

HEY CHIEF!

By: M S Heeney, Captain, USN-R

You there. You with the brassy new anchors! We're calling in your debts! You OWE. You owe a lot of people. And now it's PAYBACK time!

You owe that Chief at boot camp. He chewed your butt, he screamed at your stupidity. He saw in you the potential to BE SOMEONE SPECIAL; and, he badgered you to the point of tears to show you that he saw it.

You owe that Chief from another command who dragged you back to your bunk the night you figured you could drink beer faster than those guys could brew it. He did it because you were in *his Navy*.

When you were at the end of your first enlistment, there was that gnarled old Chief. *Remember him?* The dude who had been passed over for Chief umpteen times before he made it; and then, only after two tours in the war zone and taking that piece in the leg? And you thought how weird he was because he talked with you about how great the Navy had been to him? And there he was at two in the morning, patiently waiting until you got the frigging gear back together and he could tell you a couple more things for you to consider, and he never quite made it home to his family that night.

You owe him.

You owe that other Chief, for that time the Old Man had you on the carpet for some screw up - and, boy was he mad - and it looked like your ten years in the Navy was down the tubes. And Chief (What the heck was his name, anyway?) really got into it with Captain Fang, *insisting* that you were a damned good sailor; he saved your buns. And the Old Man took particular pains to ignore the Chief from then on for arguing with him. The Chief, he never mentioned it to you or got on your case; he had done it just because he was your Chief.

And your buddy from two duty stations ago. A First Class Petty Officer, just like you, remember how he spent hours with you and the chief's course took so you could understand some obscure but important stuff and get your multiple so you would at least get selection board eligible? The list came out this time and he wasn't picked, but the section he drummed into your head you aced so well on the exam that you squeezed him out.

Him you owe a lot!

You owe those petty officers and those officers who always (well usually) gave you the benefit of the doubt at evaluation time. You never saw it, but they spent a lot of time at their desks writing evals, searching for the good in you, and taking the time to write a thoughtful, meaningful and believable report on you. They faithfully documented the effort you put into your Navy and your career. *They put their reputations on the line when they pronounced you worthy of promotion.* So you got promoted and promoted and promoted.

Finally to Chief.

An era in your life has ended and a new one begun. You can't ever go back. *You are a Chief now and you will always be a Chief.* You will get admiration and respect. You will be paying for that admiration and respect from now on!

And, the strange thing is, although you've worked your tail off for the Navy, the job in front of you is like nothing you have ever faced before. You have to prove yourself worthy of the respect given you. You must prove yourself in ALL things now - everyday. *You must demand more of yourself now than anyone has ever demanded from you before.*

You must consistently justify your pride in being a Chief. You must make your colleagues in khaki proud of your being a Chief. You must endure to prove those folks who believed in you that their beliefs were warranted. *You owe them. The debt is called. Now you pay back !*

YOU must do the things that Chiefs must do. You must not only do those things without being told - you must think up those things. *You alone must realize, analyze, prioritize, improvise, exercise and supervise.*

YOU are that Chief in boot camp. YOU are that Chief who saves sailors from their own folly. YOU are that Chief who is willing to risk his tail for just treatment of his sailors. And YOU are the Chief who must see to it that your people become the best that they can be.

YOU OWE IT.

YOU are the Chief who now must spend extra hours at home on evaluations and on lesson plans and technical material that makes your head reel - just because YOU are the Chief. YOU are the Chief to whom your sailors turn for the answers; to whom your officers turn for results; and to whom your Captain turns for the wisdom of experiences like but not like his own.

YOU OWE IT.

You owe your seniors. You owe it to your juniors. You owe it to the Navy and to your country. Most importantly, you owe it to every individual who has ever become a Chief.

And you will always be paying this debt that you owe, for you CANNOT EVER pay it off. The ledger will NEVER be even, for you must pay the debt not just to the people you owe, but to the new sailors and the new officers, streams of them, all looking up to you - the Chief.

YOU must see to it that they end up owing you, yet you must not ever collect.

You must do these things for one reason only; You are a Chief. You will always be a Chief. You now must change the lives of others.

You are the best of the best of the best. And so you must always be nothing less than that.

You must pay what you owe forever, but no one will ask you to do it.

No one should have to ask.

YOU ARE THE CHIEF!

Good Luck Chief,