

Episode 57.mp3

Speaker 1 [00:00:00] The views expressed in this interview are those of the individuals, and do not reflect the official policy or position of the U.S. government, the Department of Defense, the U.S. Navy, or the Naval Postgraduate School. Welcome to the Trident Room. Brewer of stout. Conversation unfiltered and on tap.

Speaker 2 [00:00:18] On today's episode of Lieutenant Dan Patterson and Lieutenant Commander Alaina Youngblood speak with Rear Admiral John Oaken about his expansive naval career and the evolution of his leadership values.

Speaker 3 [00:00:32] Good afternoon from the Naval Postgraduate School campus here in Monterey. We are honored to have with us today Rear Admiral John O'Connor, Vice Commander of U.S. Fleet Cyber Command. With me today is Lieutenant Commander Elena Youngblood and myself, Lieutenant Dan Peterson. And typically at this point, we would read through the bio of Admiral O'Connor, but I feel like that might take up the full 30 minute block. So rather than go through that, if you don't mind, sir, would you mind just kind of walking us through some of your career highlights?

Speaker 4 [00:00:58] Sure. I'm just a kid from upstate New York, born and raised in Syracuse. Youngest of five boys. Graduated high school in 1987 from West Tennessee High School. All I ever want to do was be a broadcast meteorologist. Need a way to go to school? Need a way to pay for school. So I went to New York Maritime down South. Graduated in 1991. Started out as a service warfare officer on USS Ticonderoga, and then moved every 24 to 27 months from 1991 to today. So stationed in South Mississippi as an aide did a forecast for optimum track ship routing tour in Norfolk as a young. A meteorology and oceanography officer. Postgraduate school here 2000 to 2003 Ford USS Dwight Eisenhower as a ship's meteorologist and oceanographer, Naval War College Joint Staff deputy director, regional operations work in South Comm. Navy issues command out of Yokosuka. The H.W. center there the top of the seamount. personnel officer Millington command back and lovely Monterey of fleet Numerical Meteorology and oceanography command back on the NAF staff as the ETA Admiral branch and then Admiral Thai then 2017 selected for flag and then commanded Naval Meteorology oceanography command for four years. Oceanographer, the Navy navigator of the Navy. And then, in 2021, moved back to DC and took over as director, information warfare integration. And then last fall, moved up to Fort Meade, just up the Baltimore Washington Parkway, working for Admiral Clapperton and as as his vice commander.

Speaker 3 [00:02:30] Wow. And and I think that's kind of the reason why we didn't want to read the full bio, because that would have taken the full 30 minutes for. Thanks for cutting that down to a couple of minutes after the start. So really appreciate that. And you kind of already knocked out one of the questions I was going to ask at the beginning, I share a common background. I was also born in upstate New York. So my question kind of revolves around how do two people from upstate New York decide to join the Navy?

Speaker 4 [00:02:53] Yeah. So for me, I had no intention of ever joining the Navy. Told you I want to be a broadcast meteorologist. I want to be the next Al Roker. I fell in love with meteorology in high school. My science teacher got me really jazzed about the science. And so, truth be told, I was a terrible student in high school. I didn't apply myself. I didn't work hard. I barely got into college. I got into two schools, Suny Brockport and Suny Maritime College. My brother was a senior go rising senior when I was a freshman, and so I only went there because they had a dual meteorology and oceanography degree. I had

enough money to pay for college for one year, and I had to get a scholarship. What I realized at maritime was a lot of the values from upstate New York. And, Dan, you could probably attest to this. Community values, hard work, discipline yourself. Those things started to come out when I had to start living on my own and taking responsibility for my actions, and my parents weren't there to sort of ride roughshod on me. And I naturally found that the sea service, the family values in the sea service, the things that we do started to mesh very, very naturally with my upbringing in my community of Camillus in Syracuse, New York, and my high school, West Genesee. And so I took the ROTC route, and again, I was going to do my four years and get out. And that was in 1995. And lo and behold, we're now 2024.

