

INITIAL TRAINING OF SURFACE WARFARE OFFICERS:  
A HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVE FROM  
WORLD WAR II TO 2008

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by

JAMES T. ROBINSON, LCDR, USN  
B.S. Mathematics, University of Memphis, Memphis, TN, 1996

Fort Leavenworth, Kansas  
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Name of Candidate: LCDR James T. Robinson

Thesis Title: INITIAL TRAINING OF SURFACE WARFARE OFFICERS: A HISTORICAL  
PERSPECTIVE FROM WORLD WAR II TO 2008

Approved by:

\_\_\_\_\_, Thesis Committee Chair  
John T. Kuehn, Ph.D.

\_\_\_\_\_, Member  
Thomas G. Bradbeer, MMAS, M.A.

\_\_\_\_\_, Member  
CDR Peter J. Callaghan, M.A.

Accepted this 12th day of December 2008 by:

\_\_\_\_\_, Director, Graduate Degree Programs  
Robert F. Baumann, Ph.D.

The opinions and conclusions expressed herein are those of the student author and do not necessarily represent the views of the U.S. Army Command and General Staff College or any other governmental agency. (References to this study should include the foregoing statement.)

## ABSTRACT

INITIAL TRAINING OF SURFACE WARFARE OFFICERS: A HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVE FROM WORLD WAR II TO 2008. by LCDR James T. Robinson, USN, 90 pages.

This thesis will examine how Surface Warfare Officers (SWO) received their initial post-commission training beginning with the end of World War II and ending with the training program as of September 2008. Specifically, this thesis examines the reasons why there was no initial SWO training after commissioning and what changed to require initial training. The discussion also addresses the effects of changing the commissioning source to a mix of Naval Academy, Naval Reserve Officer Training Corps and Officer Candidate School. Additionally, the influence of technology and the bipolar world of the Cold War will provide insight as to the appropriateness of the initial training. Finally, the decision to conduct most of the initial training onboard ship beginning in 2003 will be analyzed, especially in light of the decision in 2008 to establish a four-week course in San Diego and Norfolk, which is mandatory for all ensigns to attend immediately after reporting to their ships.

Although the world changed from the relatively simple Cold War paradigm in the past twenty years, history provides us with a means to understand why the Navy came to do business the way it did. Understanding why things occurred as they did, leads to lessons that will aid in making future decisions.

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## ACRONYMS

CNO	Chief of Naval Operations
DOC	Division Officer Course
SWO	Surface Warfare Officer
SWOS	Surface Warfare Officer School
SWOSCOLCOM	Surface Warfare Officer Schools Command

## CHAPTER ONE

### INTRODUCTION

It must be kept in mind that seamanship, just like anything else, is a matter requiring skill, and will not admit of being taken up occasionally as an occupation for times of leisure; on the contrary, it is so exacting as to leave leisure for nothing else.

–Pericles, address to the Athenian assembly<sup>1</sup>

In a message dated 29 December 2002, Vice Admiral Timothy W. LaFleur, Commander Naval Surface Forces laid out the new training path for Surface Warfare Officers.<sup>2</sup> Without regard to commissioning source, Surface Warfare Officer trainees would report directly to their ships and begin their qualification process. Using a combination of hands-on training and computer based training; trainees would proceed through the Surface Warfare Officer Personal Qualification Standard towards qualification as a Surface Warfare Officer. Once they completed qualification as Officer of the Deck (Underway) and with their commanding officer's recommendation, the trainees would report to the Surface Warfare Officers School in Newport, Rhode Island for a three-week course. Upon completion of that course they would return to their ships, satisfy their commanding officer as to their knowledge of Surface Warfare and receive their Surface Warfare pin, becoming fully qualified Surface Warfare Officers (designator 111X.)<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Robert B. Strassler, ed. *The Landmark Thucydides* (New York: Touchstone, 1998) 82.

<sup>2</sup> Surface Warfare Officers School Command. "Curriculum Downloads." Surface Warfare Officers School Command. <https://wwwcfs.cnet.navy.mil/swos/restricted/Doc/Downloads.cfm> (accessed May 17 2008).

<sup>3</sup> Designators are similar to the Military Occupational Specialties used by other branches of the armed services. 111X is a Surface Warfare Officer, the X maybe either 0 if the officer has a regular commission, 5 if a reserve commission or 7 if the officer is Full Time Support. Full Time Support officers are those officers on active duty that serve to

Why did the training pipeline change? The previous pipeline involved Surface Warfare trainees (designator 116X) reporting to Surface Warfare Officers School for the six-month long Division Officer Course prior to reporting to their ships. The Division Officer Course instilled the basics of seamanship, navigation, rules of the road, gunnery, naval engineering, administration, and the many other skills needed by Surface Warfare Officers. Upon reporting to their ships, the trainees would qualify as Junior Engineering Officer of the Watch, Combat Information Center Watch Officer, Small Boat Officer, Officer of the Deck (Inport), and Officer of the Deck (Underway.) After meeting those milestones, the trainees would pass an oral qualification board and earn their Surface Warfare pin. The placement and length of the Division Officer Course was the major difference in the qualification path. In attempting to answer the question of why the training pipeline changed, one discovers that the Division Officer Course began in 1975. This begs a more fundamental question— how were Surface Warfare Officers trained before 1975?

### Defining Surface Warfare Officers

The requirements for the skills for a U.S. Navy Surface Warfare Officer have varied over the years, but for the purposes of the paper the following general definition will apply. A Surface Warfare Officer is a line officer whose specialty is manning and fighting surface ships.<sup>4</sup> Skills required by United States Navy Surface Warfare Officers run the gamut from administration of programs to applied engineering to navigation to

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administer the Naval Reserve. These officers used to be known as “TARS” which stood for training and readiness of the reserves.

<sup>4</sup> Line Officers are those officers who are eligible for command at sea, currently the line community consists of: Naval Aviators, Submarine Officers, Naval Special Warfare (SEAL) Officers, Special Operations Officers (EOD) and Surface Warfare Officers.

seamanship to weapons employment. Reportedly Captain John Paul Jones, Continental Navy said, “It is by no means enough that an officer of the Navy should be a capable mariner.”<sup>5</sup> This sentence and the rest of the quotation have been used for many years in the United States Navy to inspire and cajole both new officers and officers-in-training. The first line however, seems to be glossed over; how does one become a capable mariner? No naval officer springs forth from the forehead of Neptune, fully knowledgeable and competent at his craft. Every officer learns those skills, which are unique to his profession in some manner. For hundreds, if not thousands of years the method of learning naval warfare (before the invention of the airplane and the submarine, naval warfare *was* surface warfare) was to go down to the sea in ships. In the early days of the United States Navy, all officers were either line officers fighting ships or staff officers, such as surgeons and pursers. Admiral David Farragut, the first officer to hold that rank in the United States Navy, entered the Navy as a midshipman and went directly to sea when he was nine years old. He commanded his first ship when he was twelve years old, a prize ship taken by the frigate *Essex* during the War of 1812.<sup>6</sup> Obviously, he learned while on the job and was quite successful.

A Surface Warfare Officer is in some ways a bit of an enigma. He is part of a fine tradition of effective and gallant naval battles, which stretches back to Captain John Paul Jones in the American Revolution. Surface Warfare Officers have always been a part of the United States Navy and as such they should have an edge in professionalism on other,

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<sup>5</sup> Lori Lyn Bogle and Joel I. Holwitt, “The Best Quote Jones Never Wrote.” *Naval History* April 2004 18-23.

<sup>6</sup> Naval Historical Center. “Farragut.” Naval Historical Center. <http://www.history.navy.mil/danfs/f1/farragut-ii.htm> (accessed May 17, 2008).

more youthful communities such as naval aviation. And professionalism in this instance is the establishment of a formal means of training and education for its officers. Yet, Surface Warfare Officers were nearly the last line officer community to receive a distinctive breast device unique to their qualifications.<sup>7</sup> The Surface Warfare Officer insignia, awarded first in 1975, gave an observer instant identification, in much the same way as the wings of a naval aviator or the dolphins of the submariner, that this officer was a professional, a master of his chosen craft.

### Early Training

When the Continental Navy was formed, commissions were given to men who had a maritime background and had previously served at sea or commanded merchant vessels. There was no formal training process. With the permanent establishment of a standing Navy in 1794, prospective officers went to sea as midshipmen and learned their trade at sea, just as Admiral Farragut did.<sup>8</sup> In 1825 President John Quincy Adams suggested a Naval Academy “for the formation of scientific and accomplished officers.”<sup>9</sup> The near mutiny and subsequent hanging of a Midshipman for attempted mutiny aboard the American brig *Somers*, a training vessel in 1842 lent impetus to Secretary of the Navy George Bancroft’s formation of the United States Naval Academy in 1845.<sup>10</sup>

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<sup>7</sup> The Special Operations community or Explosive Ordnance Disposal (EOD) Officers wear a derivative of the Surface Warfare Officer’s insignia and are therefore technically the last line community to have their own badge. However, they had their EOD badge which reflected their specific qualifications in EOD.

<sup>8</sup> Jack Sweetman. *American Naval History: An Illustrated Chronology of the U.S. Navy and Marine Corps, 1775-Present*. Annapolis:2002.

<sup>9</sup> United States Naval Academy. “A Brief History of the United States Naval Academy.” United States Naval Academy, <http://www.usna.edu/VirtualTour/150years/> (accessed May 12, 2008).

<sup>10</sup> Ibid.

With the establishment of the Naval Academy, an institution now existed which trained midshipmen on the basics of shipboard life and the running of a ship, once out to sea the newly commissioned officer could hone his skills and put schoolroom theory into practice. The vast majority of officers earned their commissions through the Naval Academy and the Academy seemed to satisfy all the needs of teaching the basics of the naval profession and readying officers for satisfactory service at sea.

### Beginnings of the Modern Surface Warfare Officer

As the 20th century dawned there were many new developments in technology across the board and some of these technological innovations greatly influenced the Navy. The steam driven ship had finally risen from its early use in 1807 to an effective and reliable means of driving a warship.<sup>11</sup> There were advances in naval gunnery to go along with the new propulsion system. Marconi's wireless telegraph, otherwise known as the radio, changed the way battles were coordinated. The reaction of the naval officer community to the new inventions was telling in many respects. In particular, the advent of steam propulsion was not embraced as enthusiastically as might be expected. To the layman and to the modern naval officer, anything which removed ships from the mercies of the winds and currents, albeit incompletely, would be a vast improvement and a technology to be vigorously perfected. Many older officers looked at the new technology with disdain. They lumped the steam engineers into the same category as carpenters and sail makers; necessary to build and sail warships, but not the ones to fight those ships in battle. The fact that the first engineers in the fleet were actually civilian contractors did

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<sup>11</sup> Stanley L. Klos. "Robert Fulton." Robert Fulton. <http://www.robertfulton.org/> (accessed May 17, 2008).

not sit well with the line officers. It took an act of Congress to initially give steam engineers a formal foothold in the ranks of the Navy in 1842, some twenty-five years after the first steam powered warship entered service. Even once the engineers became commissioned and warranted officers, they did not have parity with the line officers.<sup>12</sup>

The beginnings of a potential divide in the officer ranks between generalists and specialists became evident with the introduction of steam propulsion. In many ways the fight over training in the Surface Warfare community would be a battle between these two camps. One camp firmly embracing the traditions and history of the naval service, where knowledge was acquired by going to sea in the same way mariners had learned for millennia. The other camp, at various times home to steam engineers, submariners, and aviators, consisted of those who eagerly embraced technology and the potential of dramatic change.<sup>13</sup> Once the new steamships began construction, it appeared as though the best and brightest officers sought training in the new technology and then took their training to civilian careers.<sup>14</sup> The complexity involved in maintaining and operating the new propulsion system alone demanded new training. The impact to tactics, of being able to sail at will without regard for the wind, rendered many of the lessons learned in the days of sailing ships obsolete. There was extensive argument regarding the establishment of an engineering corps, separate from those officers concerned with traditional ship

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<sup>12</sup> Donald Chisholm. *Waiting for Dead Men's Shoes: Origins and Development of the U.S. Navy's Officer Personnel System, 1793-1941*. (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2001) p 193, 419-436.

<sup>13</sup> Submarine officers and aviators for many years served in the surface fleet before they were transferred over to their new communities; therefore, those communities had a stake in how Surface Warfare Officers were initially trained.

<sup>14</sup> Holden A. Evans. *One Man's Fight for a Better Navy*. (New York: Dodd, Mead, and Company, 1940) p 50.

duties. The Naval Personnel Act of 1899 merged the separate officer corps for engineering with that of the line and necessitated the inclusion of engineering as a core subject into the curriculum at the Naval Academy.<sup>15</sup> The issue of adopting new technologies and who was going to be the master of those technologies would continue to influence the training of Surface Warfare Officers for the next century. Two inventions in particular would reshape all of the world's navies and that reshaping would have a profound effect on the Surface Warfare Officer community. The airplane and the submarine would change naval warfare from a two dimensional chess game to a new battle space that incorporated the ocean's surface, the waters beneath and the air above.

### Embracing Technology

In stark contrast to Surface Warfare, there appeared a need for special training to master the new technologies. Even before their inception as separate communities within the line officer ranks, submarine officers and naval aviators both had specific schools, which they attended prior to their first assignment in those warfare specialties. The submarine school graduated its first class in July, 1916<sup>16</sup> and in December, 1911<sup>17</sup> the first naval aviator reported for flight training. The new developments, particularly aviation, tended to attract the more adventuresome types although not the kind of wholesale migration of midshipmen from the surface fleet into the aviation and submarine communities after the Second World War. It is worth mentioning the

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<sup>15</sup> Peter Karsten. *The Naval Aristocracy*. New York: The Free Press, 1972. p 69

<sup>16</sup> Naval Submarine School. "History of Naval Submarine School." Naval Submarine School, <https://www.npdc.navy.mil/slc/nss/history.htm> (accessed April 20, 2008).

<sup>17</sup> Naval Historical Center. "Naval Aviation 1911-1986: a Pictorial Study." Naval Historical Center, [www.history.navy.mil/download/pict-m2.pdf](http://www.history.navy.mil/download/pict-m2.pdf) (accessed April 20, 2008).

promotion system in use by the Navy from the turn of the 20<sup>th</sup> century until the Naval Personnel Act of 1916. Openings in higher ranks came from mandatory retirement at age 65, death, or resignation of officers more senior. Promotion was strictly by vacancy. All an officer had to do was continue to breathe and not commit an offense serious enough to warrant dismissal from the service and he was guaranteed promotion in due time.<sup>18</sup> This stagnation in the officer corps when combined with the new innovations tended to draw many of the most talented officers and more importantly those officers willing and eager to innovate out of the Surface Warfare community. In his autobiography, Admiral Daniel Galley reported his experience applying for training in naval aviation in 1924 and being accused of selling his birthright by his executive officer.<sup>19</sup> The loss of those willing to innovate and the growing division of the line officer corps into the traditionalists and the embracers of new technologies had a significant impact on the Surface Warfare community.

On the other hand, there were those who wanted change. Two notable events occurred in the last quarter of the 19<sup>th</sup> century that set the Navy firmly on a professional path. First, a group of concerned naval officers formed the United States Naval Institute in 1873.<sup>20</sup> The second was the foundation of the Naval War College in 1884, driven

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<sup>18</sup> Donald Chisholm. *Waiting for Dead Men's Shoes: Origins and Development of the U.S. Navy's Officer Personnel System, 1793-1941*. (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2001) p 202-205.

<sup>19</sup> Daniel V. Gallery. *Eight Bells, and All's Well*. (New York:1965) The executive officer on a naval ship was the second in command of the ship.

