

## MCPON Birthday Message to the Fleet

Our birthday is a celebration of our rich heritage and of the men and women who proudly call themselves United States Sailors. Our Navy was born on the crest of a wave. We have changed much over 232 years, but the spirit of those who serve our nation at sea remains strong, proud and forever connected to those who have served before us.

October 13<sup>th</sup> we celebrate our customs, traditions and a culture unique to those of us who leave the comforts of home for the challenges of sea. There is a character to the United States Sailor, a language all our own and a shared sense of pride in being part of a crew.

Our leaders must impress upon our youngest Sailors that wearing this uniform has always been more than just a reflection of what we do. I don't believe you can be an effective leader without understanding who we are, and who we are is tied directly to our heritage.

We have branched out into other capabilities. We're leveraging your creativity and your ingenuity and providing your abilities to combatant commanders around the world. But we will always be, first and foremost, a maritime service. Sailors will be forever identified by their courage in the face of danger and the moral conviction to stand up for what's right. The term "ship, shipmate, self" was created at sea. To a United States Sailor, there is no better description of our culture and our character.

When I consider our Navy heritage, I think of Sailors working in the harsh environments of our world's oceans just as we've done for 232 years. You're making the same sacrifices, serving our nation at sea. It is the common bond we share with those who have gone before us. Our history was forged at sea and every one of our separate communities has contributed to that legacy.

On our birthday we will recall the sacrifices of our forefathers. It will be a day to search out a veteran from World War II or Korea or Vietnam who still remembers every face and every name of his shipmates lost in battle. Those veterans will tell you that their ties to the Navy have never been stronger, that the pride they feel in what you do fortifies them.

Like the rest of the nation, our veterans are grateful for the blanket of protection you provide this country. On our Navy's birthday I join them and all of America in thanking you for what you do, and thanking your families for the support they provide us all.

You are all members of the greatest Navy the world has ever known and it's an honor to serve with each of you.

Happy birthday Shipmates.