Speaker 3 [00:04:11] That's crazy, because there's a lot of parallels, I think, in the way that we both arrived in the Navy. I similarly had no interest in joining the military when I was in high school, but a different generation. And I grew up and watch 911 happen live the first semester in college. And that really changed the way that I viewed the world and what I felt like I could give. And you hit the nail on the head being from upstate New York. And when it's time to roll up your sleeves and get work done, that's what we do. So really awesome. Thank you sir.

Speaker 1 [00:04:37] I would think it's a little bit obvious, as you said, what your education was and the categories and genres of that. So would you say that that education and your preference for the environmental sciences influenced your naval career choice?

Speaker 4 [00:04:50] Yeah, absolutely. Lana. So let me just sort of unpack that a little bit. When I graduated maritime, I had no idea we had a meteorology and oceanography community. It was never talked about. None of those Nonso aviator submarine communities were ever talked about. And so I get on board the USS Ticonderoga and we're doing kind of drug ops. This is in 1994. And on board Senior Chief Gary Benner, an AG one rolling scholar. So Ajax, Benner and AG one scow, I come aboard and we're doing a back. Well, now, it was a rest back then. But, you know, basically, environmental prediction of low, slow fliers and how to tune our radars. And I was just blown away. I'm like, I had no idea we had a community that did that brought the two loves of my life outside my wife, Valerie, but the two loves of my career. Right. The love for the science and and the love for the ocean. And I fell in love with the ocean at Maritime College. It was just. It's just a whole nother thing being at sea, especially as a young person. And I just. I fell in love with the sea. And I found these, these two communities. And the truth is, I was getting out in 1995, I was going to get out of the Navy, and I was going to go pursue my career in broadcast meteorology. And until I found Senior Chief Benner. And if senior Chief Banner's going to watch us because he's still live in Norfolk, I guarantee you'll remember that conversation that him and I had. But that's the, I found the two labs, and, I decided I'm going to make. I'm going to try this. I'm going to a lateral transfer. I'll try it one time. And if I like it, great, I'll stick with it. And what I found is the organization that I was in. And this is nothing against the surface warfare officers or the ships. Right. But, back in the 90s, I was finding myself an environment that the community cared more about what I could do by who I am. And when I transitioned into the meter community, I found a community that cared as much about who I am, as much as what I can do. They care that my dad was dying of cancer in upstate New York, and allowed me to take leave for me to go see my dad as he was dying. And so it was that love of the community and. The family environment that I think. I would hope all of you would agree that we have in our community, and it transcends any pay grade. It's we are part of the meta family. And and so from 1995 to today, I've had a great ride, and I think I'm leaving it in a place where it

does blend the two things that I really try to aspire to, which is the science and the love for the Navy. And hopefully that transcends. And you can see it in in the community.

Speaker 1 [00:07:21] I would absolutely agree with you about that. One thing that I've noticed, just it's a very small thing about our community, is that with the Navy in general, you have these like rare moments to be together in groups of like people that you haven't seen in 12 years or more.

Speaker 4 [00:07:34] Or you mean like when we first met, when you were coming off the destroyer and Yokosuka and I was a sea. Yes. Lieutenant J.G. Youngblood.

Speaker 1 [00:07:41] Yeah. So that was our first time meeting, and now we are doing a podcast so many years later. But just anybody within the community, we have a moment where we serve together and then we don't see each other. But anytime that we have those rare moments in the Navy where you all get together a bit like it's just like coming home, it's just like coming to a family. You're so excited to see everybody.

Speaker 4 [00:07:59] We pick right back up.

Speaker 1 [00:08:00] Exactly. It's it's though. Nothing has changed.

Speaker 4 [00:08:02] Daniel, last time I think we saw or may probably Norfolk.