<sup>20</sup> Donald Chisholm. *Waiting for Dead Men's Shoes: Origins and Development of the U.S. Navy's Officer Personnel System, 1793-1941*. (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2001) p 364.

largely by Rear Admiral Stephen B. Luce.<sup>21</sup> While this school educated senior officers and not junior officers, it did set in motion a growing desire to treat the Naval service as a profession and to provide the necessary training and education inherent in a profession. This top down approach to training and education, coupled with the formation of the United States Naval Institute in 1873<sup>22</sup> provided the impetus toward the professionalism in the Navy and the Surface Warfare community.

Surface Warfare Officers did not attend a formal school, independent of the Naval Academy or other commissioning source, designed to train them in their warfare specialty until the Naval Destroyer School was established in 1961.<sup>23</sup> The Naval Destroyer School prepared officers who were headed back to sea to serve as department heads and was not intended to train new officers in the art and science of Surface Warfare. In the mid 1970s the Surface Warfare Officers School Division Officer Course began as a formal school of instruction for newly commissioned officers prior to reporting to their first ship. What caused the initial training of Surface Warfare Officers to change from on the job training, which had worked well for the United States Navy, to a formal school requirement? Further, how did this state of affairs in turn change to the current on the job training style that used computers to enhance the learning process?

## World War II

A firm idea of the state of the Naval Officer Corps and the overall status of the US Navy from the beginning of World War II, through the end of World War II and to

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<sup>21</sup> Jack Sweetman. *American Naval History*, 3<sup>rd</sup> ed. (Annapolis: Naval Institute Press, 2002) p 88.

<sup>22</sup> Ibid. p 84.

<sup>23</sup> Lieutenant Commander J. F. McNulty. "Naval Destroyer School." *U.S. Naval Institute Proceedings*. April, 1966. p. 157.

the Korean War will provide a solid foundation upon which to build a model of how the Navy trained its Surface Warfare Officers. The concept of training, as used in this thesis, is defined as that process that imparts the fundamental skills necessary to a particular profession. It is separate from the concept of educating an officer in the sense that education provides a broad background in the liberal arts and the sciences. Surface Warfare training concerned navigation, engineering, damage control, tactics, ship handling, gunnery, and all of the other skills a naval officer needs in order to properly run a ship.

The mobilization of the United States of America in response to the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor dramatically changed the size and scope of the US Navy. On 7 December 1941, the Navy mustered 337,349 officers and enlisted personnel. Upon the Japanese surrender on 2 September 1945, the strength of the US Navy was over 3 million personnel, with an average time in service of 2 years, 6 months.<sup>24</sup> Of those 87.4 percent of the force were United States Naval Reserve (USNR.)<sup>25</sup> Looking at the numbers of United States Navy (USN), or regular officers, versus USNR officers in 1938, the numbers were 9800 USN to 12,700 USNR. There were no reserve officers until 1925; officers were either on active duty or retired. The USNR number includes those officers on inactive duty as well. The vast majority of officers actively serving the fleet were regular officers. In 1945 the reserve officers numbered 261,000 to the regular officer's

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<sup>24</sup> Naval Historical Center. "US Navy Personnel in World War II: Service and Casualty Statistics." Naval Historical Center, [http://www.history.navy.mil/library/online/ww2\\_statistics.htm](http://www.history.navy.mil/library/online/ww2_statistics.htm) (accessed April 26, 2008).

<sup>25</sup> Ibid.

47,100.<sup>26</sup> With the limited experience of the newest and largest segment of the Naval officer corps, new training methods were used to quickly bring the incoming service members up to speed. It was not possible to send every officer through the Naval Academy at Annapolis, so Officer Candidate Schools and various training commands were established to impart the necessary knowledge. Two of the most notable programs were the Naval Reserve Officer Training Corps (NROTC) and the V-12 program of midshipmen training at universities.

As a result of the huge numbers of reserve officers in the service and the pressing needs of the war, some of the traditions of the naval service were set aside. Admiral Elmo R. Zumwalt, Jr. (see Chapter Three) recounts in his autobiography:

My own first experiences with Mickey Mouse actually were experiences with its absence, for I went on active duty early in World War II. Then, with the tremendous influx of civilian sailors and reserve officers, the Navy perforce knocked off most of the Mickey Mouse. This was certainly true on destroyers, in which I served. Consequently, I had nearly three years to see that it was possible to maintain a dedicated, enthusiastic, well-disciplined, well-trained crew without chicken regs[sic]. It was after the war, as the civilian sailors departed and the regulars took over again, and the Navy lost the motivating thrust of the war, that Mickey Mouse began to come back. It involved such things as a requirement that a crew be in blue or white uniform for evening meal, although this could mean that a hard-working machinist's mate would have to leave a pump repair, come up and change clothes, and then get back into his dirty clothes to finish the job.<sup>27</sup>

After the war was won, some arcane traditions were brought back.<sup>28</sup> Prior to the Second World War, it was a safe assumption that any given line officer onboard a ship

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<sup>26</sup> Roland L. Warren, "The Naval Reserve Officer: A Study in Assimilation." *American Sociological Review*, April 1946: 209.

<sup>27</sup> Admiral Elmo R. Zumwalt, Jr. *On Watch*. (New York: The New York Times Book Co, 1977) p 183-184. "Mickey Mouse" was the term used to refer to regulations, which did not seem to have any practical use, such as the required uniform for evening meals above ship.

<sup>28</sup> Roland L. Warren, "The Naval Reserve Officer: A Study in Assimilation." *American Sociological Review*, April 1946: 203-204.

was a graduate of the Naval Academy and thus could be expected to have received training on navigation, ship handling, naval gunnery and the rest of the skills necessary to ship life as an officer. Therefore, there was no need for additional schooling for officers reporting to ships for their first tour. After the outbreak of hostilities, the training for all naval officers was shorter than might otherwise have been desired, but the necessities of war dictated a compressed schedule. In the great mobilization of the nation for the Second World War, it seems as though men were given just enough training to keep from immediately killing themselves and then they were sent to war. There was no time to have a formal course of instruction beyond what was taught in either NROTC or the V-12 program. The Navy drew down nearly as fast after the war, with many of the officers opting to return to civilian life rather than stay in the Navy for a career. Although much hard won knowledge walked out the door with those officers eager to resume normal life, there was plenty of knowledge and skill left in those who decided to stay. And those most likely to stay were Naval Academy graduates, those who had spent years, not months earning their commissions.<sup>29</sup>

As the battleships lay smoking and sinking from the surprise attack on Pearl Harbor, the past of the Navy's Surface Warfare Officers also sank with the great "mistresses of the sea." Prior to the Second World War, the airplane and the submarine were technological advances on the periphery of the Navy. Midshipmen who were keen on a long and distinguished career would choose the surface forces, battleships if at all possible, over technological novelties like the airplane or submarine. After the war,

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<sup>29</sup> Ibid.

however, things changed. The world saw navies fight without ever coming within sight of each other. It was not merely that the air arms of the carrier forces fought one another, but that aircraft had sunk and seriously hindered surface ships. Submarines had nearly brought the Empire of Japan to its knees by sinking most of her merchant tonnage. No longer did the surface ships of the line rule the seas.<sup>30</sup>

The Second World War changed the composition of the Navy and the officer corps changed as well. The debate over the use of technology and how it should be implemented continued to overshadow the question of how to train the Surface Warfare officers.

Chapter Two covers the impact of the new technologies such as radar, missiles, and helicopters on the Surface Warfare community. In the 1950s, the Navy saw an increasing discussion among the officer community over specialization versus generalization and the need for formal training for Surface Warfare Officers at all levels. The first true exclusive training school for Surface Warfare Officers, the Naval Destroyer School will be discussed. The time period for this chapter will be from 1950 until approximately 1970.

Chapter Three covers the impact that Chief of Naval Operations, Admiral Zumwalt had on the formation of the Division Officer Course, the issuance of the Surface Warfare Officer insignia and the growing professional development of the Surface Warfare community. Perhaps one of the most important developments during the

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<sup>30</sup> Robert W. Love, Jr. *History of the U.S. Navy 1942-1991*. (Harrisburg: Stackpole Books, 1992) p 195.

Zumwalt years was the formation of a board of junior officers to report on suggested changes to, and the status of, the Surface Warfare community.

Chapter Four discusses the rise of the 600-ship navy during the Reagan administration. This expansion led to an increase in the size and diversity of the surface fleet with regards to capabilities and types of ships. There continued to be calls for increasing the professionalism of the Surface Warfare community and the quality of the Division Officer Course was questioned. Also, the impact of using the Surface community as the “dumping ground” for those who failed flight training or nuclear power training led to what was perceived as a dilution in the quality of instruction and standards for the Division Officer Course.

Chapter Five analyzes the effectiveness of the Division Officer Course and the effect on fleet readiness. In June 2008, Vice Admiral D. C. Curtis, Commander Naval Surface Forces, established a four-week course at both the Norfolk and San Diego Fleet Concentration Areas for newly commissioned officers to prepare them for their duties as division officers aboard ship.

## CHAPTER 2

### BEGINNINGS OF THE MODERN SURFACE WARFARE OFFICER

It cannot be too often repeated that in modern war, and especially in modern naval war, the chief factor in achieving triumph is what has been done in the way of thorough preparation and training before the beginning of war.

–Theodore Roosevelt, graduation address, U.S. Naval Academy, June 1902<sup>31</sup>

After the Second World War ended, the United States emerged as a much different country amid a vastly changed world. The world political stage was broken into two camps, with the democracies led by the United States and the communists led by the Union of Soviet Socialist Republic. The National Security Act of 1947, and subsequent amendments during President Harry S. Truman's time in office, made the Air Force an independent service and subordinated the Departments of the Army, the Air Force and the Navy underneath a new organization, the Department of Defense.<sup>32</sup> These were just a few of many things, which were different between the Navy before World War II and the Navy after World War II. Those differences in the outside world, particularly the need to counter Soviet influence and ambition, drove the Navy to change rapidly. In turn the rapid changes caused the officer corps to develop. The initial training of surface warfare officers reflected the developments of the post-war world. There are six factors, not in priority order, which affected the way Surface Warfare Officers were trained following World War II: new technology, expanded operational requirements, establishment of the Naval Reserve Officer Training Corps, competing with other line communities for new

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<sup>31</sup> Robert Debs Heinl, Jr. *Dictionary of Military and Naval Quotations* (Annapolis: United States Naval Institute, 1966), 329.

<sup>32</sup> Jack Sweetman. *American Naval History: An Illustrated Chronology of the U.S. Navy and Marine Corps 1775-Present*. 3<sup>rd</sup> ed. (Annapolis: Naval Institute Press, 2002) p. 197.

officers, cries for professionalism from within the surface warfare community, and the “generalist versus specialist” debate.

### Technology

In 1957 Captain William P. Mack wrote, “World War II produced in a five-year period a technical advance in weapons and the art of naval warfare that might have taken fifty years to produce under peacetime conditions, and the postwar surge of scientific research, spurred forward by Navy-sponsored basic research, produced even greater advancements.”<sup>33</sup> Perhaps the best way to discuss the changes in technology between the pre-1940 and post-1945 United States Navies is to compare two cruisers, which were representative of those Navies and the technologies they employed. USS *Baltimore* (CA 68) was a cruiser displacing approximately 15,000 tons.<sup>34</sup> Launched in 1942, she was the first cruiser built after the failure of the Washington and London Naval Treaties in 1938 and she represented the most current thinking about cruisers and how they would be employed in battle.<sup>35</sup> *Baltimore*’s main armament was her nine 8-inch guns; there was no anti-submarine or anti-air capability. In 1961, the USS *Long Beach* (CGN 9) was commissioned. *Long Beach* was nuclear-powered and did not have any main guns. Guided missiles comprised her main battery, both anti-surface and anti-air. She had the latest in radar systems, a phased array system that would not be recognized by a Captain from World War II. In contrast to the *Baltimore*, the *Long Beach* was more than an anti-

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<sup>33</sup> Willaim P. Mack, Captain, “The Exercise of Broad Command: Still the Navy’s Top Specialty.” *U.S. Naval Proceedings*, April 1957. p. 370-375.

<sup>34</sup> Norman Friedman. *U.S. Crusiers: An Illustrated Design History*. (Annapolis: Naval Institute Press, 1984) p. 480.

<sup>35</sup> Robert W. Love, Jr. *History of the U.S. Navy 1775-1941*. (Harrisburg: Stackpole Books, 1992) pp 584-616.

surface platform, with a secondary mission of shore bombardment. She was also tasked with defending the carrier and her support ships from air, surface and subsurface attack. The technological advances were immense and her mission requirements were different as well.<sup>36</sup> The technological changes increased the demands upon an officers skills and the training required to get those skills.

In addition to knowing ship handling, navigation, and leadership, the fledgling surface warfare officer in the 1950s and 1960 might also need to know or at least understand electronic theory and nuclear propulsion. Anti-air and anti-ship tactics now involved over the horizon targeting. Anti-submarine tactics relied heavily on employment of helicopters and fixed wing operations as well as increased cooperation with other ships, all linked with radio circuits and aided by computers.

The new complexities faced by the surface warfare officer can be illustrated by looking at the problem of anti-submarine warfare. As discussed in Chapter One, submarines destroyed significant portions of the Japanese fleet, both merchant and naval. German U-boats did similar damage to Allied shipping in the Atlantic Ocean. As a result of the successful employment of the submarine, anti-submarine tactics became a vital skill for the surface warfare officer. Aiding in the anti-submarine fight were three vital pieces of technology: sonar, the missile launched torpedo, and the helicopter. Sonar, a system of using sound waves in the ocean, passive or active, to locate and track submarines was both an art and a science. Given enough information about the composition of the water which lay between a ship and a submarine; the sound waves,

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<sup>36</sup> Norman Friedman. *U.S. Cruisers: An Illustrated Design History*. (Annapolis: Naval Institute Press, 1984) p. 495.

either produced by the ship and sent out into the water, or the sound waves produced by the submarine in the course of its operations and radiated into the water, could be used to precisely locate the submarine and track it. Once located, the submarine could be attacked or the fleet could be routed away from it. That was the science part, the art comes from the fact that seawater is far from uniform and because seawater varies, the path that sound travels varies and makes the location of the submarine very difficult to determine.

As the torpedoes launched from submarines became more powerful, the age old arms versus armor race was ceded to the torpedo.<sup>37</sup> It was becoming cost prohibitive to armor against the destructive power of the warheads carried by modern torpedoes. Instead the fight was shifted to either destroying the submarine at the greatest distance possible, keeping the fleet out of the range of the torpedoes, or as a measure of last result either decoying the torpedoes or evading them. A key part of destroying the submarine or keeping the fleet out of range depended upon finding the submarine. As the sonar systems on both submarines and surface ships developed in increased range and accuracy the distance at which submarines were detected increased as well. However the submarine torpedoes' range was increased also. Using naval aircraft; whether fixed wing, from aircraft carriers or land based, or ship based helicopters to find and attack submarines broke the continuing stalemate. Surface warfare tactics now required a three-dimensional approach to either attack or defense. No longer was the fight contained to the surface of the ocean, but rather it was above, on and under the ocean. A similar set of

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<sup>37</sup> A torpedo is a mobile weapon, launched from a submarine, surface ship or aircraft. They usually consist of an explosive warhead, guidance section, and a propulsion section. In general they are much faster in the water than their targets.

problems was presented by anti-air warfare. To learn the new tactics an officer could attend the Fleet Anti-Submarine Warfare School or they could learn on the job through studies of tactical manuals and experience.<sup>38</sup> There was no effort made to provide a set training curriculum for all surface warfare officers prior to their first ship.

