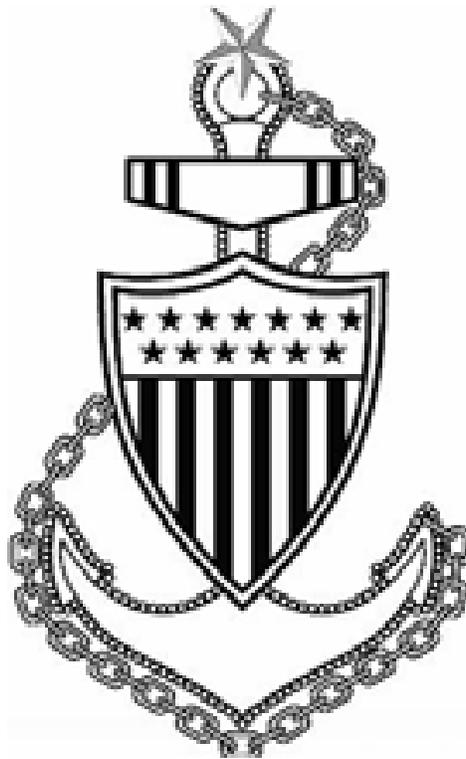


THE EVEN NUMBERED CHIEF
By: YNC Jeff C. Wheater



I know what you're thinking, "What is that?" Well, he is the least known member of the chief's corps and one of the most important, yet underappreciated, members in our service. The even numbered Chief is the E8; commonly known as the Senior Chief Petty Officer.

The E-8 and 9 positions were established in May 1958. However, it was not until MCPOCG Vincent Patton led a team to review the language and content of Public Law 85-422 which led to a Senior Enlisted Needs Assessment that studied our Senior Enlisted ranks. This study determined that the most influential part of the Coast Guard's organizational leadership comes from the Chief Petty Officer corps rather than the Officer corps. You've all studied this is not new. However, did you know?

Although the Chief of the Mess (COTM) is normally a Master Chief, the job of sustaining the Mess and its many requirements is often delegated to a Senior Chief. This is done so the job will get done while still maintaining good order and discipline (it's called Partnering). This means the Senior Chief must know his job COLD (Lead Self – be Technically Proficient), develop the next generation of sailors (Lead Others – be Influential and Mentor), stay ahead of the process (Lead Performance and Change - be Creative and look for ways to be Innovative), meet command goals (Lead the Coast Guard – be Stewards of resources). Sounds like a daunting task. It can be, but a Senior Chief sees this as a challenge worth taking. He will not panic and try to be Mr. Popular, he will simply succeed.

Now you may be asking yourself, "Why is this important to know?" I will counter with this question, "Who runs the Chief Petty Officer corps?" You're wrong; it is not the Master Chief. It is the Senior Chief. He trains, educates, mentors, and keeps the Chief humble while at the same time he keeps the Master Chief in check while he is resigning in the officers who are getting a ahead of themselves.

"What happens in the Mess stays in the Mess" is a term used every day within the Chiefs corp. And, every day while a Master Chief is fighting for command concerns and at the same time a Chief is fighting for the concerns of his junior members, there is the all important "even numbered Chief" in the middle using his training, experience, and education to influence the Mess so that a balance is maintained and success can be achieved.

When you have a moment, find that even numbered Chief ; yes the quiet one in the corner and say "Thank you, Senior."