Speaker 3 [00:08:05] I believe it was done. Ensign Cinemark when we were doing an OpEd. Sir, that was a few years ago for those who didn't know.

Speaker 1 [00:08:10] And the meteorology community, I think is one of the rare communities that were that that does happen.

Speaker 3 [00:08:14] So I think that's a great kind of segue into the start of this, the Genesis. You know, you provided a lot of information, sir, on on the background of how you came into the community. But tell us a little bit about your early years in the talk community and some of the memories that you have, and maybe some of the mentors that helped you along the way? Yeah.

Speaker 4 [00:08:30] That's great. I've been blessed to have some just phenomenal sailors. And when I say sailors officer enlisted that I would say forged me into who I am today. And one that really comes to mind too, I'll say first, is the first person I work for on Watch at Norfolk and at synergy, Bubba Johnson, you know, as a young lieutenant coming off of, Tyco having a very rigid structure of officer enlisted, now you're getting in that community and there's that structure still, but now it's what do you know? And I rolled onto the wash floor in Norfolk, and senior Jim Johnson was the CTO and I was the FTO. And regardless of our pay grades, he poured leadership in me. He taught me how to be a forecaster. Same thing with Ag1 Green, just that ability for us to work across pay grades on a common purpose. And it doesn't matter what's on your collar, it's what you know and what you can pour into others. And so Synergy Johnson was amazing on that. The other one that really and this is when you when you talk about like the single most influential person to help me get here. It's massive Kirk Grove. Massive Grove was an AG one when I was a lieutenant. He made senior chief. We found ourselves, by some coincidence, not really coincidence, but a target, a detail of us both back on Dwight Eisenhower as the the meat tag team. He was the lead CPO and I was a devo. He taught me what it really meant to bleed the creed. The five lines of our Sailors Creed. He taught me what it means to walk

it and talk it. And I think anything that I've been able to do as far as the fundamental leadership sailor, the sailor teaching the creed through my thoughts, my words, my actions, I just try to emulate Kirk background.

Speaker 3 [00:10:12] That's a great mentor. As a young airman, coming in and having that ship best grow, it was a great opportunity to to really learn that mentality. And he was such an exceptional leader in the community and just personality wise, very human in the way that he approached things.

Speaker 4 [00:10:28] Very humble, firm but fair.

Speaker 3 [00:10:31] Yeah, absolutely. So just real quick, I know some of these acronyms change, so I just wanted to cover what FTO, stood for.

Speaker 4 [00:10:38] Yeah. So. Sorry. Forecast duty officer. That's personnel watch. That's digging through the observations, the models trying to figure out what the environment is going to look like on the surface. Intangible parameters, you know, wind, sea precipitation, cloud cover 48 hours in advance. Yeah. It's great. And that's really where, you know, you talk about the love of meteorology. That's really what like I still put pen to paper. I still dig into the models when I want to know, do I need to go play golf today? Can I go for a run? What time? How much? So yeah, that was a lot of fun. And that's the old days when we had no glass. It was literally hand charts, streamlines. There's something really therapeutic, as a meteorologist, of putting a pencil on a paper once in a while and drawing some charts.

Speaker 3 [00:11:28] I had a different experience at seasonal. I don't think I called it therapeutic at the time, but you're absolutely right there. Yeah, there's a directional component that that makes you personally invested into it once, once you're drawing by hand. And I, I completely appreciate that.

Speaker 4 [00:11:42] I think the other thing I'd like to stress is, you know, leadership doesn't always come from above, right? You really need to start looking as leadership in the 360. And and I've learned I would probably say. More from the sailors that I've had the opportunity to lead. And it's nothing to disregard my seniors, but we are all leaders and you just have to look for that moment of leadership. And leadership is not defined by what's on your collar. It's what's defined by what's in your heart and how you act and treat people. And so that was something very special to me, to be able to come into the community and learn that type. And they brought me in as one of their own. Right. It wasn't, well, we'll let the lieutenant go do his own thing. Right? They cared about my personal development.