### Operational Requirements

Robert W. Love, Jr. describes the state of international affairs and the much-changed postwar world this way:

World War II had upset the classical relationships of international affairs and left the United States and the Soviet Union as the only two great powers in the field. France, occupied for four years by the Germans, was in disarray, and Britain, having fought one or more Axis powers for six years was bankrupt. Germany and Japan were in ruins. “The whole world structure and order that we had inherited from the nineteenth century was gone,” observed Assistant Secretary of State Dean Acheson.<sup>39</sup>

The new preeminence of the United States as a superpower combined with the commitment of the United States to supporting democracies throughout the world, as outlined in the speech given by President Harry S. Truman before Congress on 12 March 1947, the Navy found itself with new operational requirements.<sup>40</sup> In addition to the requirement of supporting the occupation of Japan, there was the growing mission to support democratic governments against the communist threat posed by the Soviet Union and its satellite states. While the Navy had a long history of carrying out operations far from the territorial seas of the United States, the mission changed significantly as a result

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<sup>38</sup> Malcom Muir, Jr. *Black Shoes and Blue Water: Surface Warfare in the United States Navy, 1945-1975*. Washington: Naval Historical Center, 1996. p. 107.

<sup>39</sup> Robert W. Love, Jr. *History of the U.S. Navy 1942-1991*. (Harrisburg: Stackpole Books, 1992) pp 278-279.

<sup>40</sup> Jack Sweetman. *American Naval History: An Illustrated Chronology of the U.S. Navy and Marine Corps 1775-Present*. 3<sup>rd</sup> ed. (Annapolis: Naval Institute Press, 2002) p. 197.

of the Truman Doctrine. Most of the previous campaigns and battles fought before World War II were to protect US interests, such as the fight against the Barbary pirates in the early 1800s. Now the task would be “to support free peoples who are resisting attempted subjugation by armed minorities or outside pressure.”<sup>41</sup> This expansive doctrine required stationing forces forward in Japan and the Mediterranean. Sixth Fleet was established in 1950 as a counter to Communist forces that might threaten sea lines of communication in the event of a Soviet ground offensive into Western Europe.<sup>42</sup>

During the interwar period between the two World Wars, there was one probable enemy for the United States Navy to face, the Japanese in a regional fight for control of the Western Pacific. The Japanese Empire represented an inherently maritime power by virtue of its island status. Raw materials of all types fueled the Japanese economy and made the Empire dependent upon on seaborne trade.<sup>43</sup> The problem presented by the Japanese forces was one clearly answered by the naval forces of the United States.

With the coming of the Cold War, there was still one enemy, the Soviet Union; this enemy however, was worldwide from a naval perspective due the presence of fleets in the Baltic Sea, Mediterranean Sea and the Pacific Ocean. While there were Soviet naval forces around the globe, the initial threat presented by the Soviet Union was that of ground invasion into Western Europe. Due to the geography of Europe, the relative weakness of the Soviet Union as a naval power in the immediate years following World

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<sup>41</sup> Jack Sweetman. *American Naval History: An Illustrated Chronology of the U.S. Navy and Marine Corps 1775-Present*. 3<sup>rd</sup> ed. (Annapolis: Naval Institute Press, 2002) p. 197.

<sup>42</sup> Ibid. p. 198.

<sup>43</sup> Geoffery Parker. *The Cambridge History of Warfare*. (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2005) p. 354.

War II, and the atomic bomb, there seemed to be little need for a strong navy.<sup>44</sup> Of course, the United States Navy did feel that there was a need for a strong navy. Writing in the professional journal *Proceedings*, Admiral Robert B. Carney, Chief of Naval Operations, said, “If it is atomic war they want, we in the Navy are prepared to make our contribution, and we will also be ready to perform the one-thousand-and-one non-atomic tasks that are involved in this very complicated business of exercising sea power.”<sup>45</sup> Looking at the time period from 1946 to 1970, there are several wars, skirmishes, and other uses of force by the navy, which did not involve the use of atomic weapons. The Korean and Vietnam Wars are perhaps the best known, but naval forces were involved in Lebanon as well as Taiwan in 1958, Thailand, the naval blockade of Cuba during the Cuban missile crisis in 1962, the Dominican Republic in 1965, the recovery of atomic weapons lost in an air collision off of Spain in 1966, and the Sea of Japan in response to the shooting down of an American reconnaissance plane by North Korea in 1969. These are just a few of the many different missions the United States Navy was carrying out during the Cold War.

Of course no enemy, potential or real, ever remains truly static, and the Soviet Union was no exception. While the Soviet navy was not much feared in the immediate years after World War II, in the early 1950s several new ships and submarine designs were launched which reinforced the perceived need for a strong U. S. Navy. The successful test of an atomic bomb in 1949 demonstrated that the Soviets were a serious

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<sup>44</sup> Robert W. Love, Jr. *History of the U.S. Navy 1942-1991*. (Harrisburg: Stackpole Books, 1992) pp 285.

<sup>45</sup> Malcom Muir, Jr. *Black Shoes and Blue Water: Surface Warfare in the United States Navy, 194-1975*. (Washington: Naval Historical Center, 1996) p. 40.

threat and necessitated that the navy focus on countering the Soviet forces. By removing the United States' monopoly on atomic weapons, the Soviets made the possibility of future wars being non-atomic, or conventional a reality. The Korean War showed that conventional warfare still had a place in the modern world. Subsequently, the surface warfare community had to focus on conventional tactics as well as the atomic fight.<sup>46</sup>

The indecision of the United States regarding military force and its employment in the years following the Second World War showed in the heated debate between the newly formed Air Force and the Navy. The culmination of that debate was the “Revolt of the Admirals.” In a prepared statement to the House Armed Services Committee’s Unification and Strategy Hearings in October 1949, Admiral Louis E. Denfeld, Chief of Naval Operations said:

“Why do we need a strong Navy when any potential enemy has no navy to fight?” I read this in the press, but, what is more disturbing, I hear it repeatedly in the councils of the Department of Defense. As a result, there is a steady campaign to relegate the Navy to a convoy and antisubmarine service, on the grounds that any probable enemy possesses only negligible fleet strength. This campaign results from a misunderstanding of the functions and capabilities of navies and from the erroneous principle of the self-sufficiency of air power...Fleets never in history met opposing fleets for any other purpose than to gain control of the sea— not as an end itself, *but so that national power could be exerted against the enemy.*[emphasis original]<sup>47</sup>

The fight to keep the U. S. Navy alive in the late 1940s resulted in little funding being spent on the surface fleet. Naval aviation and the submarine force received the lion’s share of the limited naval budget and the surface fleet became the red headed

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<sup>46</sup> Malcom Muir, Jr. *Black Shoes and Blue Water: Surface Warfare in the United States Navy, 194-1975*. (Washington: Naval Historical Center, 1996) pp. 35-36.

<sup>47</sup> Jeffrey G. Barlow. *Revolt of the Admirals: The Fight for Naval Aviation, 1945-1950*. (Washington: Naval Historical Center, 1994) p. 253.

child.<sup>48</sup> At the same time budgets decreased, the operational commitments increased. This lack of funding meant that the previous method of instituting small training courses was not a satisfactory course of action. Often, there were no schools available. During the preparation for the Korean War, Lieutenant Junior Grade Richard G. Alexander, stationed aboard the USS *Rooks* (DD 804) said, “There were no schools ashore for these new guns or the fire control gear. The Navy had not filled a pipeline with trained people to go along with the equipment. It was makee [sic] learn. What a lousy situation!”<sup>49</sup>

The impact of the global commitments mandated by the Truman Doctrine and the position of the United States as one of two super powers placed increasing demands upon the officers responsible for carrying out those missions. A newly commissioned officer might find himself, mere months after commissioning, involved in missions around the globe, facing an increasingly sophisticated enemy and dealing with a battle space far different from the one familiar to Admiral Farragut. The new ensign would only be as prepared as his commissioning source made him. Most likely, a graduate of the Naval Academy would be best prepared, having been in a naval school for four years and receiving the collective wisdom of his naval instructors, but he would not have gotten focused training in his warfare specialty. An ensign who received his commission thorough the Naval Reserve Officer Training Corps or Officer Candidate School would be even less prepared for assuming duties directly upon commissioning because he received the bulk of his teaching from civilian professors in pursuit of a civilian degree; his naval training was part time.

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<sup>48</sup> Malcom Muir, Jr. *Black Shoes and Blue Water: Surface Warfare in the United States Navy, 194-1975*. (Washington: Naval Historical Center, 1996) p. 5-15.

<sup>49</sup> *Ibid.* p. 37.

## Naval Reserve Officer Training Corps

In 1946, Congress passed the Holloway Plan, named after Rear Admiral James L. Holloway, Jr. The Holloway Plan established permanent Naval Reserve Officer Training Corps (NROTC) units.<sup>50</sup> Now there was another way for ensigns to enter the fleet other than the Naval Academy at Annapolis. Not everyone approved of the new track, but it did provide a means of controlling the supply of new officers to help the Navy fill its operational requirements. There was a new saying in the Navy, “Did you get your commission the hard way or the Holloway?”<sup>51</sup>

Leaving aside any rivalry between officers resulting from their commissioning source, there was a considerable difference in the education received by midshipmen who attended the Naval Academy and those who attended NROTC. The Academy midshipmen attended an institution devoted solely to producing naval officers. Many of their instructors were naval officers who imparted their experience of sea life alongside the history and mathematics, which were the official subjects. Contrasting sharply with this, midshipmen attending NROTC were only partially immersed in a naval culture. They received instruction on navigation, naval customs, weapons, and many of the same topics as their brethren at Annapolis. One crucial difference was that most of their professors were not naval officers; therefore there was less of a chance for mentorship from officers with sea gong experience. Another difference was the presence of two types of midshipmen at the NROTC units, contract and reserve midshipmen.<sup>52</sup> Contract

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<sup>50</sup> Jack Sweetman. *American Naval History: An Illustrated Chronology of the U.S. Navy and Marine Corps 1775-Present*, 3<sup>rd</sup> ed. (Annapolis: Naval Institute Press, 2002) p 197.

<sup>51</sup> *Time*. “Restrained Power.” August 4, 1958.

<sup>52</sup> Todd A Forney. *The Midshipman Culture and Educational Reform: The U.S. Naval Academy 1946-1976*. (Newark: University of Delaware Press, 2004) p. 58.

midshipmen would receive reserve commissions in exchange for their tuition being paid by the government and be ordered to active duty with the chance to convert their reserve commission to a regular commission after a few years of service. Reserve midshipmen constituted a trained pool of officers to be called upon in an emergency. Eventually contract midshipmen were commissioned with regular status, exactly the same as an Academy midshipman.

A newly commissioned officer headed into a career as a naval aviator or submariner could look forward to a formal course of instruction designed to train him in the basics of his new community. A midshipman in his senior year at the University of Oklahoma who chose the surface fleet might look around in vain to find an officer at his unit who had served aboard a destroyer stationed out of Pearl Harbor, HI, finding only an officer who had served on an amphibious ship homeported in Norfolk, VA. His fellow Academy midshipman had a much better chance of finding someone who could fill him in on what to expect in his new assignment. This lack of contact time or mentoring was a crucial deficiency inherent in the NROTC program. That is not to say that good officers did not begin their careers in NROTC or Officer Candidate School. For example, former Vice Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, Admiral David E. Jeremiah was a graduate of the University of Oregon and commissioned through the Officer Candidate School in 1956.<sup>53</sup> Upon commissioning Ensign Jeremiah would have had very little training in the

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<sup>53</sup> Hon. Ike Skelton in the House of Representatives Thursday February 24, 1994. <http://thomas.loc.gov/cgi-bin/query/z?r103:E24FE4-245>: (accessed 9 June 2008.)

specifics of surface ship operation, yet he qualified as Officer of the Deck after standing only three watches.<sup>54</sup>

There was little doubt that surface officers who did not graduate from the Naval Academy were at a disadvantage in terms of professional knowledge. Yet, the Naval Academy itself was undergoing drastic changes in how it trained junior officers. Prior to World War II, the battleship and its predecessor the ship of the line ruled naval warfare. The Naval Academy existed to train the nascent Nelsons and ensure they possessed the rudimentary skills to serve onboard the ships of the fleet. Thus, the training provided by the Naval Academy sufficed so long as the battleship was the core of the fleet. With the dramatic change in naval warfare provided by the dominance of carrier-based aviation during the Second World War, the curriculum at the Naval Academy changed as well. Line officers were as likely to be aviators or submariners as they were to be surface warfare officers. Therefore the course of instruction at Annapolis incorporated topics appropriate to naval aviation at the expense of “core” surface topics.

For the first hundred years of its existence, the Naval Academy was a trade school of sorts, not a college. Captain W. D. Puleston wrote in 1942,

The advocates of a school ashore for midshipmen did not contemplate a college, and that term has never been applied to the Navy’s school. They advocated a school where midshipmen and instructors would be congregated and would pursue certain subjects essential to the training of naval officers. The opponents and advocates both kept a weather eye on the Academy after it was founded to make sure that it was not turned into a college and that it stuck to its task of preparing young Americans to be junior officer of the Navy.<sup>55</sup>

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<sup>54</sup> Malcolm Muir, Jr. *Black Shoes and Blue Water: Surface Warfare in the United States Navy, 1945-1975*. (Washington: Naval Historical Center, 1996) p. 120. An Officer of the Deck is the officer on watch who is directly responsible to the Commanding Officer for the safety of the ship and its adherence to the operational schedule.

<sup>55</sup> W.D. Puleston. *Annapolis: Gangway to the Quarterdeck*. (New York: D. Appleton-

In the years immediately following World War II, the focus of the Academy changed away from a trade school, geared towards providing specific skills immediately applicable to the fleet, towards providing a solid education in both the hard sciences and the liberal arts with the goal of producing officers who could think and reason.<sup>56</sup> While this change likely developed officers who were better prepared for the long term needs of a naval career it did little to prepare an officer to work on a surface ship.

Thus neither NROTC nor the Academy truly prepared their midshipman for service as a surface warfare officer. The Academy officer was likely better prepared than his NROTC counterpart due to the increased mentoring and immersion available to him. Yet, the fleet paid the price of the better educated, less trained officers reporting to a navy increasingly reliant on sophisticated technology amid a much larger battlespace.

### Competing for New Officers

In 1952 a new personnel system designated surface officers “as an officer not a member of the aeronautic organization.”<sup>57</sup> With such a glorious definition, and the fact that an aviator was twice as likely as a non-aviator to be promoted to admiral in the ten years after World War II, surface warfare continued to be the less attractive option for new officers.<sup>58</sup> Rear Admiral James L. Holloway’s son, James L. Holloway, III, a future Chief of Naval Operations, completed his flight training in 1946, which his father had encouraged him to pursue. In 1944 then Captain Holloway had written to his son,

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Century Company, 1942) p. 3.

<sup>56</sup> Todd A Forney. *The Midshipman Culture and Educational Reform: The U.S. Naval Academy 1946-1976*. (Newark: University of Delaware Press, 2004) p. 60.

<sup>57</sup> Malcom Muir, Jr. *Black Shoes and Blue Water: Surface Warfare in the United States Navy, 194-1975*. (Washington: Naval Historical Center, 1996) p. 69.

<sup>58</sup> *Ibid.* p. 71.

