Retention rates in the Navy are down. *The Washington Post* (27 August 1980, p. A12) reports that petty officer reenlistments have dropped from 77% to 53%, leaving a shortage of 20,000 men. Further, *Newsweek* (27 October 1980, p. 52) says “The Navy will soon need 10,000 more petty officers to staff the 50 to 60 new ships that will enter the fleet by 1985.” In the second session of 1980, then-Chief of Naval Operations, Admiral Thomas B. Hayward testified before Congress that the Navy has an “exodus of mid-grade officers and enlisted” men that is “at a point of crisis at the present time.”

Does this sound familiar? It should. This was the plight of our Navy a few years ago. Since then, military personnel have received significant increases in pay and incentives, as well as the renewed respect of our country; the horror stories of sailors receiving food stamps have disappeared from the newspapers, along with the stories of ships that could not go to sea because they were pitifully undermanned. So, it seems in these days of increased military awareness, the Navy no longer has a retention problem. Unfortunately, this assumption could not be further from the truth. Because the services have been meeting their recruiting goals, their retention rates have lost significance in the media. However, *Newsweek* (18 January 1982) reported that the Navy will again be short 20,000 noncommissioned officers this year—the same amount as in 1980! Admiral Hayward stated in his report for this fiscal year that we still have “serious and continuing shortages of midgrade officers and petty officers.” Further, he said, “It is too early to gauge the long term impact which recent compensation improvements will have on retention. . . . More needs to be done.”

Certainly, everyone associated with the Navy will agree that more needs to be done. The lack of petty officers,
who are the industrial backbone of the Navy, is crippling to the combat readiness of the fleet. Therefore, within the last few years, many programs have been initiated—and many more ideas published and argued—to help alleviate this problem. Yet the problem continues. I believe that there is a simple approach to this complex problem that can be used by anyone in the Navy. It is such a simple idea that it tends to get lost in the complexities of the many approaches.

My proposal can be implemented easily by today’s leadership. I emphasize the word leadership, for it is good, effective leadership that we must use as our part of the effort to solve the serious problem of retaining enough skilled people to meet our national security requirements.

The major areas of the Navy’s retention effort can be categorized into three objectives: (1) improve the “job trimmings” for sailors, (2) increase their pay, and (3) upgrade the “quality of life” of sailors.

I have coined the phrase “job trimmings” to represent the many diverse changes that were introduced during Admiral Elmo Zumwalt’s tour as Chief of Naval Operations, including replacing the traditional bell-bottomed blues with new uniforms, allowing enlisted men to carry civilian clothes on board ship, changes in grooming standards, and disposing of many of the so-called Mickey Mouse regulations. The purpose of these radical changes was to attract men and women from a civilian population becoming increasingly individualistic and antimilitarist.

The second objective, increasing pay, is an ongoing battle for the entire military. In fiscal year 1981, Congress approved an 11.7% pay raise for the Navy. For fiscal year 1982, Congress approved a 10 to 17% pay raise, with the higher percentages appropriated to the noncommissioned officers. These raises are long overdue, but sadly, they still do not bring military pay up to civilian standards. This disparity in pay scales has long been a problem for sailors, especially young sailors with families, trying to make ends meet; they often have to moonlight or apply for food stamps. Obviously, it is hard to convince a sailor to stay in the Navy if he cannot earn enough money to meet the basic needs of his family. The Navy fully recognizes this problem and is constantly working to further improve the pay scale.

The third objective, advancing the quality of life of sailors, includes improving working conditions, remodeling living and berthing spaces, upgrading messing facilities, and providing more and better recreational equipment. The Navy is attempting to furnish pleasant—as opposed to tolerable—surroundings in which sailors may work and live. The basis for this objective is obvious: The favorite complaints of sailors are shipboard food and living conditions.

The Navy places a lot of emphasis upon its quality of life program. Recently, All Hands magazine printed an article about the USS John F. Kennedy (CV-67) entitled “A Ship That Cares,” describing the Kennedy’s quality of life program, its implementation, and its successful impact upon improving retention. The article explained that the Kennedy was due to enter the yard for an 11-month overhaul. Yard periods are a time of extremely poor retention because of their inconvenience to everyone on board. However, while in the yard the Kennedy was given a $1.7 million Naval Sea Systems Command Habitability Improvement Self-Help Project. Most importantly, all the work in the project was done by the crew. The Kennedy’s galleys were also remodeled with the most modern cooking facilities available. Off the ship, athletic teams were organized, equipment acquired, and leagues developed. Facilities were made available for off-ship barracks, which the crew also remodeled; free off-ship laundries were established; and a bus was purchased, refurbished by the crew, and used as a shuttle from the crowded Norfolk parking areas to the ship. Overall quality of life in the yard was improved immensely, along with the Kennedy’s retention rate.