Speaker 1 [00:12:29] So talking about command and fast forwarding a little bit to that. When you were Cinemark, the community motto was from the seafloor to the stars. What compelled you and your team to adopt this particular slogan?

Speaker 4 [00:12:41] Two things. First, we stole that idea. So if you go back to reading the CNO Richardson's designed for maintaining Maritime Superiority and Superiority 2.0, there is a line in there about warfighting. And as we read it, Kaylee turf it. And Amanda from really struck this up. The other one was it starts with us when we were going through the 2018 Fleet Week, where we brought moreand to Staten Island, we're trying to figure out how do we tell the story seamlessly of the community. Well, you had this great oceanographic ship. How do we tell the story of USS know the flex, the nook, and all the

sub commands underneath it? And they literally told it from the stars to the seabed, from the bottom of the floor, but the bottom of the ocean to the stars. And we lined up our commands on the pier. And it started with USO. So we started with the stars in time, and it worked its way down through the environment, down to the ground, down to the boundary layer, down to the surface air sea interface, and then down into the ocean and all the way down to the seabed. And when they got done with that conversation, then they actually went on board Maury to see the data collection, including the core samplers and the ROVs. And so we try to tell that story that it's the seamless movement throughout the environment, from the bottom of the ocean to the stars that we are responsible to deliver.

Speaker 3 [00:14:11] I think that's awesome because, you know, a lot of times we get wrapped up into different domains, and sometimes we forget that there is a seamless transition between all of them, and how they connect is critically important. So that's amazing to be able to tie that all together in one storyboard like that.

Speaker 1 [00:14:25] Or you generally just get told like, oh, you're you're me, talk your weather. No.

Speaker 4 [00:14:28] What's the goal forecast?

Speaker 1 [00:14:29] It's it's a whole wholesome forecast. It's everything.

Speaker 3 [00:14:33] So there's been a lot of iterations. You know, it starts with us I think kind of struck a chord within the community. It's still something that the community still carries as a brand. But there's been a lot of evolution with what that means. So going back to its genesis, what personal kind of meaning did that have to you at the time?

Speaker 4 [00:14:49] Really? It was two pronged. Naval war fighting starts with us, and it was a conversation I had with CNO Richardson when I was here. Admiral Tigh and he was a CNO, and he asked me, John, are you a war fighter? And I said, I absolutely am. And I had known about Richard since, and he would be back as a captain just before I made flag in 2007. And he chuckled a little and I didn't chuckle back. And I said, you know, name one thing that you do in the Navy that does not start with us and does not include us. And I'm not trying to make more of this than it is. I'm not trying to over inflate the community, but we're integral and valued members of the warfighting team, integral and valued. We're not support. We're not an enabler. We're integral members of the warfighting team. The other part that it really and so if you look at it renamed something that we do in the Navy that delivers warfighting deterring or winning awards. And it starts with us. Let's think about it. Every brief on a CSG starts with me. Talk starts with me. Talk starts with us. Right. You got to know the environment. We can go back to Sun Tzu if we want to quote, we can go back to sunset. The other part is the human element of leadership. When you look at the things that now let's say we as a navy, but we as humans do that we want to change how we look at each other. I talk about this and you may have heard it take the book cover off. Right. Our uniform, our skin. Right. The human interaction starts with us. It starts with our behavior. How do we treat people at the fundamental level? It starts with us. It doesn't start with our upbringing. It doesn't start with our stature in the world. It starts with our belief that we are all in the same boat. We may have come in from different ships, but we are all in the same boat as humans. And so how do we treat each other? And so that behavior starts with us. It starts with me. It starts with how do I treat those around me? Officer enlisted civilian doesn't matter. It's, it's your human interaction. You and I've talked about this before. Or there's no human interaction that's neutral. It's either positive or negative. You either build lives or you tear it down. And that starts with us. It starts with our thoughts,

our words, our actions. You got to think like your thoughts turn into your words. Your words turn into actions. Your actions turn into habits. And it starts with us, every one of us.