“Carrier aviation is clearly the wave of the future. I urge you not to delay in putting in for flight training.”<sup>59</sup>

With the center of the Navy’s fighting formations changing from the battleship to the aircraft carrier, the traditional path to higher rank changed. Submarine warfare had also proven its worth; experience in submarines was viewed positively. One writer put it this way in a June 1953 article in *Proceedings*, “To choose the more favorable between submarine and aviation training as far as succession to high place is concerned would be difficult. Either one or the other is a decided asset.”<sup>60</sup> Before the Second World War membership in the “gun club,” i.e. battleship experience and command was the way to succeed in the Navy, assuming that an officer performed his duties as required.<sup>61</sup> Combined with the increased chances for promotion, extra pay for those officers qualified in either submarines or naval aviation tipped the scale against the surface warfare community.

At least one officer, Commander Gerald W. Rahill, took the tack of suggesting that service in the surface fleet would better prepare a junior officer for service as an aviator or a submariner. His thesis put forth the idea that due to complexity of a modern destroyer and the variety of missions it could face, a junior officer would learn more about naval warfare than just about anywhere else. Commander Rahill lays out a thorough argument to the effect that surface warfare provides a solid foundation for a

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<sup>59</sup> Malcolm Muir, Jr. *Black Shoes and Blue Water: Surface Warfare in the United States Navy, 1945-1975*. (Washington: Naval Historical Center, 1996) p. 10.

<sup>60</sup> Commander Ralph Gerber. “The Choice of a Career within the Navy.” *U.S. Naval Institute Proceedings*. June 1953. p. 622.

<sup>61</sup> Malcom Muir, Jr. *Black Shoes and Blue Water: Surface Warfare in the United States Navy, 194-1975*. (Washington: Naval Historical Center, 1996) p. 10.

naval warfare as a whole.<sup>62</sup> The fact that an article placed surface warfare in the position of being a stepping stone of sorts for bigger and better things shows the relative decline of the surface force as the mainstay of the Navy.

### Professionalism

World War II showcased the power and might of the United States Navy. The Navy developed new tactics and proved them in battle. Massive amounts of personnel and material moved along sea lines of communication protected by the US Navy, which denied those same lines to the enemy. Yet, in 1949, Commander John S. McCain, Jr. wrote “The professional education of the naval officer, a subject of grave importance, should be re-examined in the light of World War II experience.”<sup>63</sup> After all, Fleet Admiral Nimitz spoke of his preparation at the Naval War College in very glowing terms, “The enemy of our games was always Japan, and the courses were so thorough that after the start of World War II, nothing that happened in the Pacific was strange or unexpected.”<sup>64</sup> What was wrong with the educational system of the Navy, which had just won the largest maritime war in mankind’s history? The change in the world and the United States’ place in world events suggested that the system, which produced the great naval victories in the Pacific theater was not up to the task of producing the naval officer of the future. While Commander McCain’s article aimed more at higher education for officers than initial training, it holds the lack of a central commissioning source to be a

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<sup>62</sup> Commader Gerald W. Rahill. “Destroyer Duty.” *U.S. Naval Institute Proceedings*. October, 1952. p. 1081.

<sup>63</sup> Commander John S. McCain. “Where Do We Go from Here?” *U.S. Naval Institute Proceedings*. January, 1949. p. 47.

<sup>64</sup> Fleet Admiral Chester W. Nimitz. “Admiral Chester W. Nimitz (1885 - 1966)” <http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/amex/macarthur/peopleevents/pandeAMEX90.html> (accessed July 22, 2008).

crucial difference in the officer corps from before the war compared to after World War II.

It became apparent that the training received by junior officers in their commissioning pipeline failed to meet the needs of the Cold War Navy. Commander R. B. Laning, commanding officer of USS *Seawolf* (SSN 575), “suggested to the commander of the Atlantic Fleet destroyers that the surface navy establish a destroyer school and a technological development group, develop a specialized insignia to bolster esprit de corps.”<sup>65</sup> Commander Russell S. Crenshaw, author of the highly respected *Naval Shiphandling*, wrote in 1957 concerning the state of junior officers, “If our fleets are to be a cornerstone of national defense in the age of guided missiles and nuclear power, they must be manned by competent, aggressive, and thoroughly trained officers, and thus manned at the first moment of aggression!”<sup>66</sup> In his Proceedings article, Commander Crenshaw postulates one of the reasons for officers deciding not to stay in the Navy, particularly the surface fleet had to do with the training the officers received. Commander Crenshaw called for more through training leading to a commission where “the standards of performance should be rigidly high.”<sup>67</sup> Unlike some of his contemporaries, he held the belief that training was best accomplished on the job. He noted, “An individual seldom forgets how to do something he has actually done, and the excellence of his knowledge and ability is not increased by any number of reports.”<sup>68</sup>

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<sup>65</sup> Malcolm Muir, Jr. *Black Shoes and Blue Water: Surface Warfare in the United States Navy, 1945-1975*. (Washington: Naval Historical Center, 1996) p. 78.

<sup>66</sup> Commander Russell S. Crenshaw. “Why We are Losing Our Junior Officers” *U.S. Naval Institute Proceedings*. February, 1957. p. 128.

<sup>67</sup> *Ibid.* p. 131.

<sup>68</sup> *Ibid.* p. 132.

Professionalism, as defined by Samuel P. Huntington, consisted of three elements: expertise, responsibility, and corporateness. The professional education necessary for expertise Huntington said, “consists of two phases: the first imparting a broad liberal, cultural background, and the second imparting the specialized skills and knowledge of the profession.”<sup>69</sup> After World War II, the Naval Academy shifted from being a “trade school” toward modern college. Combined with the new source of officers graduating from civilian colleges and universities, the commissioning pipeline changed to satisfy the Huntington first phase. There was however, no formal education, which satisfied the second phase for surface officers.

#### Generalist versus Specialist

The final factor influencing training for surface officers was the “generalist versus specialist” debate. The generalist approach held the idea that a line officer ought to have enough technical competence to understand the various technologies employed in a modern navy. The specialists believed that a line officer should learn a specialty such as missiles or nuclear propulsion. Commander M. Eckhart, Jr. addressed the subject this way,

First, the only requisites among the many possible professional qualifications of line officers are those derived from the function of operational command, none of which are specific technical qualifications. (In the specific debate over specialist versus sub-specialist, the conclusion frequently finds expression in the statement that ‘command’ is the specialty of every line officer.) Second, the technological demands imposed on the line profession by the modern Navy can be satisfied by the *collective* technical capacity achieved through individual pursuit of sub-specialties by a majority of line officers. [emphasis original]<sup>70</sup>

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<sup>69</sup> Samuel P. Huntington. *The Soldier and the State: The Theory and Politics of Civil-Military Relations*. (New York: Vintage Books, 1957) p. 9.

<sup>70</sup> Commander M. Eckhart, Jr. “The Wit to See” *U.S. Naval Institute Proceedings*.

As the technology used in the fleet became more and more complicated, schools developed that provided training in how a particular technology worked.<sup>71</sup> The downside of schools specializing in specific technologies or areas of warfare such as guided missiles or anti-submarine warfare was that the officers of a particular ship had to be carefully matched to the ship's capabilities and combat effectiveness might be compromised by the absence of just one officer. Additionally what happened to an officer who specialized in an area that was later overshadowed by new technology? In the submarine force, those officers who did not desire training in nuclear propulsion or did not meet the standards for selection into the program found themselves not competitive in the submarine force.<sup>72</sup>

In the end the generalist won the argument. In 1957, seven years before Commander Eckhart's article which assumed command was the specialty of the line, Captain William P. Mack wrote, "Either we must declare that he will succeed to broad command only if he becomes a specialist in guided missiles, or aviation, or submarines, and name which of these specialties holds the most promise, or we must hold to the theory of broad command and tell him that there is only one *real* specialty- command." [emphasis original]<sup>73</sup>

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August, 1964. p. 34.

<sup>71</sup> Malcolm Muir, Jr. *Black Shoes and Blue Water: Surface Warfare in the United States Navy, 1945-1975*. (Washington: Naval Historical Center, 1996) p. 107.

<sup>72</sup> *Ibid.* p. 117.

<sup>73</sup> Captain William P. Mack. "The Exercise of Broad Command: Still the Navy's Top Specialty." *U.S. Naval Institute Proceedings*. April, 1957. p. 374.

## The Naval Destroyer School

The Naval Destroyer School in Newport, Rhode Island started in 1961 with the mission “to provide the destroyer forces, through a system of functional education and training, with officers professionally qualified and motivated to function as effective naval leaders on board ship.”<sup>74</sup> Rear Admiral Charles E. Weakly, Commander Destroyer Force, Atlantic Fleet, envisioned a school to provide practical professional training, which was not being provided in the undergraduate education of officers.<sup>75</sup> A further consideration for starting a school for destroyer officers was the increasing inexperience of officers filling department head billets, most being filled by lieutenants (junior grade) and ensigns.<sup>76</sup> Taking a very unusual step, Commander Allan P. Slaff, commanding USS *Davis* (DD 937), wrote directly to the Chief of Naval Operations in 1962, specifically laying out several issues with his ship. Among those issues was that there were no line officers above the rank of lieutenant (junior grade) other than himself and his executive officer.<sup>77</sup>

A basic primer on shipboard organization is in order here. The commanding officer was the one officer who was overall in charge of the ship. The role of the commanding officer has not changed much throughout the years. Admiral Lord Horatio Nelson would be intimately familiar with the responsibilities of a modern ship captain, excepting perhaps the ever-increasing paperwork. The number one assistant to the

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<sup>74</sup> Lieutenant Commander J. F. McNulty. “Naval Destroyer School.” *U.S. Naval Institute Proceedings*. April, 1966. p. 157.

<sup>75</sup> *Ibid.* p. 157.

<sup>76</sup> *Ibid.* p. 157.

<sup>77</sup> Malcolm Muir, Jr. *Black Shoes and Blue Water: Surface Warfare in the United States Navy, 1945-1975*. (Washington: Naval Historical Center, 1996) p. 120.

commanding officer was the executive officer. He was charged with administering the ship and assisting the commanding officer. Directly underneath the executive officer would be the various department heads (also called heads of department) such as the chief engineer, responsible for the engineering department; the weapons officer, responsible for the ships weapons; and so on. Working for the department head there were various division officers, each responsible for a smaller section of the department. For example in the engineering department, there was an officer in charge of the auxiliaries (winches, ship's boats, steering gear and other machinery outside of the main propulsion spaces) and there was an officer in charge of the propulsion spaces. There were some differences in the exact makeup of the chain of command from ship to ship but that was the general shape.<sup>78</sup> A department head had vast responsibilities and the surface navy did not necessarily provide the right training for the job until the establishment of the Naval Destroyer School.

The curriculum at the Naval Destroyer School gave each student a thorough grounding in the three line departments: weapons, operations, and engineering. Prospective students must have eighteen months of destroyer duty, volunteer, possess their commanding officer's recommendation, be career oriented, and have a solid record of performance. Upon arrival at the school, all students took a comprehensive examination and additional training brought weak students up to speed. Coursework

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<sup>78</sup> Commander Arthur A. Ageton. *The Naval Officer's Guide* (Annapolis: Naval Institute Press, 1960) pp. 272-280.

consisted of classroom instruction as well as practical experience at sea in destroyers whose mission was to serve as a school ship.<sup>79</sup>

The Naval Destroyer School marked a significant change in how the surface navy trained officers. “The Destroyer School quickly became the shortest route to division command and to promotion.”<sup>80</sup> The school was not the direct answer to all of the issues faced by the surface navy after World War II, but it was certainly a step in the right direction. While not addressing the issue of initial training for surface warfare officers, it had an important side effect. The department heads, at least on destroyers, were better trained. In turn, they provided better training to their subordinate officers, which had the affect of raising the overall quality of the wardroom on the ship.

With the success of the Naval Destroyer School, a push began to establish a similar school to provide the training lacking in junior officers. In 1965, Lieutenant (junior grade) Roy C. Smith, IV, wrote an article in *Proceedings* laying out a sound rationale to establish a “surface line school for junior officers.”<sup>81</sup> He noted, “Being a “professional” in the Navy of the present day requires a more-than-working knowledge of advanced, ever-changing engineering, weapons, and electronic systems; complicated tactical and operational procedures; and a sound foundation in the increasingly more horrifying naval administrative structure.”<sup>82</sup> Of interest, he proposed that, since many junior officers were already spending between six and twelve months out of their first

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<sup>79</sup> Lieutenant Commander J. F. McNulty. “Naval Destroyer School.” *U.S. Naval Institute Proceedings*. April, 1966. p. 158-162.

<sup>80</sup> Malcolm Muir, Jr. *Black Shoes and Blue Water: Surface Warfare in the United States Navy, 1945-1975*. (Washington: Naval Historical Center, 1996) p. 121.

<sup>81</sup> Lieutenant (junior grade) Roy C. Smith, IV. “Wanted: A Surface Line School for Junior Officers.” *U.S. Naval Institute Proceedings*. April, 1966. p. 129.

<sup>82</sup> *Ibid.* p. 129.

four years of service attending courses to provide some specific skill, a six month school at the beginning of an officer's career would have the benefit of both providing a better trained officer and reducing the need for the smaller skill specific schools.<sup>83</sup>

It would be a little over ten years before the Surface Warfare Officers School Division Officer Course would begin. It would take one of the more unorthodox Chiefs of Naval Operations, Admiral Elmo R. Zumwalt, Jr. to make it happen.

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<sup>83</sup> Ibid. p. 131.

## CHAPTER 3

### BIRTH OF THE SURFACE WARFARE OFFICER DIVISION OFFICER COURSE

For decades the surface Navy was the Navy. But then came the submariners and the aviators, slicing off groups of officers with their special insignias and their pride of specialization.

—Commander Raymond J. Hart, *U.S. Naval Institute Proceedings*<sup>84</sup>

In September of 1970, 24 newly commissioned officers began a pilot course at the Surface Warfare Officer School at Newport, RI.<sup>85</sup> In the six weeks of instruction provided by the new course, the budding SWOs learned the duties and responsibilities of division officers and watch officers; the ensigns used simulators as well to gain practical experience.<sup>86</sup> As an off shoot of the highly successful Naval Destroyer School, this new course initially trained only officers headed for destroyer service. By the middle of the decade the school had expanded to provide initial training for all SWOs prior to reporting to their first ship.

Several factors influenced the establishment of a formal initial training school for all SWOs. First, the relatively deep selection of a SWO, Vice Admiral Elmo R. Zumwalt to be Chief of Naval Operations (CNO), provided the stamp of approval for changing the established patterns of the Navy. Second, some of the changes in the nation as a result of the fighting in Southeast Asia, particularly the changing environment on American university campuses and the end of the draft. These factors greatly changed the pool of individuals choosing to pursue a commission in the Navy. Finally the combination of all

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<sup>84</sup> Commander Raymond J. Hart. “Surface Warfare Officers: The Need for Professionalism.” *U.S. Naval Institute Proceedings*, June 1976. p. 38.

<sup>85</sup> Lieutenant Commander Charles P. Vion. “The First Step Toward SWO Qualification.” *U.S. Naval Institute Proceedings*, March 1978. p. 137.

<sup>86</sup> *Ibid.* p. 137.

surface type commands into just two commands, Commander, Naval Surface Forces Atlantic (ComNavSurfLant) and Commander, Naval Surface Forces Pacific (ComNavSurfPac) provided just two advocates for Surface Warfare in the fleet. This was in contrast to two amphibious, two destroyer, two cruiser, two mine sweepers, and two service fleet type commands, one of each type in the Atlantic and Pacific.<sup>87</sup>

Admiral Elmo R. Zumwalt, Jr.