Unfortunately, as the Newsweek excerpt plainly displays, the efforts of all three objectives had little effect upon retention within the entire Navy. Many of the job trimmings instituted by Admiral Zumwalt have been revoked or changed today because they proved unproductive or detrimental to the Navy; the new-style uniforms are being replaced by the old “crackerjacks,” and the previous nonconformist ideology of the 1970s is being replaced with the time-tested ideas of pride, discipline, and professionalism. The increase in pay has helped raise the fiscal year 1981 retention rate for career petty officers. Whether this is a permanent increase, though, has yet to be ascertained, and, as the cost of living increases—as it invariably will—the money’s temporary effect will be lost. Further, though the Navy is doing all it can in this area, it is simply not a part of the retention effort that can be directly helped by most officers. Finally, the quality of life improvements may be making more sailors comfortable, but they do not seem to be influencing needed personnel to “ship over.” All of these efforts appear advantageous, and they do have an effect, but they have not worked to the degree expected, even though they did on board the Kennedy.

To clarify this apparent contradiction, we need to examine the concept of Frederick Herzberg’s “Dual-Factor Theory.” Herzberg said that employee dissatisfaction is not necessarily the result of the employee’s lack of satisfaction or satisfaction with his job. Rather, separate factors motivate employee satisfaction and dissatisfaction. As a result of his research, Herzberg formed the table presented here, as Table 1.

According to the Dual-Factor Theory, the three objectives of the Navy’s retention effort address factors in the table which are primarily dissatisfiers. This means that the sailors’ dissatisfaction can certainly be decreased. But, it also means that retention cannot be increased with any of the objectives.

A survey was administered to 2,287 naval reservists, questioning them about the items that they were most satisfied with during their active duty tours prior to joining the reserves. Ranked 15th and 14th on a list of 15 items were pay and sea duty, respectively. Ranked just above these were recognition, talents and abilities, status, accomplishments, and supervisors. The Navy is trying to improve pay and reduce sea-duty time, but again, these problems are out of the control of most officers. Regarding the other factors, it is important to note that of the five items, accomplishments, recognition, and talents and abilities represent the three largest satisfiers in Herzberg’s theory. Further, it should be obvious that all five items are directly related to the personal growth of the individual.

This theoretical explanation is not consistent with the situation on board the Kennedy, however. The Kennedy
Table 1 Factors affecting job attitudes

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Factors Characterizing 1,844 Events on the Job that Led to Extreme Disatisfaction</th>
<th>Factors Characterizing 1,759 Events on the Job that Led to Extreme Satisfaction</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Percentage Frequency</td>
<td>Percentage Frequency</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>50%</td>
<td>0%</td>
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<td>40%</td>
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<td>10%</td>
<td>40%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>0%</td>
<td>50%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

- Recognition
- Work load
- Responsibility
- Advance ment
- Growth
- Policy and Administration
- Supervision
- Relationship with Supervisor
- Work conditions
- Salary
- Relationship with Person
- Personal life
- Relationship with Subordinates
- Status
- Security

All Factors Contributing to Job Dissatisfaction: 81
All Factors Contributing to Job Satisfaction: 61

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Figure 1 Predicted effect on retention of the quality of life and pay in the navy (assuming an unemployment rate of 12%)

Percent Ship Days C1/C2-Personnel

- Actual
- Predicted

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apparently made the objectives work, increased satisfaction, and increased her retention rate. A reexamination of the Kennedy article, in light of Herzberg's theory, reveals a few previously unseen motivators. The programs gave the sailors a sense of purpose, a task to accomplish for which they were personally needed, a set of goals to strive for, and a sense of worth—all the items the retention survey said were missing and that Herzberg said were necessary for satisfaction. The value of the quality of life program lay not only in its physical worth, but in its effect upon the attitudes of the crew. The retention factor unobserved in the Kennedy's program was the good leadership demonstrated in her leaders' ability to fulfill the needs of their sailors. All of the satisfaction factors listed are directly affected by the division officer and they can only exist and become positive motivators through the active support of a ship's wardroom. The secret behind the Kennedy's success is reflected in her motto: "A Ship That Cares."

Stop and think for a moment. Many instances should come to mind of men who have endured hardships when a necessary job had to be accomplished: a job they were needed for, where they could use their talents and abilities, and experience a sense of achievement and some recognition. Admittedly, this sounds like a lot of home-spun philosophizing, but many such instances should come readily to mind. Now, reflect upon the things that are missing from the Navy for today's sailor. His everyday life is usually full of routine and monotony. The advertisement always says, "It's not just a job, it's an adventure!" But, more often than not, that adventure gets buried under a thousand mundane tasks and becomes just a job. Satisfiers do not come packaged with each rate and each ship in the Navy, they must be initiated by leaders. Therein lies the crux of the retention problem, and it composes the greatest challenge to tomorrow's leadership.