Speaker 3 [00:17:14] And I think that's one of the pieces about it starts with us. That really resonates with me because, you know, we talk about the most important ships in the fleet, and I think this one in particular hits to the cornerstone of what the US Navy is built on. And that's ownership. And I think, you know, it starts with us, really encapsulates that ownership piece of each one of us owns a piece of the fight, and it's up to us as individuals to perform. And really, like you were saying, have that positive influence on other people's lives. And so I, I really resonated with me, and I'm glad to hear the Genesis and where it all kind of started from. So thank you for that, sir.

Speaker 4 [00:17:49] I think it was a binding moment also in the wake of the murder of George Floyd, that it starts with us. How are we going to treat each other? How are we going to have those conversations when wrongs are being done? Can we step forward and apologize? Can we listen to be curious and not judgmental? It starts with us in every aspect, every aspect of our lives. It starts with our choices.

Speaker 3 [00:18:11] I absolutely love it. And I'm going to jump a little bit into another one of your concepts when it comes to leadership. You've talked about the six C's concept. Do you mind kind of walking us through? You kind of alluded to it already and how that applies. But I think the six C's kind of truncate it down into something that's very, very direct and clear. So would you mind kind of.

Speaker 4 [00:18:30] Yeah, absolutely. And I coined it a little different now and I'm probably going to trademark it. So feel free to get this out before I trademark it. It's called CCI C squared CCI C squared choices. Create your character character create your course. It's not your upbringing. It's not what happened to you when you were in junior high. It's not anything that's happened to you. Your choices, your simple choices of good over evil, positivity or negativity. Your choices of whether or not you say hi to somebody as you pass them in the P way, your choices to either lift up people or tear them down. That's what creates your character. It's simply your choices. It's nothing. It's not your byproduct of your upbringing or anything or your education. It's simply your choices in life, verbal and nonverbal. And your character ultimately defines your course. And it's not how much money you have, how many kids you have, the status of your house, your car. None of that simply do you have a strong, positive character. And if you do, you are a rich human being. It's not the money, so it's in your bank. It's what's in your heart. And so it's your choices again. Your thoughts, your words, your actions define your character. And your character will ultimately define your legacy, which is your course. And it's not how much money I'm going to leave, folks. It's how I'm going to make them feel. And if they if I made them a better version of themselves for us, having interacted, whether it's once as a j.g. or now as a lieutenant commander, as a PhD student, have I benefited your development and your growth as a human being? Because if you do that, if you develop the person, you develop the sailor. But I think sometimes leadership folks, you know, leadership, we focus on developing the sailor and not always. If you develop the sailor, you may not develop the human being. And this goes to the point. You develop the human being and whatever book cover, if you develop the book, whatever book cover you put on them doctor, lawyer, sailor, soldier, marine, it doesn't matter. I've developed the book through my character, and that's the legacy. It's not with what's on my uniform or on my collar devices. It's how I try to make people feel. And have I lifted them up through my character, in my actions to be a better version of themselves? Wow.

Speaker 3 [00:20:56] I'm just going to take a moment there. That's. It's not often that you get such diverse and direct leadership, considering all the opportunities and positions and time that you've dedicated to service. And so, you know, was there a moment or experience in your career that you feel kind of help define you now as an officer?