Perhaps more than any other single person Admiral Zumwalt deserves the credit for bringing Surface Warfare back as a serious professional specialty in the Navy. On 01 July, 1970 Admiral Elmo R. Zumwalt, Jr. relieved Admiral Thomas H. Moorer as CNO. Admiral Moorer moved on to become the Chairman of the Joints Chiefs of Staff. Zumwalt was a highly qualified officer with a broad background, which included operational tours during three conflicts as well as extensive service in the Naval bureaucracy. He graduated from the Naval Academy in 1943 and fought in destroyers during the Pacific campaign in World War II. Zumwalt served as navigator in USS *Wisconsin* (BB 64) in the Korean War. In addition to the practical experience of serving as a Surface Warfare Officer, Zumwalt studied at the Naval War College and the National War College. Tours in Washington at both the Bureau of Naval Personnel and as aide to Secretary of the Navy, Paul H. Nitze rounded out his professional expertise.<sup>88</sup>

Further knowledge of how the Navy worked within the larger military industrial complex came when Zumwalt stood up the Division of Systems Analysis. He gained first

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<sup>87</sup> Vice Admiral Robert S. Salzer (Retired). "The Surface Forces." *U.S. Naval Institute Proceedings*, November 1976. p. 28.

<sup>88</sup> Robert W. Love, Jr., ed. *The Chiefs of Naval Operations*. (Annapolis: Naval Institute Press, 1980), 363-366.

hand experience in bringing emerging technologies to the fleet when he commanded the U. S. Navy's first guided missile frigate, USS *Dewey* (DLG 14). Not all of his operational time was spent with the mainstream of surface warfare. Admiral Zumwalt commanded U.S. Naval forces in Vietnam from September 1968 to May 1970, where he gained considerable experience in riverine warfare.<sup>89</sup> All of his combined experiences stood him in good stead and explain why the Secretaries of Defense and the Navy chose to select Zumwalt, a three star Admiral for the four star job of CNO.<sup>90</sup> As CNO, Zumwalt changed many things within the Navy, but his influence was particularly felt within the surface fleet. Not only did he push hard for technology advances, he worked diligently to improve the personnel of the Navy as well. During his time as CNO he oversaw the shift to all volunteer military. Zumwalt realized the nature of how the Navy treated its personnel must change with the ending of the draft.

In one of the more significant acts of his tenure with regards to the Surface Warfare Officer community, Zumwalt established of a working group consisting of junior SWOs to report on the retention of SWOs, the Surface Warfare Officer Retention Study Group. In fact in the first of his Z-grams, Admiral Zumwalt laid out a plan to have retention groups, comprised of junior officers from various communities within the Navy, meet in Washington, D.C. Z-grams were messages sent out personally by Admiral Zumwalt as CNO. Typically Z-grams instituted immediate changes in regulations or policies. The groups briefed their recommendations to Zumwalt personally.<sup>91</sup>

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<sup>89</sup> Robert W. Love, Jr., ed. *The Chiefs of Naval Operations*. (Annapolis: Naval Institute Press, 1980), 366-367.

<sup>90</sup> Admiral Elmo R. Zumwalt, Jr. *On Watch*. (New York: Quadrangle, 1976), 44-51.

<sup>91</sup> *Ibid.* 170-172.

In 1970, the same year Zumwalt became CNO; the retention rate for SWOs was fourteen percent.<sup>92</sup> The SWO Retention Study Group made many recommendations, nearly one hundred. The most significant of these were “more rigorous standards, better schooling, and a surface warfare pin equivalent to the dolphins worn by submariners or the wings by the aviators.”<sup>93</sup>

The desires expressed by the Retention Study Group reflected a growing sense of professionalism in the Surface Warfare community. Professionalism grew significantly in the 1960s, but it was mostly directed at the higher levels of the SWOs. The Naval Destroyer School advanced the professional standard for department heads on destroyers, but did little to enhance the quality of either entry level SWOs or other classes of ships within the fleet.

Formal recognition of Surface Warfare as a separate discipline within the Navy came in April 1970 when the Bureau of Naval Personnel established the SWO designation. One year into his tour, Admiral Zumwalt changed the qualification process to make it more stringent.<sup>94</sup> Under the revised guidelines, qualification as both Combat Information Center Watch Officer and Officer of the Deck and a minimum time of service onboard ship of one year were required prior to achieving the SWO Designation.<sup>95</sup>

The Retention Study Group also recommended that officers who failed either flight school or the nuclear power program (which was now a prerequisite for a line

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<sup>92</sup> Malcolm Muir, Jr. *Black Shoes and Blue Water: Surface Warfare in the United States Navy, 1945-1975*. (Washington: Naval Historical Center, 1996), 223.

<sup>93</sup> *Ibid.* 224.

<sup>94</sup> *Ibid.* 224.

<sup>95</sup> *Ibid.* 224.

officer to serve in submarines) not be sent to the surface fleet. They argued that those officers be sent out of the service so as not to reinforce the image of the surface fleet as “second-class citizens”<sup>96</sup>

Admiral Zumwalt included additional items in his Z-grams: items designed to improve the professional lives and opportunities of SWOs. Z-gram 14 eliminated or reassigned to petty officers several collateral duties traditionally assigned to junior officers.<sup>97</sup> Z-gram 31 established a shiphandling competition among junior officers.<sup>98</sup> A particularly bold Z-gram, number 64, directed “commanding officers to increase the opportunities for junior officer to practice shiphandling. Standard visual conning signals have been implemented to enable observers to know that the CO is not conning the ship, and indicating the rank of the officer or senior petty officer having the conn.”<sup>99</sup> Z-gram 64 implied the CNO underwrote the possibility of less than stellar ship handling in the name of professional development.

#### Introduction of the Surface Warfare Officer Designator

CinCPacFlt/CinCLantFlt Instruction 1412.1 laid out the first official requirement for SWO, designator 1110. Issued in 1973, almost two hundred years after the foundation of the U.S. Navy, this instruction became the bedrock document defining the knowledge needed by SWOs as a profession.<sup>100</sup> The curriculum of the initial SWO School changed as one of the results of the SWO Retention Group recommendation. The

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<sup>96</sup> Malcolm Muir, Jr. *Black Shoes and Blue Water: Surface Warfare in the United States Navy, 1945-1975*. (Washington: Naval Historical Center, 1996), 224.

<sup>97</sup> “Z-gram Summary” *U.S. Naval Institute Proceedings*, Naval Review 1971. p. 294.

<sup>98</sup> *Ibid.* p. 296.

<sup>99</sup> *Ibid.* p. 298.

<sup>100</sup> Lieutenant Commander Charles P. Vion. “The First Step Toward SWO Qualification.” *U.S. Naval Institute Proceedings*, March 1978. p. 137.

expanded curriculum trained the new officers in the skills required by the combined Atlantic and Pacific Fleet Instruction 1412.1.<sup>101</sup>

Lieutenant Commander Charles P. Vion, former academic director of the SWO Basic Course in Newport, RI wrote “Because of increasing fleet equipment sophistication, emphasis on fleet material readiness, and reduced underway training time, an accelerated expansion plan was implemented to provide the training capability to meet an annual SWOS training rate of 1275 students by the end of fiscal year 1975.”<sup>102</sup> This course, universally taken by junior officers prior to reporting to their first ship, marks the first time that the surface fleet took charge of establishing the basic requirements of the professional SWO.

#### Post Vietnam Changes

On June 5, 1970 at 0101 hours, an improvised explosive device destroyed the Naval Reserve Officer Training Corps (NROTC) midshipmen’s wardroom (lounge) at the University of California, Los Angeles campus.<sup>103</sup> Perhaps nothing other than the shooting of four students by the Ohio National Guard at Kent State during a protest against the Vietnam conflict serves to illustrate the huge split between the college-age students and the military.<sup>104</sup> NROTC and Officer Candidate School provided a large portion of the new officers needed by the fleet; the alienation of the student bodies at many civilian universities drastically shrank the available pool of potential officers.

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<sup>101</sup> Lieutenant Commander Charles P. Vion. “The First Step Toward SWO Qualification.” *U.S. Naval Institute Proceedings*, March 1978. p. 137.

<sup>102</sup> *Ibid.* p. 137.

<sup>103</sup> Midshipman 1/C Lawrence M. Kryske. “NROTC at UCLA: The Colors Still Fly.” *U.S. Naval Institute Proceedings*, December 1971. p. 25.

<sup>104</sup> Jack Sweetman, *American Naval History: An Illustrated Chronology of the U.S. Navy and Marine Corps 1775-Present*. 3<sup>rd</sup> ed [Annapolis: Naval Institute Press], 236.

The effect of the draft had not gone unnoticed in the years prior to the Vietnam conflict. Commander Russell S. Crenshaw, Jr. noted of junior officers in 1957 that, “Most chose the officer program as a means of satisfying the Military Service requirement. Three years as an officer is preferable to two years as ‘G.I.’”<sup>105</sup> Eighteen years later the Professor of Naval Science at the University of Pennsylvania, Captain E. Soper wrote about the ending of the military draft saying, “the only incentive for enrollment are the generous scholarships and the opportunity to serve as an officer in the Navy or Marine Corps. But these are attracting fewer men, including fewer of the most capable ones. Voluntary disenrollments are increasing.”<sup>106</sup> Soper noted, “In this age of complexity, the Navy must have officers who are intellectually capable of handling new political, technological, and leadership problems. The fleet must be manned and led by an officer corps of dedicated individuals who are not simply ‘qualified’ but who are among the ‘best qualified’ men the country can produce.”<sup>107</sup>

The quality of new officers reflects the quality of the pool from which those officers come. As a result of the increasing anti-war sentiment expressed across civilian institutions, eight NROTC units at some of the best universities in the country shut down. To make up for the loss in officers commissioned from those units, twelve new units were established at other colleges. The quality of the new colleges lagged that of the old schools. By extension the quality of education received by officers commissioned through the new NROTC units was less than that of officers commissioned at units

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<sup>105</sup> Commander Russell S. Crenshaw, Jr. “Why We Are Losing Our Junior Officers.” *U.S. Naval Institute Proceedings*, February 1957. p. 129.

<sup>106</sup> Captain M. E. Soper. “Officers or the 1980s: A Challenge for NROTC.” *U.S. Naval Institute Proceedings*, February 1975. p. 40.

<sup>107</sup> *Ibid.* p. 40.

associated with more rigorous universities.<sup>108</sup> Soper used, “the failure of NROTC to produce its share of officers qualified to undertake nuclear power training,” as proof that the NROTC program quality lowered in the years immediately following the cessation of the draft.<sup>109</sup>

An officer’s ability to quickly learn skills needed aboard ship while simultaneously leading a division depended upon both his preparation and his background prior to reporting his ship. Rigorous education prepared officers to excel. Officers, who received less than rigorous educations through the universities associated with their NROTC units, were not prepared to excel. By removing the learning of the basic skills required by a SWO from the shipboard environment, the SWO Basic course leveled the playing field for new ensigns.

#### Merger of Type Commands

In another drastic change in the surface fleet, Admiral Zumwalt consolidated all of the various surface type commanders into just two, one for each coast. Type commanders are responsible to the CNO for the maintenance and training of the units assigned to them. Prior to Zumwalt’s tour as CNO, the responsibility for surface ships was scattered between commands for Cruiser-Destroyer Forces, Amphibious Forces, Service Forces (replenishment ships) and Mine Forces.<sup>110</sup> Having the responsibility for training spread across so many different commands prevented successful professional development. A prime example of this was the Naval Destroyer School. Crusier-

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<sup>108</sup> Ibid. p. 42.

<sup>109</sup> Ibid. p. 42.

<sup>110</sup> Vice Admiral Robert S. Salzer (Retired). “The Surface Forces.” *U.S. Naval Institute Proceedings*, November 1976. p. 27.

Destroyer Forces command supported the formation of the school, representing just part of the surface warfare community. Initially begun as a cost saving merger, primarily by eliminating staff positions, the actual effect was much greater.

Vice Admiral Robert S. Salzer, the first Commander, Naval Surface Forces Pacific, who oversaw the merger on the Pacific coast said, “The only real advantage of the merger was the potential it offered for assisting in the restoration of proper emphasis on surface warfare and reversing the decline in the prestige and esprit of the ‘black shoe’ community which had become so apparent in recent years.”<sup>111</sup> Further, Salzer noted, “The surface components of the Navy brought up the rear with respect to funding, manning, *and professional programs* [emphasis added]; also they badly lacked cohesiveness.”<sup>112</sup> He expected that the consolidation of the type commands would help out not just the Navy’s bottom line but would benefit the entire SWO community as well.

All militaries suffer from internal strife amongst their various units and disciplines. The degree of strife varies from good-natured joking about the abilities of units and services to serious competition for limited funds. The surface community exhibited the same characteristics. A distinct pecking order existed with the cruisers and destroyers occupying the top spot, then amphibious ships, service ships and mine warfare ships. While merging all of the previous type commands failed to remove all traces of the intra-surface force rivalries, it provided a united front to the Navy and increased the professionalism of the SWO.

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<sup>111</sup> Ibid. p. 29.

<sup>112</sup> Ibid. p. 29.

Against the advice of outgoing CNO Admiral Moorer who thought the practice of having a naval aviator as CNO was the best course for the Navy, Secretary of Defense Melvin R. Laird selected Admiral Zumwalt to be the CNO.<sup>113</sup> Zumwalt oversaw a difficult time in the Navy and indeed the Nation. Part of the extensive changes he instituted provided the professional foundation for SWOs in two important ways. First, the establishment of a separate designator for SWOs enhanced the sense of community. Second, merging the type commands provided a voice for that community. The combined voice of the two surface type commanders set standards for SWO qualification. That standard in turn became the driving force for the curriculum of the SWO basic school. Finally, the complex interactions between the military and universities as a result of the Vietnam War, which changed the potential pool of officers, necessitated the formation of a school to train the officers before they went to their first ship.

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<sup>113</sup> Robert W. Love, Jr., ed. *The Chiefs of Naval Operations*. (Annapolis: Naval Institute Press, 1980), 367.

## CHAPTER 4

### THE EVOLUTION OF SWO INITIAL TRAINING

War is highly competitive; we are trying to train people to endure the hardships and strain of war and we would be doing ourselves and our country a disservice to adopt measures which would soften the fibre of men in uniform.

–Admiral Robert B. Carney, remarks while Chief of Naval Operations<sup>114</sup>

With the establishment of the SWO Basic School in Newport, RI and a second SWO Basic School opened in Coronado, CA, it appeared as though the SWO community had gained its sense of self and professionalism. By 1980, SWOs possessed their own warfare device, rigorous standards in the Personnel Qualification Standards (PQS) and their own initial training to start the SWO candidate on the correct path towards professionalism. These items addressed the major concerns of the SWO retention group, who delivered their recommendations to Admiral Zumwalt in 1970. As with any institution, the situation changed over time subject to three major influences. First, the later half of the Cold War, particularly from the end of the United States involvement in the Vietnam War to the collapse of the Soviet Union, provided the background against which the Surface Navy developed. Feedback from the fleet shaped SWO Basic as the second significant change. The final challenge faced by SWO initial training concerned the perception that the SWO community had become a dumping ground for “fallen angels” and “nuclear waste”, terms referring to officers who failed out of flight and nuclear training respectfully.

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<sup>114</sup> Robert Debs Heinl, Jr. *Dictionary of Military and Naval Quotations* (Annapolis: Unites States Naval Institute, 1966), 329.

