 1989 MAR 21 Shipboard Firefighting FLETRAGRUPH (16 hours).
- 1989 MAR 28-JUL 9 USS Cleveland Exon Valdez oil spill Prince William Sound, AK.
- 1989 SEP 4-OCT 19 USS Valley Forge RIM PAC Bering Sea, high seas ripped the guard rails (cowling) off the bow of the ship, rough ride, seat belt required to stay in my rack.
- 1989 DEC 11-15 DEC USS Leftwich Oceanography Support.
- 1990 APR 3-4 USS Worden Oceanography Support.
- 1990 APR 10-MAY 10 NAS Barbers Point, HI as Flight Weather Forecaster and Office Support.
- 1990 JUN 25-JUL 3 USS Brewton Weather Support.
- 1990 AUG 11-SEP 14 USS Reclaimer towed USS Nautilus from Panama to Bremerton.

1990 OCT 11 Career Info and Counseling COMNAVSURFGRUMIDPAC (36 hours).
1990 OCT 26 USS Helena Dependent cruise Pearl Harbor to Maui with Patti and stepson Craig.
1991 FEB 11-15 USS Ouellet Oceanography Support.
1991 FEB 16-APR 15 MCAS Kaneohe Bay, HI support Desert Storm. MET Pearl Harbor had to take over the weather officer while the Marines were deployed.
1991 APR 26-JUN 11 USAV Harold D. Clinger, WWII ordinance from Solomon Islands to Johnston Atoll. We made a stop at Kwajalein Island Army Post to refuel.
1991 AUG 12-16 USS Worden Oceanography Support.
1991 DEC 31 Transferred to Fleet Reserve.



During my naval career I received the following military awards: Navy Commendation Medal, Army Commendation Medal, Navy Achievement Medal, Meritorious Unit Commendation (2), Good Conduct Medal (4), National Defense Medal (2), Vietnam Service Medal (3), Coast Guard Special Operations Ribbon, Sea Service Ribbon, Navy-Marine Overseas Service Ribbon, Vietnam Campaign Medal.

The TRANSITION was complete.

My experiences in the US Navy can only be described as **WOW!** Would I do it over? **YES!** Cross-rate TRANSITION, piece of cake.

I am proud to say my stepdaughter, Kim, enlisted as a Russian Linguist and retired as a CTICM (SW). My stepson, Craig, enlisted as a Nuclear Electrical Technician and served six years aboard USS Helena as an ET2 (SS). My wife, Patti, was Club Manager for NAS Barber's Point EM Club. She received the coveted Secretary of the Navy 5 Star award for club excellence. **How proud am I!**

After my Navy career, I continued to pursue my education receiving a Bachelor of Science, Technical Management in January 1996, and a Master of Science, Business Education in May 2003, through Southern New Hampshire University.



I was hired by the Naval Service Training Command. As Placement Officer in the Seaman to Admiral program, Pensacola, FL, I placed over 1500 enlisted sailors into college officer programs nation-wide. Officially retired on 31 March 2016 as a GS-9 and received the Meritorious Civilian Service Medal.



After all these years, my wife and I still have the desire to travel near and far, eat strange foods and see the world. Retirement is wonderful and I am happy to be part of the Naval Weather Service Association where I can share these great memories.