Speaker 4 [00:21:14] I will say not as an officer, but a human being and as a human being. I think I've been a better officer. Told you, as I was a swell I didn't feel like I was in the right environment. I didn't feel like I was where I needed to be. And so I made a change and it got better. It got better in the better community. But it's still something wasn't right. And forgive me if my voice cracks a little here. I'll try to keep it together. But when my dad died at 68 and I was over his casket, I looked at him and I said, I have to fundamentally change who I am, right? I am going down a path. And I wasn't a don't get me wrong, I wasn't a bad person, but there were some things that I was a young, young person, young officer that I'm not necessarily proud of, how I treated people. I have no idea why anybody on my first step, EMC Hall, IBM, BMS and Milton Seaman Woodward, these are all folks that I'm hoping to see here in a few weeks at my retirement, but I treated them poorly. Now they are incredibly gracious and humble. And they said, now you were just developing and I disagree with them. The way I treated them was not what I aspire to. What I was that my or my dad's cascading, not to get too deep on my dad, but worked very hard raising five boys with my mom. My dad passed away back in the late 90s. My mom just passed away. My dad was trying to be the man that I wanted to be, right? And so I fundamentally made the change. I said, I'm going to start making good choices for myself. I'm going to start being the type of person that I was raised as. And again, I wasn't way off course, but it was a reset button for me to say, okay, you are going to change right now, and I did. I just made the decision. I'd said, I'm not going to do that anymore. This is the kind of person I'm going to be. And it took time, right? I had to undo habits, I had to undo things. And my wife was really supportive. And that was, if you matter, she's just amazing woman. She was a good sounding board for me. And someone said, hey, that's not the right thing to do.

Speaker 1 [00:23:00] Out of curiosity, do you remember any tools or any books or anything that helped you when you have made that decision that I want to change, I want to become a better person. I want to become a better leader. Was there something that you reached out to, or is there something that you used in order to help you begin that journey for you?

Speaker 4 [00:23:19] So some of it is just my faith. That was very helpful. This is about same time Bill and I started to walk away. We're both Catholic, started walk away from church and so going back church was actually very helpful for us just spiritually to align ourselves. I didn't start reading till later in life. There's a couple really good books I would encourage everybody read. One is what got you here won't get you there. That's about the evolution of leadership and the things that make you successful as a lieutenant commander will make you successful still as a flag officer, but you have to have different tools in your toolbox. Many communicate. If you can connect, that's a really good book. It's about fundamentally connecting with those that you lead on a really human level. And then a really, really good book. True story. Two souls, indivisible. Indivisible. It's the story of Fred Sherry and Porter Halliburton, two prisoners of war, I think is Vietnam. And this is about back in the 60s, when you had an African-American aviator and a Caucasian aviator put in a prisoner war cell. And the Vietnamese thought that the race division that we have in our country would manifest in the P.O.W. camp, but in fact didn't, because we're different regardless of race. We're bound together by an oath. And it backfired. And the prisoner of war camp, actually. Porter. Halliburton. Nurse Fred Cherry. So. Porter, African

porter, Caucasian southern white naval aviator. Fred, African American Air Force aviator from the South. And Porter was put in the cell with Fred and nursed him back together. I didn't know the story until I went to War College. And the two gentlemen that I just mentioned were on stage, and they told her entire story right in front of us. And that was one of those ones where, like, hey, we are one. We are one. Regardless of what the book cover shows. Embrace the book cover. But it's really about the book.

Speaker 3 [00:25:08] And I'm glad that you brought up the importance of family. I don't think there's been a podcast interview that I've done, leadership, that the value and the importance of family has not been left or impressed upon me personally, as so, you know, in the military, it's more than just the member, it's the family. And that goes more, I think, to the human aspect of what you've been discussing with developing the human and also the families. And so it's an incredibly valuable strength that we have, and it's a.

Speaker 4 [00:25:32] Cornerstone of our nation's strength.

Speaker 3 [00:25:34] Absolutely, sir. You were the commander of Cinemark, and I just wanted to kind of ask, as you've progressed through your career now, how did that experience kind of help you now and the leadership decision making that you've had for the last several years?