## The Cold War

The world changed significantly both politically and militarily during the 1980s and 1990s; many of those changes affected the United States Navy. The changes affecting the Navy centered first, on the Soviet Union's fleet expansion and subsequent contraction, and secondly, on the growth and development of the 600 ship navy of the Reagan years as a direct counter reaction to the naval might of the Soviet Union. As the US Navy matured, the SWO training matured to answer the needs of the fleet. The Soviet Navy presented the first major challenge as it grew in strength throughout the 1970s to emerge in the 1980s as a credible blue water fleet. Yet, by the end of the 1980s, serious cracks appeared the Soviet façade and the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics vanished 08 December 1992.<sup>115</sup> Since the end of the Second World War, the Soviet bear provided the de facto measuring stick for determining military readiness. Admiral Zumwalt felt so strongly about the threat presented by the Soviet Navy that he had Soviet naval writings translated into English and disseminated to the fleet to educate his officers while he was CNO.<sup>116</sup> Both the rise and fall of the USSR affected the US Navy and by extension the subset of the Navy concerned with Surface Warfare.

By astute planning in response to the success of American naval power during the Cuban Missile crisis, the Soviet Navy began a large period of expansion in the years during and immediately after the United States' heavy involvement in Southeast Asia. The post war Soviet Navy of the 1950s, built primarily to provide for coastal defense, developed into a credible blue water force by the 1970s. The Soviet Navy of the 1970s

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<sup>115</sup> Jack Sweetman. *American Naval History: An Illustrated Chronology of the U.S. Navy and Marine Corps, 1775-Present*. (Annapolis: Naval Institute Press, 2002), 289.

<sup>116</sup> Robert William Love, Jr., ed. *The Chiefs of Naval Operations* (Annapolis: Naval Institute Press, 1980), 370.

and early 1980s possessed the capability to deny the US Navy the use of the seas, at least temporarily.

In the decade following U.S. withdrawal from Vietnam, Soviet defense expenditures exceeded American spending by \$100 billion.<sup>117</sup> This money brought the Soviet Navy into a position of power; they became a first-rate naval power. New classes of ships and submarines brought the ability of a Soviet fleet to hold off an American fleet or even threaten the vital sea lines of communication between North America and Europe.

President Ronald Reagan's Secretary of Defense, Casper Weinberger said in 1981 that, "in virtually every measure of military power the Soviet Union enjoys a decided advantage."<sup>118</sup> Anti-ship cruise missiles provide an excellent example of the advantage held by the Soviets. Despite the successful deployment of ships armed with surface to air missiles, Secretary of Defense Robert McNamara canceled American development of ship based anti-ship cruise missiles in 1962.<sup>119</sup> The Soviets continued to develop anti-ship cruise missiles and in 1967 a Soviet ship, operated by Egyptian forces sank an Israeli ship using anti-ship cruise missiles.<sup>120</sup>

As a counterweight to the Soviet military expansion of the 1970s, Ronald Regan successfully campaigned for the Presidency on a platform that included major increases in defense spending. He worried about the decline in American military might, which

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<sup>117</sup> Robert W. Love, Jr. *History of the U.S. Navy: Volume Two, 1942-1991* [Harrisburg, Stackpole Books, 1992] 704.

<sup>118</sup> *Ibid.* 704.

<sup>119</sup> *Ibid.* 714.

<sup>120</sup> Jack Sweetman. *American Naval History: An Illustrated Chronology of the U.S. Navy and Marine Corps, 1775-Present.* (Annapolis: Naval Institute Press, 2002) 237.

happened while recovering from the Vietnam conflict and the inflation of the late 1970s. On 05 February 1981, newly appointed Secretary of the Navy John Lehman, Jr. testified to the Senate Armed Forces Committee that the Navy needed to build back up to a strength of 600 ships in the active fleet.<sup>121</sup> In a new change, Soviet naval strength enabled Soviet involvement in areas as far flung as Angola, Ethiopia, Southeast Asia and Yemen, giving the Soviets the type of global reach enjoyed by the United States Navy since the end of the Second World War.<sup>122</sup>

The Reagan years brought both new capabilities in the form of new classes of ships and weapons; old capabilities returned as well with the recommissioning of the *Iowa* class battleships. In the early 1980s, the *Ticonderoga* class cruisers entered service. These new cruisers used the new Aegis weapons system, coupling phased array radars with missile launchers forward and aft and 5-inch gun mounts forward and aft as well. In addition, the cruisers carried two anti-submarine helicopters and shipboard launched torpedoes. The class was designed to be multi-mission, covering anti-air, anti-surface, and anti-submarine warfare. The *Ticonderoga* cruisers leaped ahead of other ships in the inventory and the world by providing the capability of defending an area against air attack versus point defense. This changed tactics, no longer did a carrier's escort ships have to position themselves between the threat and the carrier; the new cruisers could defend the carrier from the opposite side of the carrier to the threat.

Since the fall of the Iron Curtain, new facts revealed that the Soviet threat might have been overstated. After the Soviet collapse, historians gained access to new material

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<sup>121</sup> Ibid. 246.

<sup>122</sup> Edwin Bickford Hooper. *United States Naval Power in a Changing World*. (New York: Praeger Publishers, 1988) 242-243.

revealing that training and maintenance lagged the standards of the U.S. Navy.<sup>123</sup> One on one, an American ship most likely would beat her Soviet counterpart hands down.

However, as Joseph Stalin reputedly said, “Quantity has a quality all its own.” Whether or not the Soviet Navy would have beaten the U.S. Navy is immaterial to this topic. The existence of a specific enemy provided excellent focus to all levels of the American Navy, from equipment selection to tactics to training. In an article about the reasons SWO junior officers gave for leaving the navy, Captain E. Tyler Wooldridge III wrote of his time as a junior officer,

Our operations at sea were meaningful and geared to combat a real-world threat. We chased Soviet combatants, hunted their submarines, and protected battle groups from the air threat. We trained hard to make sure we could fight and win a war at sea. We knew what we were doing was important, were willing to sacrifice to achieve our mission, and obtained tremendous satisfaction from doing our jobs right. We were saving the Free World!<sup>124</sup>

In a 1999 article about the retention of SWOs, Lieutenant John R. H. Callaway wrote, “Part of [SWO retention problems] can be blamed on the lack of a pressing national and service mission to focus the wardroom.”<sup>125</sup> Callaway contends that, not having a distinct enemy to train against, robbed the surface navy of its élan. His conclusions are similar to Captain Wooldridge and other officers writing around the end of the twentieth century. The collapse of the Soviet Union left a vacuum in its wake. The Soviet bear, the only competitor considered a peer by the U.S. Navy, vanished.

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<sup>123</sup> Lisle A. Rose. *Power at Sea: A Violent Peace 1946-2006* (Columbia: University of Missouri Press, 2007) 176.

<sup>124</sup> Captain E. Tyler Wooldridge III. “Five and Out?” *U.S. Naval Institute Proceedings*, August 1998. p. 26.

<sup>125</sup> Lieutenant John R. H. Callaway. “You Gotta Want to Go to Sea.” *U.S. Naval Institute Proceedings*, November 1999. p. 59.

The lack of a focus, combined with the demise of the United States' Cold War enemy, caused changes in SWO training. In the most dramatic change, the Division Officers Course in Coronado, CA shut down in June 1994 as part of the Base Realignment and Closure Process (BRAC).<sup>126</sup> Now, all community training for SWOs resided in Newport, RI, including the Division Officers Course. By the 1990s no active U.S. Navy ships were stationed at Naval Station Newport; unlike Coronado, located across San Diego harbor from the bulk of Third Fleet. Not having ships readily available for student SWOs to gain hands on experience led one writer, Lieutenant Commander Stephen F. Davis, Jr. to suggest, "Assign a non-vertical launch system *Spruance* (DD-963)-class destroyer scheduled for early decommissioning to Newport as a school ship. Create a curriculum and a community where the students live, work, and study on the ship."<sup>127</sup> Davis recognized the expense of home porting a ship in Newport and offered suggestions to reduce the expense, even going so far as to suggest mothballing the engineering plant to reduce the maintenance costs. Clearly, he valued having a ship to train on was worth the cost, although he knew it would not put to sea under his plan.<sup>128</sup> The next section will address feedback from fleet during the time period 1975 to 2003 about the effectiveness of the SWO graduate and the appropriateness of the training received in initial training.

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<sup>126</sup> U.S. Department of the Navy, *Surface Warfare*. "SWO School Basic Certification CO's Can Count On." July/August 1994. p. 14.

<sup>127</sup> Lieutenant Commander Stephen F. Davis, Jr. "Nobody asked me, but...Fix SWOS for Good!" *U.S. Naval Institute Proceedings*, October 1997. p. 53.

<sup>128</sup> *Ibid.* p. 53.

## Feedback from the Fleet

No major changes occurred to the initial SWO training from its establishment in 1975 until the dramatic events of 2003. In April 1980, Captain John T. Parker, Director of the Surface Warfare Manpower and Training Requirements Division, reported, “ It is the *application* of theory and system knowledge to watch performance that is important to the command. Knowledge of theory and systems is important to the SWO candidate, of course, since he will not be able to cope with watchstation qualifications without a solid and complete understanding of theory and systems, and that’s what we are requiring now at SWOS Basic.[emphasis original]”<sup>129</sup> Rather incremental changes adapted the training to the new equipment. Initially, SWO Basis received positive feedback from the fleet. Certainly throughout the 1980s, both graduates of the Basic course and the commanding officers of ships seemed pleased with the performance of the new school.

Captain Neil C. Ammerman commanded Surface Warfare Officers School Command (SWOSCOLCOM) in 1980. At that time, five years after SWO Basic began sending officers to the fleet, he said of his instructors, “There are no two ways about it. Those officers *are* frontrunners, *are* highly qualified, *are* strongly motivated. And they have an excellent physical plant, training devices, and lessons plans to work with. In consequence, the professionalism of our instruction is very high. [emphasis original]”<sup>130</sup> This commitment to having quality instructors mirrors that of the Naval Destroyer School, upon which the SWO Basic course was modeled.

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<sup>129</sup> U.S. Department of the Navy, *Surface Warfare*. “SWO School Basic Certification CO’s Can Count On.” April 1980. p. 25.

<sup>130</sup> *Ibid.* p. 25.

The instruction seemed to be doing what it was chartered to do; produce SWO candidates who possessed a firm grasp of the theory and principles of the SWO profession so they could more quickly qualify once they arrived onboard their ships. Onboard the USS *Coral Sea* (CV 43) SWO basic graduates entered a revised, faster paced shipboard qualification process based on the increased knowledge they learned at SWOS in 1982. The graduates reported with the basics and theory of the various Personnel Qualification Standards applicable to the earning the SWO designator complete.<sup>131</sup>

SWOSCOLCOM changed heading as necessary to keep the schools on course. “The surface warfare officer community is soundly professional, and that professionalism rest squarely on the training provided by this institution,” said the Captain Raynor A. K. Taylor, the commanding officer of SWOSCOLCOM. He added, “The profession of fighting ships in warfare, for the most part, is grounded on unchanging principles, but it must also be promptly updated to incorporate new concepts, tactics and technology. To keep training responsive to fleet needs is our continuing challenge.”<sup>132</sup> Captain Taylor saw the value added by the Basic course in the increased professionalism in previous graduates of the Basic course who returned to Newport for the Department Head course. He continued to improve SWO training by introducing three major changes to the student curriculum. First, his staff emphasized relating the systems knowledge and theory directly to the improved employment of weapons. Second, the school increased the interaction of students by including research projects and ship visits to help with the

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<sup>131</sup> Ibid. p. 37.

<sup>132</sup> Ibid. p. 4.

understanding and comprehension of lectures. Third, he tasked his staff with remaining current with the latest changes in fleet tactics and equipment. Additionally, his staff reviewed the SWOS Basic course with the intent of removing material covered in the commissioning pipeline. Eliminating the redundant material allowed time to cover the remaining material in greater depth.<sup>133</sup>

In 1986 the name of SWO Basic changed to Surface Warfare Division Officers Course or SWDOC.<sup>134</sup> More than just window dressing, the new name represented a thorough evaluation of SWO initial training. Captain Thomas W. Yankura, Director of the SWDOC in Newport, RI said, "This is not a 'basic' school. This is the most important school in the Navy, as far as I'm concerned, and fits into the whole continuum of surface warfare training at the *division officer* level. I don't want anyone coming here expecting a rubber stamp. The students work hard while they're here and the word 'basic' makes the school sound too easy [emphasis original]."<sup>135</sup> In the largest and most significant change, the SWO PQS, theory and systems sections, ceased to be the basis for the school.<sup>136</sup> At first glance, the decoupling of SWO PQS and the initial SWO training appears revolutionary. However, this was evolutionary in that the school now took more of a watchstation-based approach to teaching the students. Instead of asking multiple-choice questions such as "what is the set point for firemain pressure?" in the exam for the engineering portion of the training, the staff now tested the students using essay type exams that covered all of the material previously presented. A revised question might

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<sup>133</sup> Ibid. p. 5-6.

<sup>134</sup> U.S. Department of the Navy, *Surface Warfare*. "SWO Basic Becomes SWDOC." March/April 1986. p. 26.

<sup>135</sup> Ibid. p. 27.

<sup>136</sup> Ibid. p. 27.

read something like this, “You are standing watch as OOD (inport) and the Damage Control watch reports firemain pressure is 75 psi. Are you concerned and if so why?” The curriculum moved away from rote memorization and towards an integrated approach, which emphasized the application of knowledge. Significantly, “Many of the changes of emphasis have been made in response to feedback from CO’s and from graduates who have been in the fleet for six months to a year.”<sup>137</sup>

On 17 May 1987, two Iraqi Exocet missiles fired by by a F-1 Mirage struck the USS *Stark* (FFG 31) operating in the Persian Gulf.<sup>138</sup> Captain John L. Byron, qualified as both a Submariner and a SWO, wrote an article entitled, “The Surface Navy is Not Ready.”<sup>139</sup> His first sentence, “The mugging of the *Stark* demonstrates that surface ship readiness is the major issue facing the Navy today...” threw down the gauntlet to the entire SWO community.<sup>140</sup> Captain Byron made four proposals to correct the surface fleet, the second of which was “*Train for Combat*”[emphasis original].<sup>141</sup> He addressed and dismissed the entirety of the SWO school system, noting that, “*All the Stark* officers attended those courses.”<sup>142</sup> Captain Byron condemned the entire SWO training pipeline based on only one anecdotal piece of evidence. Further, he spoke about the quality of the

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<sup>137</sup> Ibid. p. 27.

<sup>138</sup> Jack Sweetman. *American Naval History: An Illustrated Chronology of the U.S. Navy and Marine Corps, 1775-Present*. (Annapolis: Naval Institute Press, 2002) 237.

<sup>139</sup> Captain John L. Byron. “The Surface Navy Is Not Ready.” *U.S. Naval Institute Proceedings*, December 1987. p. 34.

<sup>140</sup> Ibid. p. 34.

<sup>141</sup> Ibid. p. 37.

<sup>142</sup> Ibid. p. 38.

officers in charge of submarine officer training and naval aviation training, condemning the quality of the officers assigned to SWOS.<sup>143</sup>

Many SWOs answered Captain Byron's article, and the challenge it represented. Most of the responses printed in *Proceedings* addressed his proposals other than the training piece, but one officer, Commander R. Robinson Harris replied, "The fact that three consecutive SWO School commanding officers (including the present incumbent) have been selected for promotion to rear admiral is no coincidence. As confirmed by the fiscal year 1989 rear admiral selection board, only the finest surface officers are detailed to head SWO training."<sup>144</sup> Captain Byron offered a two final retorts. First, "Training the officers of a wardroom individually ashore is not the same as taking that wardroom, the crew, and the ship itself into a realistic battle training test as challenging as the human mind can make it."<sup>145</sup> And lastly, "The difference between Harvard, for example, and your local community college is not the quality of the bricks or the superior strain of ivy on the walls. The faculty and its commitment to excellence make the difference."<sup>146</sup> Captain Byron's first point, while accurate, does not provide an adequate case for abandoning shore training altogether. His second point fails to adequately respond to the counter evidence presented by his challengers on the subject of instructors at SWOSCOLCOM. His challengers pointed out the fact that the officers in charge of both the submarine school and SWOSCOLCOM were standouts in their respective fields.