Good leadership is certainly not the complete answer to retention. Retention is a multifaceted problem, and cannot be solved by attacking it from one side only. Retention centers around people, and for a program to work it must, therefore, be dynamic. As such a dynamic program, it must be implemented by people at the grass roots level. Further, just because the dis-
satisfaction factors do not increase satisfaction, they must not be ignored. All of the quality of life programs should continue, and even be expanded. Monetary compensation must also be increased as much as possible. Because of the efforts of Admiral Hayward invested in these areas, the Navy is finally seeing a “bottoming out” in the downward trend in retention; for there is an inherent time lag involved between the implementation of the objectives and the realization of their results (a lag of one and one half years for quality of life to three years for pay). This means that we are just now beginning to see the results of fiscal year 1980 programs, and it means that we must continue their expansion if we are to maintain this positive trend into fiscal year 1985. (See Figure 1.)

To complement these programs, though, the satisfier side of Herzberg’s theory must be addressed. The present lack in this area has caused the loss of many sailors. Just a little effort put into the satisfiers could easily move the predicted return to previous retention levels back to perhaps fiscal year 1984. Moreover, it could also raise those retention rates beyond the predicted level. Unlike the dissatisfiers which may be administered through Navy-wide policies, the satisfiers must be introduced at the individual level; much of the retention program’s success lies with the people in direct leadership positions. As Admiral Hayward told Congress: "... the U. S. Navy has a responsibility toward improving this situation. Money does not solve all the problems. Leadership and motivation and running a Navy right are important obligations... (and) we will do our utmost to do that job right.”

A report done through the Naval Health Research Center at San Diego concluded that: “... greater emphasis should be placed on leadership training and command management at the division level in order to increase such elements as leader’s facilitation and support, subsystem (department and division) cooperation and harmony, and professional (Navy) esprit de corps. It is expected that such efforts would have positive effects on retention... (and)... may be especially crucial for personnel with less than one year of service.”

The Navy does have a program currently under way emphasizing leadership training and command management: Leadership, Management Education, and Training (LMET). The program’s students include commanding officers through leading petty officers—anyone scheduled to fill a leadership billet. Admiral Hayward said of this program: “I am convinced that the LMET program will result in better leadership, which will, in turn, enhance personal motivation and productivity and thereby reduce attrition and improve retention.”

The Navy is expending a lot of time and money to send its leaders through LMET. Unfortunately, such a program cannot be enough, though necessary, it is insufficient. Individual effort and initiative by naval leaders is necessary to achieve success. If one will permit another worn analogy: “You can lead a horse to water, but you cannot make him drink.”

The Navy is a people-oriented service. This fact tends to get lost in the plethora of technology that now exists. The Navy must take care of its people; retention and the Navy’s effectiveness depend upon it. We are the Navy’s leaders of the 1980s. It is up to us to address this problem. All the leadership programs in existence cannot make us good leaders if we do not care about those we lead. These men are ours; this job is ours; this Navy is ours. Leadership can be our part in helping to solve the retention problem. The retention program for the upcoming decade must be based on good leadership and caring. To paraphrase the Kennedy’s motto, the Navy’s theme for the 1980s should be: “The Navy: A Service That Cares.”

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2 Tom Bowler, Commander, USN, “CNO’s Office of Operations Analysis: OP 96,” Address presented at the Naval Academy, Annapolis, Maryland, 4 February 1982.

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Semper Paratus for Whatever

In May 1980, during the Cuban Exodus, I was a deck watch officer on board the USCGC Valiant (WMEC-621), a 210-foot cutter. We were in the Florida Straits when an 80-foot converted ferryboat was spotted fleadled back to Key West loaded with refugees. The captain sent the ship's corpsman, an inexperienced but enthusiastic third-class petty officer, and myself over to the crowded boat to determine if they needed any assistance. We arrived at the boat to discover numerous sick people and one pregant woman who was having contractions at two-minute intervals. The captain decided to evacuate her to the Valiant and a waiting helicopter for the trip to Key West.

As the corpsman and I were standing at the side of the converted ferryboat waiting for the Valiant’s small boat, I thought maybe the corpsman would need me towels in case the woman had her baby on the helicopter. I asked him if he needed any towels.

He replied, “Gee, I don’t know, Mr. Winter, will I be staying overnight?”

Lieutenant (junior grade) Brooke E. Winter, U.S. Coast Guard

(The Naval Institute will pay $25.00 for each anecdote published in the Proceedings.)