Speaker 4 [00:25:47] I think at Cinemark, one of the biggest things that we as a community and I tried to bring as the commander, as we are part of a broader AI system. Right. And the one thing that I tried to impart in Cinemark and I brought back to the Pentagon with me was, hey, listen, if we have one more dollar to spend, it may not be the best decision to spend on us. It may be to spend on another aspect of it. And in that corporate approach, many. If you heard the bio early, I didn't spend many tours in community. I've done many tours outside of the community, and taking the corporate navy approach is really the way to lead these large organizations. You can't just be so bore scope down in it. It's all about me. It's all about me. You'll eventually get consumed by the bigger beast, so you have to take a broader Navy enterprise approach. Some of what struggles at Cinemark is the location, right? It is. I consider it a fleet concentration area. It is for naval oceanography. But for the other platform centric communities, it's not. And so bringing that viewpoint from the Pentagon, San Diego, Norfolk down in and giving a broader enterprise approach, I think is really critical. And I'd ask any aspiring leader, as they're moving up, to think in these priorities garden country, Navy, naval oceanography and then between naval oceanography, Navy as naval information warfare. Right. So if we're doing something that does not align to God and country and navy, and it's just for naval oceanography, then we need to stop.

Speaker 1 [00:27:22] As a quick little side note, can you explain what you mean by the location of Cinemark? Just for those that don't know?

Speaker 4 [00:27:27] Yeah, we're in, deep south south Mississippi between Gulfport and New Orleans. That is not a hotbed of what most folks think is a hotbed of naval activity, but it's the largest concentration of oceanographers anywhere in the world. So when you talk about the things that we do as a community with unmanned systems and supercomputing centers and the six oceanographic survey vessels that we have, that all flows in from and through Stennis Space Center, the headquarters of Navy's Meteorology, Oceanography Command.

Speaker 1 [00:27:58] Absolutely. Thank you very much. In your most recent role, you were the director of Warfare Integration Directorate into in six at the office of the Chief of Naval Operations. How did your role as the oceanographer and 80 and all of your previous meteoric experience, as we've discussed, help you for that specific position?

Speaker 4 [00:28:17] Yeah, we're an apprentice organization. The Navy is an apprentice organization. Every job you take is going to be something new that you've never done before, and you're gonna have to figure it out. So when I stepped in as the integrator, I had a fleet concentration approach where I had a fleet first approach, which I was able to, I think, bring that into a building that in some pockets thinks fleet first, but in a large section does not think that fleet fleet forces nav your first. So so that was helpful. But the other aspects of it, it was a steep learning curve for cryptology, electromagnetic warfare, intelligence, information technology, information technology policy. But I leaned on my fleet experience. I leaned on what was happening in the fleet, what they thought was a priority, what makes their readiness, their operational readiness to deliver warfighting and combat power. What was happening. And this is through the times of Admiral Davidson and Admiral Grady. What did he think about what what consumed his time and those things that I made a priority because the commander down to fleet forces was making them a priority, and he was using his limited and most precious asset, which is time on these critical capabilities.

Speaker 3 [00:29:27] So what were some of your biggest takeaways is opposed to unsexy.

Speaker 4 [00:29:31] We need more cowbell. We need more I and I think. You can see that if you just you want to follow the priorities, you follow the money. And we grew the budget 18% over the last three years, largely through other people's money, whether it's big corporate, Navy money, DoD or congressional ads. That's a true sense of what we're doing is very important things in, from and through space really, really important. It's a domain that we must pay strict attention to. And and I think you can see the Navy we established while I was there, the maritime space officer designator, to allow us to put our limited intellectual capital. And the folks that are really good in the space domain, that wear the Navy uniform into these critical billets in MOX and some of the other locations to help operational commanders make these tough decisions. I want to talk about maritime operations in from a through space.