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<sup>143</sup> Ibid. p. 38.

<sup>144</sup> Commander R. Robinson Harris. "The Surface Forces Are Ready." *U.S. Naval Institute Proceedings*, Naval Review 1988. p. 83.

<sup>145</sup> Captain John L. Byron. "The Surface Forces Are Ready." *U.S. Naval Institute Proceedings*, Naval Review 1988. p. 92.

<sup>146</sup> Ibid. p. 93.

SWOSCOLCOM did not make any adjustments to its curriculum as a result of Captain Byron's comments.

As the Cold War ended, the entire U.S. Navy began to reevaluate how it trained junior officers. As part of this overall institutional response SWO training received its share of growing criticism. Perhaps Lieutenant Commander Davis reflected this best in an article from 1997, that appeared in *Proceedings*:

It is time to rethink the Surface Warfare Officer School Division Officer Course (SWO-DOC) starting from scratch – not merely applying another temporary fix to a program that is probably irretrievably broken. We must transition to something that has a hope of working, and start preparing officers for prompt and sustained combat operations at sea. Despite more than two decades of SWOS-DOC experience, we continue to see young officers –Naval Academy graduates and others—who report to their first ships without a practical sense of what it means to be a division officer, or a surface warfare officer, and often lack an appreciation for such basics as relative motion. SWOS-DOC was supposed to address these deficiencies and provide a common baseline from which junior officers can begin successful careers.<sup>147</sup>

Such strong criticism appeared out of place given the strong support provided from the fleet to first SWO Basic, then SWDOC in its many variations. The turmoil of 'right-sizing' the military immediately following Operation Desert Storm ushered in many changes and challenges, but SWOSCOLCOM weathered those rather well. In 1994, SWOSCOLCOM received the Navy Training Excellence Award. The citation specifically noted "the proactive way in which they have provided a continuum of leadership training, dealt with the 'right-sizing' of the Navy, incorporated new fleet tactics and operations, and integrated 55 specialty course with the SWOS curriculum to centralize surface warfare officer training in Newport, RI."<sup>148</sup>

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<sup>147</sup> Lieutenant Commander Stephen F. Davis, Jr. "Nobody asked me, but...Fix SWOS for Good!" *U.S. Naval Institute Proceedings*, October 1997. p. 53.

<sup>148</sup> U.S. Department of the Navy, *Surface Warfare*. "SWO Basic Becomes SWDOC."

What complaints did the fleet have about SWOSDOC? Assuming Davis spoke for some constituency in the fleet, he listed several complaints, “There is limited discussion of naval history and heritage, no war gaming, no yard patrol craft (YP) steaming and division tactics (DivTacs), and most important, nowhere in the curriculum is an officer helped to learn how to think like a warrior and make independent—or, in some cases, any—decisions.”<sup>149</sup> Most of Commander Davis’s ideas challenge the school to change its focus away from providing the baseline knowledge and training originally envisioned for SWO initial training and implemented by the various incarnations of SWOSDOC. Davis proposes, “Amend the standard post-commissioning training track. Ensigns should report to Newport for four weeks of an intensive operationally oriented curriculum. Upon completion of that training, send them directly to an operational ship for four months to work on personnel qualification standards, standing watches, and completing an extensive professional reading program.”<sup>150</sup> Davis addressed the quality of instructors and advocated, “Assign instructors who are career-oriented (read: *competitive for executive officer*) post-department head officers who have already led ensigns at sea. It is unreasonable to expect junior officers who have just finished division officer tours themselves to have the perspective, expertise, or maturity to teach those who are essentially their peers.”[emphasis original]<sup>151</sup> Lieutenant (junior grade) Michele Poole wrote for an article for *Proceedings*’ Arleigh Burke essay contest, “Building

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May/June 1994, p. 36.

<sup>149</sup> Lieutenant Commander Stephen F. Davis, Jr. “Nobody asked me, but...Fix SWOS for Good!” *U.S. Naval Institute Proceedings*, October 1997. p. 53.

<sup>150</sup> *Ibid.* p. 53.

<sup>151</sup> *Ibid.* p. 53.

Surface Warriors” in 1998. She noted the same concern as Commander Davis regarding the staff at SWOSDOC. She wrote,

The instructors at SWOSDOC, nearly all fresh from their division officer tours are only one step ahead of the students they teach. Post-department head officers, those who have been leading division officers in the fleet for at least three years and who have presumably committed to a naval career, would bring more experience and maturity to the program. They have a thorough understanding of what is expected of new division officers and are better equipped to pass on that knowledge.<sup>152</sup>

Poole further wrote, “A surface warfare officer should be an articulate, thinking, and active leader and tactician, and the founding of the U.S Naval Destroyer School was an important step in developing a corps of this kind of professional naval officer who one day would take command at sea. Surface Warfare Officers School, however, has strayed from its roots, lost its focus, and is at risk of losing its relevance.”<sup>153</sup>

The author attended SWOSDOC in the summer of 1996 as part of class 119; instructors bragged of transferring to ‘CIVLANT’, (they had resigned their commissions) immediately followed by their teaching a supposedly hour-long class in twenty minutes or less. “Two months of school crammed into six months” ran the common joke amongst ensigns in Newport, RI.

Poole compared the training given at SWOSDOC to the Marine Corps Basic School:

Consider a similar program in our sister service. The Marine Corps’ Basic School (TBS) takes every newly commissioned Marine officer, and in six months, produces officers ready to step into their required duties. TBS:

educate[s] newly commissioned or appointed officers in the high standards of professional knowledge, esprit de corps, and leadership required to

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<sup>152</sup> Lieutenant (junior grade) Michele Poole. “Building Surface Warriors.” *U.S. Naval Institute Proceedings*, May 1998. p. 36.

<sup>153</sup> *Ibid.* p. 34.

prepare them for duty as a company grade officer in the Fleet Marine Force, with particular emphasis on the duties, responsibilities, and warfighting skills required of a rifle platoon commander.

TBS articulates its mission statement several things missing from SWOSDOC. Developing leadership, professional knowledge, and warfighting skills is listed upfront as a primary goal. Marine Corps officers spend roughly 70 hours per week in practical training. Routinely, the Corps sends its best personnel to teach. By comparison, it appears as if the Navy is not serious about training its leaders.<sup>154</sup>

Both Davis and Poole appear dissatisfied with the classroom training provided in SWOSDOC. Davis notes, “Lessons learned at sea are *transformational*—they change the way officers look at themselves and their profession. [emphasis original]”<sup>155</sup> and “It is all but impossible to instill shipdriving skills in young officers without maneuvering ships in formation, an increasingly rare event in the fleet.”<sup>156</sup> Interestingly, Davis fails to address the implication that if the fleet is not conducting formation maneuvers, then perhaps that skill is as obsolete as using bow rams. For her part Poole again reaches outside the surface community to make her point about the classroom, “Student aviators fly planes, and student submariners operate nuclear plants, but student warriors sit in a classroom.”<sup>157</sup> Again she implies that hands on training trumps school lectures, “In both 1977 and 1997, experienced surface warriors wrote in *Proceedings*, pleading for the return of the YPs.”<sup>158</sup>

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<sup>154</sup> Ibid. p. 37.

<sup>155</sup> Lieutenant Commander Stephen F. Davis, Jr. “Nobody asked me, but...Fix SWOS for Good!” *U.S. Naval Institute Proceedings*, October 1997. p. 53.

<sup>156</sup> Ibid. p. 53.

<sup>157</sup> Lieutenant (junior grade) Michele Poole. “Building Surface Warriors.” *U.S. Naval Institute Proceedings*, May 1998. p. 35.

<sup>158</sup> Ibid. p. 36.

One instructor at SWOS, Lieutenant Michael W. Little responded to the critics, Davis and Poole in particular. He gives answers to the four major criticisms, the use of YPs, who instructs, how instruction takes place, and the content of the course. On the YPs, he attacked from two fronts. First, he dismissed the value of training on small vessels when it did not adequately mimic the characteristics of many ships in the fleet. Second, the financial situation in the Navy precluded the return of the YPs to Newport. Little offered the simulators, already in use in the SWOSDOC curriculum as adequate substitutes for teaching the basics of shiphandling. As a counter to the charge that the instructors barely knew more than their students, he noted that post-command officers taught the prospective commanding officer course and post-executive officers taught the prospective officer course, therefore post-division officers should teach the division officer course. As to how instruction occurs, Little made no apology that the course was fast-paced and that students must master the material on their own. On the final point, course content, he argued that the division officer course taught officers how to run a division, consisting of how to lead people and maintain equipment. Little finished his argument by noting that, “Tactical Skills will come in time.”<sup>159</sup>

Lest Little’s remarks appear to be the expected defense of a man attacked for his work, not everyone in the fleet agreed on all points with Davis and Poole. Lieutenant Brandon L. Bigelow agreed with Poole that, “The school is too long and ‘provides limited practical training.’”<sup>160</sup> But, then he argued against Poole’s solution. Bigelow posited a more basic course than Poole or Davis for that matter. He based his proposal on

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<sup>159</sup> Ibid. p. 78.

<sup>160</sup> Lieutenant Brandon L. Bigelow. Response to “Building Surface Warriors.” *U.S. Naval Institute Proceedings*, July 1998. p. 12.

providing the SWO candidate with the minimum knowledge to get him started in the fleet; he reserved tactical, operational and certainly strategic thought for later in an officer's career.

The dream of hands on training materialized in 2003. On the surface, SWOS-At Sea answered the critics. Newly commissioned officers go to sea immediately from their commissioning program. There, all the advantages of working equipment and subject matter experts promise better and quicker training than a series of lectures in a classroom at a Naval Station with no ships. Or at least the Commander, Naval Surface Force billed it that way. Specifically Vice Admiral Timothy LaFleur said, "This will result in higher professional satisfaction, increase the return on investment during the first division officer tour, and free up more career time downstream."<sup>161</sup> Instead of instructors, who might or might not be the most knowledgeable in the fleet, computer based training presented material for students to master while they were aboard ship. After the ensigns spent six months or more onboard their ship, they reported to SWOS for a four to six week course.<sup>162</sup>

This idea of formal training coming after hands on training did not come out of the blue. Due to the variations in commissioning sources and the seasonal bump caused by Naval Academy graduation, some ensigns reported to a ship while waiting for a reporting date for the old SWOSDOC. Those ensigns reported the training received at

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<sup>161</sup> U.S. Department of the Navy, *Surface Warfare*. "SWO Basic Becomes SWDOC." May/June 2002. p. 32.

<sup>162</sup> *Ibid.* p. 32.

SWOSDOC as more valuable because of their experiences at sea. This formed part of the justification for the transition to SWOS-At Sea.<sup>163</sup>

SWOSCOLCOM backed up the dramatic change in SWO initial training by building a brand new facility in Newport, RI. The new building contained six Conning Officer Virtual Environment (COVE) labs. The COVE represented state-of-the-art virtual reality training. The officers undergoing the simulations don headgear that projects a virtual environment, as they turn their heads their perspective changes. COVE provided the advantage of allowing officers to conduct shiphandling evolutions they might only see once in a tour, such as mooring to a buoy. The new classrooms contained computers designed to facilitate learning for the officers coming to SWOS after having been at sea for nearly a year. Peers from different ships and numbered fleets shared their experiences to improve to overall knowledge of their groups.

#### SWO as Community of Last Resort

The final challenge faced by SWOS initial training concerned indoctrination into the SWO community. Many junior officers received their first continuous exposure to SWO qualified officers while at SWOSDOC. Many of the officers selected SWO as their first choice of community; others did not. Of those officers in the SWO community against their desires, they divided into two groups those who became SWOs before commissioning due to not meeting standards for their preferred communities and those who failed out of their desired communities' initial training.

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<sup>163</sup> Ibid. p. 32.

Junior officers who were commissioned from the Naval Academy or NROTC scholarships incurred a service obligation to serve in the Navy upon graduation. No guarantee existed as to which community they would enter. Choice of community occurred in the year prior to graduation. Sometimes midshipmen failed to gain entry into their desired community. The failure might be due to several reasons, ranging from not having the eyesight to be a pilot or the grades to be accepted into nuclear training. This type of failure, before commissioning, while disappointing to individual officers, carried much less stigma than those who attrited from aviation or nuclear training after beginning their initial training.

On the other hand, in 1988 Commander William D. Sullivan said of those pipeline failures, “The SWO Community is allowed to be a dumping ground for officer and enlisted washouts from the other two communities. Get rid of them somewhere else; the Navy may lose some good people, but the tradeoff is worth it.”<sup>164</sup> In 2000 Ensign Ian Scaliatine devoted an entire article to the topic. He noted, “During my brief time associated with the naval service I have talked to SWOs who have dropped out of flight school and nuclear power school, and I even worked with a junior officer who could not pass his nursing exam—so he went SWO.”<sup>165</sup> He wrote this article before he reported to his first ship. He considered it insulting that his community had to take on officers unable to compete in their community of choice; he acknowledged that the Navy might lose

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<sup>164</sup> Commander William D. Sullivan. “The Surface Forces Are Ready.” *U.S. Naval Institute Proceedings*, Naval Review 1988. p. 88.

<sup>165</sup> Ensign Ian Scaliatine. “Don’t Make SWO the Default.” *U.S. Naval Institute Proceedings*, July 2000. p. 87.

some good officers by not accepting them into the SWO community, but he felt the increase in pride would be worth it.

In addition to teaching the easily definable skills required for a profession, SWOSDOC provided that critical first impression, so vital in establishing esprit de corps. Accepting training attrites from other communities, while not a problem made by SWOSCOLCOM, mandated that SWOSCOLCOM address the issue. SWOSCOLCOM, touted as the center of SWO training, set the stage for an officer's perception of his community. SWOSCOLCOM never effectively answered this challenge; moving the challenge to the ships with the advent of SWOS-At-Sea rendered it moot.

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The SWO community did not develop in a vacuum. The Cold War, and its sudden termination, affected the initial training for SWOs. Fleet feedback provided the major factor in how and why the SWO initial training changed. SWOSCOLCOM failed to answer the challenge of integrating dropouts from other communities into the SWO community and culture.

## CHAPTER 5

### CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FURTHER RESEARCH

None other than a gentleman, as well as a seaman both in theory and practice is qualified to support the character of a commission officer in the Navy, nor is any man fit to command a ship of war, who is not also capable of communicating his ideas on paper in language that becomes his rank.

–Captain John Paul Jones<sup>166</sup>

How and why initial surface warfare officer training changed from World War II to 2008 was not a simple path. Many different factors led to various changes in the training. For the seventy years after it first sailed in 1775, the United States Navy trained its new officers at sea. Sending young men to sea to serve as midshipmen in order to learn how to be officers was an idea possessing centuries of tradition to recommend it. However, problems existed with the concept of pure on the job training. Leaving the training of officers entirely to the commanding officers of ships did not provide a single level foundation for young officers to start their careers with experience and even basic knowledge passed on erratically. The founding of the Naval Academy in 1845 was an excellent start to ensuring that all officers learned the same basic skills before they went to sea.

