

## The Navy Hymn Eternal Father As It Relates To The METOC Community

Submitted by RDML Tom Q. Donaldson, V, USN (Ret)

Well, as all good sea stories start, "This is a no-shitter." I joined the USS JOHN F. KENNEDY in the summer of 1988 and knew it would be my last sea assignment. I have always enjoyed sea duty, and the Navy's Hymn "Eternal Father" has always been a favorite of mine. I knew there were various verses for the USMC and other communities in the Navy, and I researched whether the METOC community had a verse which it owned or identified with. It did not, and I thought my two-year stint on the 'Big John' might inspire me to write something.

With the help of the OA Division, and my family, I composed the original verse, then set about to submit it to represent the community. I first sent the Verse to CNMOC and asked if they would print it in the quarterly "CNMOC NEWS" publication and that any feedback be sent to LCDR Donaldson/OA Division on the Kennedy. They published the verse with the invite for feedback, and I received zero interest from the CNMOC staff or the community.

At Morning Quarters one day, I told the Division they had a writing assignment. They were to each write a letter to me, saying how moved they were and how proud they would be to have the METOC verse represent the AG rate in the Navy Hymn. AGCS Randy Dyer's letter was particularly moving...

I made (Xerox) copies of the letters, and included them as attachments to a second letter, sent to CNMOC with the statement that the attachments "were just a sample of the feedback" I had received from the officer and enlisted communities. I then asked permission to send the Verse to the Chief of Navy Chaplains as an official act of submitting the Verse to represent the METOC/AG communities. Crickets from the CNMOC staff.

Having done my due diligence, I sent a letter (with attachments) to the Chief of Navy Chaplain's office in Washington, DC with the same "this is just a sample of feedback" comment, requesting the Verse represent the METOC community. The ONLY response I ever received in this year-long endeavor was from the Chief of Navy Chaplains' staff which said 1) thanks for the submission, 2) it was very timely since every 8 years they reprint the Navy Hymnal Book (no assurances the METOC verse would make the cut for printing), 3) the verse would be sent to the Chaplains Resource Board on Naval Station, Norfolk for filing, and 4) the Chief of Navy Chaplains/staff do not determine which verse represents any particular community. For example, there are several verses written (and on file) for the aviation communities. A verse comes to represent a community through its adoption/use by that community at Changes of Commands, Retirements and funeral ceremonies.

In 1989, when the KENNEDY was in port, I found the Chaplains Resource Board and was curious if the submitted verse had actually made it to the repository. An elderly white-haired lady, wearing tennis shoes, led me to a back room where in the corner was an old filing cabinet, and she pulled out the middle drawer. The drawer was nearly full of folders, arranged in alphabetical order, holding all the many verses submitted to be included in the Navy Hymn. I remember seeing a folder for ships being built in a shipyard, one for Navy nurses and one for rape victims. And, sure enough, there was one verse in the METOC folder.

That's how the verse came to be, and when I was in command of NEOC and CNMOC, I gave a framed, signed copy of the Signature and METOC verses to any Sailor or civilian employee leaving the organizations (under honorable conditions). The verse was included in every Change of Command brochure if I was involved in the event; in an attempt to introduce the verse to the community. I haven't a clue if today's community is aware it exists.

Perhaps your printing the revised version will change that. Best regards,  
Tom

Following is the original 1988 verse and proposed revision request:

### METOC Community Verse for Eternal Father Hymn

"O' Father Whose Eternal Love

Spans Ocean Floor to Skies Above  
From Raging Storms to Waters Still  
The Winds and Waves Obey Thy Will  
O' Hear Us When We Pray To Thee  
For Those Who Forecast Winds and Sea!"

At the time, the authors were not fully aware of the role the Naval Observatory played within the METOC Community; providing precise time, celestial navigation and GPS support to the nation and naval operations worldwide.

The following revision is proposed to the METOC Verse to include the Naval Observatory's role and contributions within the METOC community; in the second line, change the word "skies" to "stars". Also, in the last line, change the word "winds" to "wind".

**With the recommend changes, request the new METOC Verse be:**

"O' Father Whose Eternal Love  
Spans Ocean Floor to Stars Above  
From Raging Storms to Waters Still  
The Winds and Waves Obey Thy Will  
O' Hear Us When We Pray To Thee  
For Those Who Forecast Wind and Sea!"

Thank you for your time and attention to this matter.

Best regards,

T. Q. Donaldson, V RDML USN (Ret)

**Editor's note:** RDML Donaldson informed me that the Chief of Navy Chaplains is no longer involved with the Navy Hymn verses and that the Chaplains Resource Center in Norfolk no longer exists. He was pointed to the Navy Information Command for sending the above request to, which he has done. Any response will be published in a future edition of the Aerograph.