Technological advances caused the initial training for naval officers to change. Notably, the advent of steam driven warships changed the officer corps the most in the years between the founding of the Naval Academy and 1900. The line officer community nearly split in two over who would run the new engineering plants. One side wanted the engineers to be a specialty corps ineligible for command at sea; the other thought that all

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<sup>166</sup> Robert Debs Heinl, Jr. *Dictionary of Military and Naval Quotations* (Annapolis: Unites States Naval Institute, 1966), 206.

line officers needed to know and understand steam propulsion as a core competency. It took an act of Congress to settle the matter in favor engineering being a subset of the skills needed by the line officer.

Two other major inventions did affect the line community: the submarine and the aircraft. By the middle of the 1920s, there were now three line communities: submarine, naval aviation and general line officers. Those new communities established schools to teach their young officers the skills needed to employ their machines in naval warfare. World War II caused a large shift in how officers were trained. The massive buildup required new ways of training the large numbers of officers for the naval forces. Officers were commissioned from NROTC programs and Officer Candidate Schools since the Naval Academy could not rapidly respond to the need for new officers.

In the new Cold War environment following World War II, the United States found itself with global commitments, especially after the Truman Doctrine was announced in 1947. Operational requirements prevented the Navy from returning to its pre-World War II size; therefore the wartime practice of training midshipmen at civilian institutions was retained and formalized under the Holloway plan. NROTC provided approximately half of the officers commissioned from 1946 forward. NROTC augmented the civilian education its midshipmen learned but it did not provide the same level of training as the Naval Academy.

The tactical realities of the naval battlefield were much different following the Second World War than what existed prior to the war. Naval aviation had become a dominant force; the days of surface ships battling with guns alone were gone. Likewise, the submarine matured into a very capable platform. The naval fight was now under, on

and above the surface of the sea. The surface fleet changed to meet the new threats. Surface to air missiles gave the ships a standoff capability and new radars enhanced the ability to find incoming aircraft and missiles. As the new technologies matured, individual school dedicated to a piece of the surface warfare discipline appeared. But still no dedicated school existed that combined all of the pieces into one.

Surface Warfare as a community faced another serious challenge. Quite simply, SWOs did not exist as a separate community in the way that aviators and submariners did. Promotion opportunity for a SWO to rear admiral was about half that his aviation counterpart. Those officers who desired promotion and influence in the Navy were better served to choose a career somewhere other than surface ships.

Even though the Navy performed very well in World War II, many officers, both surface and other line officers, recommended some sort of initial training for surface officers. In addition to the lack of navy specific training received by NROTC midshipmen, the Naval Academy changed its focus. It moved away from being a trade school for learning how to be a fleet officer towards a more liberal education similar to many civilian universities in addition to military training.

A running debate throughout the SWO community existed between those who thought that a SWO should be a specialist in one area such as anti-submarine warfare, and those who held that SWOs should be generalists. The generalists pointed out that having specialist officers meant billets must be carefully matched to officer skills and shortfalls in certain skill areas might mean a ship would be unable to carry out its mission. The generalists won that argument and command at sea became the overarching specialty of the SWO community.

The Naval Destroyer School was the first school exclusively for surface officers, which taught an integrated program. The three functional areas of the surface community, weapons, engineering and operations were equally stressed in a six-month course. However there were shortcomings with the school. The Naval Destroyer School was not intended to train initial accessions into the SWO community. Rather it trained officers returning to sea for their department head tours in destroyers only. The rest of the fleet did without.

When Admiral Elmo R. Zumwalt, Jr. took over as CNO, he shook many things up in the Navy. Within his first year of service as CNO, he instituted a program where junior officers from various communities in the Navy met with him in Washington, D.C. to report on conditions in their community. One of those groups was the SWO Retention Study Group. This group recommended many things to Admiral Zumwalt that in their opinion would enhance the SWO community. Among their recommendations was better schooling for SWOs. In 1975 that better school opened in Newport, RI followed shortly by a second school in Coronado, CA. Christened SWO Basic, it taught the basics, primarily the systems and theory demanded by the new SWO Personnel Qualification Standard (PQS). The new school provided a basic level of knowledge for all newly commissioned officers prior to reporting to their first ship.

The Navy, and the United States military as a whole, spent much of the 1970s leaving Vietnam and then recovering from its effects. One such effect was the huge divide between civilians and the military over the Vietnam War. The effect this had on the SWO community was not immediately apparent, but some universities successfully removed NROTC units from their institutions. Those NROTC units were replaced at

other universities, but the quality of the new schools did not match that of the old ones. The brightest students excelled wherever they were planted; the lesser mortals benefited tremendously from having a school like SWO Basic to get them started.

Throughout the period from 1945 to 1992, otherwise known as the Cold War, the Soviet Union influenced everything the United States military did. The Soviets provided the de facto measuring stick to compare military might against. On the United States side, the combination of a long war in Vietnam and a dedicated Soviet naval expansion program led to a Navy that was significantly outclassed by its Soviet counterpart by the end of the 1970s. In response to the Soviet buildup, President Reagan began a buildup in the 1980s. Several new ships came on line such as the *Ticonderoga* class cruisers with the Aegis weapons system and older ships such as the *Iowa* class battleship returned to service with significant upgrades.

During the 1980s SWO Basic changed in evolutionary ways, mostly incorporating new technology and reacting to feedback from the fleet as needed. Its name changed from SWO Basic to SW DOC with the name morphing to SWOSDOC later. With the demise of the Soviet Union in 1992, the United States started to drawdown its forces. SWOSDOC closed its Coronado school. Increasingly, complaints came from fleet officers who did not think that SWOSDOC trained young SWOs effectively. Most of the complaints concerned a feeling that the course was too basic and did not adequately teach the basics it claimed to have taught.

More hands on training seemed to be the recurring theme of those officers calling for reform of the system; the drastic change in 2003 provided that hands on training in a quantity not seen since 1844. The move completely away from formal schoolhouse

training to a computer based training system was not the answer most fleet officers desired.

In his essay, “Innovation: Past and Future,” Williamson Murray argued that successful innovation requires two factors, specificity and military culture.<sup>167</sup> The evolution of SWO initial training appears to support that argument. SWO Basic, the first incarnation of an initial training school, did use both specificity and military culture. The specificity came from the mission to teach the systems and theory sections of the SWO PQS. The military culture embodied in the new created SWO insignia and the associated increase in pride among the SWO community led to SWO Basic becoming the foundation course in a series of professional schools devoted to the art and science of Surface Warfare. SWO Basic received quality instructors from the fleet and it responded to the feedback of the fleet. Throughout the 1980s to the end of the Cold War, SWO Basic, and the SWODOC that evolved from it, met the fleets’ needs by graduating new SWO candidates with a solid understanding of the basics of their chosen profession.

Once the Cold War ended, SWOSDOC lost focus on what exactly it taught. This loss of focus was not unique to the surface fleet or even the U.S. Navy. Suddenly the United States military no longer had an enemy against which to train and to prepare to fight. By losing the specificity of the Soviet Union as a threat, the Navy as a whole lost many of its missions. As with the end of nearly all wars, the United States began to drawdown, or “rightsized” to use the terminology of the day. By the mid-1990s, SWOSDOC no longer commanded the respect of the fleet. Many different people

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<sup>167</sup> Williamson Murray and Allan R. Millet, eds., *Military Innovation in the Interwar Period* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2007), 310-318.

presented alternatives to the perceived decline in instruction quality at SWOSDOC. However, no one seemed to have called for or expected the kind of wholesale overhaul that came with the introduction of the SWOS-At-Sea program in 2003.

### Evaluating SWOS-At-Sea

Captain Stephen F. Davis, the same Davis quoted so heavily in Chapter Four, wrote an article in 2007 detailing the problems he saw in the new SWOS-At-Sea program.<sup>168</sup> He noted two specific issues with the new method of training. First, junior officers did not have adequate shiphandling skills. Second, the ensigns did not understand their role as leaders onboard ship.

Davis placed the blame for poor shiphandling on both the lack of training prior to reporting and the reduction of underway for ships in the fleet. The solution recommended by Davis was twofold. He proposed taking advantage of the advanced simulators available, either those run by Marine Safety International (available in Newport, RI; San Diego, CA; or Norfolk, VA) or the Conning Officer Virtual Environment at SWOSCOLCOM in Newport, RI. While simulators provided excellent training, they did not substitute entirely for actual shiphandling. Captain Davis cautioned, “Much is lost in translation, even with the most sophisticated graphics and subroutines. One learns how to drive a ship at sea—in YPs or on a commissioned warship.”<sup>169</sup>

The second part of Davis’s solution was to take training into his own hands. As commanding officer of USS *Vella Gulf* (CG 72), Captain Davis implemented his own SWO training program to address the issue of being a division officer and leader

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<sup>168</sup> Captain Stephen F. Davis. “Building the Next Nelson.” *U.S. Naval Institute Proceedings*. January 2007. p. 42

<sup>169</sup> *Ibid.* p. 43

shipboard. His “Surface Warfare University” was an eight week long course for newly commissioned officers which concentrated on “critical thinking, tactical relevance, team building, and developing warriors as opposed to checklist slaves or administrators.”<sup>170</sup> In order to provide a good quality course, he relieved his division officers of their duties as division officers, tasking the division leading chief petty officers to act as the division officers, and he did not allow the officers to stand watch while in the course. Captain Davis was fortunate that he had the luxury of establishing his shipboard course; otherwise, he noted, “We would have carved out sufficient space to do something along these lines. In the absence of other broader efforts (as SWOS-DOC could have been), it became our responsibility to make Surface Warfare University effective.”<sup>171</sup>

Lieutenant (junior grade) Kate Shovlin, a graduate of the United States Naval Academy class of 2004, wrote of her experiences with the new division officer training plan. She condemned the idea that an officer could successfully teach herself the basics of being a Surface Warfare Officer while simultaneously leading a shipboard division. In the competing priorities of leading a division, handling assignments from department heads, standing watch, and trying to study the materials provided by SWOS, studying always came last.

She leveled further criticism at the three-week division officer course taught in Newport, RI. Shovlin’s major complaint was that the course contained much of what she should have known prior to reporting to her first ship. She wrote, “We have the ability

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<sup>170</sup> Ibid. p. 43

<sup>171</sup> Ibid. p. 43

and the money to set up our division officers for success. Instead, we have system of trial-by-fire in place.”<sup>172</sup>

In an article in 2007, another surface officer, Captain A. Lee Kaiss discussed the problems associated with SWOS-At-Sea concept against the larger backdrop of the entire training pipeline for SWOs. He lauded the Naval Destroyer School as having been the correct approach towards training because of its specialized nature. In spite of the many similarities between types of ships, he contended that the differences were the crucial item. Comparing the path of naval aviators in staying in either a fixed wing carrier platform or a helicopter platform their entire careers, he derides the concept of teaching a watered down course in an attempt to cover all bases rather than focusing on the specifics.<sup>173</sup>

However, the biggest problem with the new method of training officers, in his opinion, was that the program was subject to too much individual variation based on how involved commanding officers got in the training of their officers. Captain Kaiss advocated a pipeline similar to the one used in naval aviation where students graduated with their wings. He felt that by removing the qualification of SWO from their commanding officers there would be no doubt as to the standard and knowledge of anyone wearing a SWO insignia.<sup>174</sup>

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<sup>172</sup> Lieutenant (junior grade) Kate Shovlin. “‘SWOS-in-a-Box’: Generation Y’s Division Officer Training.” U.S. Naval Institute. <http://www.getthegouge.com/insider/hottopics/stories.asp?ID=76> (accessed 18 October 2008).

<sup>173</sup> Captain A. Lee Kaiss. “What’s an SWO Badge Worth?” *U.S. Naval Institute Proceedings*. January 2007. p. 38

<sup>174</sup> *Ibid.* p. 39

An additional problem presented by the change in SWOSDOC training was a bow wave of extra officers assigned to ships. Rotation dates of officers already having graduated from SWOSDOC under the pre-2003 plan were not changed. Since most officers receive their commissions in the spring, this led to overmanning of surface ships beginning in summer 2003. The new officers were often times given new billets such as assistant chief engineer, force protection officer, or admin officers. These new billets did not exist prior to 2003 and there was no existing guidance as to the specific duties and responsibilities assigned to these billets.<sup>175</sup>

The training available to these excess officers decreased due to not enough evolutions to go around. Instead of every officer getting a chance to conn the ship into and out of port; some officers merely observed the evolution. Another consequence of having excess officers onboard was the ease with which replacements for failed officers were available. There were always officers eager to step into the shoes of an officer who stumbled. Not being able to recover from a misstep made officers more cautious, thereby lowering the advantage of on the job training. Coupled with the lack of schoolroom training, SWOS-At-Sea lowered the quality of SWOs in the fleet.<sup>176</sup>

Perhaps the most telling condemnation of SWOS-At-Sea as the only initial training for SWOs was the establishment of the SWO INTRO course on 04 August 2008 in San Diego, CA and Norfolk, VA. Graduates of the Naval Academy and NROTC were the target audience of the course. SWO INTRO was modeled on a similar course given to SWOs who entered the Navy through Officer Candidate School in Newport, RI. The

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<sup>175</sup> Lieutenant Kevin M O'Neal. "Why I Am Failing My Junior Officers." *U.S. Naval Institute Proceedings*. July 2003. p. 40-41.

<sup>176</sup> *Ibid.* p. 40-42.

Newport based school began in December 2007. This new course was designed to “set our young surface officers and their commands up for that success” according to Vice Admiral Derwood C. Curtis, Commander, Naval Surface Forces.<sup>177</sup> SWO INTRO was a four-week course to introduce basic division officer skills. Those skills consisted of “3M, division officer fundamentals, basic watchstanding and leadership.”<sup>178</sup> In an interview with SWONET, a website run by the Navy for SWOs, Admiral Curtis spoke of his reasons for beginning the SWO INTRO course. He said, “Some ensigns were coming to our ships not ready to perform from different institutions throughout the United States.”<sup>179</sup> This statement and the new course was a very strong refutation of the SWOS-At-Sea process.

#### Recommendations for Further Research

There are many different questions surrounding this thesis that might benefit from further study. The National Archives were not consulted during the research for this thesis. There may be materials in those archives or at the Navy Historical Center that would give a more detailed picture into the exact methods by which SWOs received their initial training. Many of the officers involved in deciding the curriculum and/or the implementation of that course of instruction at the various SWO schools are still alive. Interviewing those officers and delving more deeply into their recollection of events should provide more insight.

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<sup>177</sup> U.S. Department of the Navy, *Surface Warfare*. “Forging Surface Warriors For a New Era of Warfare.” Summer 2008. p. 25.

<sup>178</sup> Ibid. p. 25.

<sup>179</sup> Vice Admiral Derwood C. Curtis. “Back to Basics.” SWONET. <https://www.swonet.navy.mil> (accessed 19 October 2008).

There was no readily available information from the various symposiums held by the Surface Navy Association. A review of the speeches, seminars and roundtables held at the national as well as the regional symposia might provide insight to how and why various decisions were made regarding SWO training.

A comprehensive review of the message traffic sent to the fleet regarding the SWOS-At-Sea program was not conducted. Many messages were sent that modified or clarified the initial program; some of those messages were “personnel for the commanding officer” directly from the Commander, Surface Naval Forces. Reviewing those messages should clarify the development and refinement of SWOS-At-Sea.

The next question would be a comparison of American training methods and those of the British post World War II. Since many of the United States maritime traditions are a directly descended from the Royal Navy, there is a common starting point. The Royal Navy is still one of the world’s leading powers and has been for several centuries.

Another comparative analysis would look at Japanese naval training for the Japanese Maritime Self Defense forces as contrasted with the United States Navy. Perhaps the most likely comparison would be between the Coast Guard and the United States Navy.

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