Speaker 1 [00:30:23] Thank you very much, sir. Thank you for your time and your answer to the questions. I have a lighter question for you. So something that I've always found very fascinating, especially about our community, is not necessarily the fact of like who has the information or who has the most knowledge. It's one of the jobs that I found in my oh four milestone in that kind of thing is to being the ability to communicate that information, and the fact that human communication is super complicated and super complex, and to communicate that impact of that communication, one thing is what we have to do is learn to be that professional communicator. Is there a time in your career that you found that to be challenging, or was a funny moment to perhaps the communication didn't go as well when you were under your oh four milestone, speaking to your admiral, or something of that nature, just as a funny kind of the communication didn't pan out. Well.

Speaker 4 [00:31:19] No, actually, if I've got the time, I'll give you two quick stories. One, I was on my own for milestone, and we're off the coast of Virginia doing flight ops. We're running northeast, southwest, right through the Bay Cape's Cherry Point operation. And it was in the winter, and we had a fog line set up. And I went to the bridge and told Jack

Sutherland, who was the navigator, Jacqui, to stop and reset right at this point, because if you go past this, you're going to get into the fog and you're going to go to case three and you're not going to be allowed in the planes, he said, okay, we drew the line on the chart, and then all of a sudden I hear the fog horn going, and I hear on the brick metro to the bridge. So I come up there, I go right over to the chart table, and I say, where are we? I'm like, we're north of the line. Yeah, I know, I said, well, I told you, we have to be south a line and the captain comes over. He's like, you need to move the fog. I said, sir, I'm not in production. I'm in marketing. Right. Productions on the chaplain side. I can't control where the fog is, but I can tell you where it's going to be. And you need to reset further south and run and grunt. Smith, a great officer, said, okay. And so I went away about two hours later. As we do another cycle, I go to the bridge again and I hear the foghorn, and I as soon as I go, I just start marching to the bridges. I get there, I get a call from the captain, you know, Metro Bridge. I say, okay, I'm already there. And I walk in and I go right over north of the line. I know we are like, how many times do I have to tell you you need to be south of the line? And he's like, but I need to run longer. I said, sir, if you want to run longer, you just got to start further southwest. You got to start deeper in the Cherry Point Opry. And we got along really great because I was one of Jody's. And so we communicate very clearly with each other. A couple more hours go by and I hear the foghorn and over the one mic I hear Metro Bridge and I walk right up. And Captain Smith has got a hard hat and a flak jacket for me, because I had just been getting beaten on by him, and he made me wear it the rest of the day in the wardroom, on the bridge watch that following night. And so I think even as much as you can communicate there, he hears me. He's listen to me. But the operational requirements sort of drove past. But I think the the lesson for me, officer, is I was very clear, if you want to conduct your mission, you need to conduct at south of this line. If you conduct it north of this line, you're not going to be able to do it. And I think the skipper, as funny as that was, realize that I'm trying to help him out. Right? I'm trying to get you to your mission accomplishment. But based on your requirements, you can't go north of this line. The second one is more personal, and it actually happened here at Fleet Numerical. And as you guys know, I'm a severe extrovert. I love to walk around. And this female civilian scientist Kim Lock magazine introvert, super awesome human being did not know she was an introvert and I just barged into her. I knocked on the door, I walked in, I said, hey Kim, how's it going? And I knew Kim had a daughter who is in Rothesay studying nursing and I just want to talk to her. I didn't realize that can break somebody and so I did that. She was very, very cordial with me, very humble, talk to my questions. But by the time I got back to my office, if you've been to Fully numerical, it's just two decks up. I got to my office. I had already gone to call from John Ertel and said, what did you do? I'm like, I'm really sorry, that drives home. I think the part on the menu communicate. If you connect, if you want to lead human beings, you need to be able to adapt your leadership style to the individual who you're leading. It's not on them to adapt their style. To me, I, as the leader, have to adapt my communication and my demeanor to each one so I can get the very best out of them based on who they are. I think you've heard the Golden Rule. Have you heard of the Platinum Rule? No. So the golden rules treat others the way you like to be treated. The platinum rule is treat others the way they want to be treated. You've also probably in your careers, heard the skipper. Hey, you're just not listening to me. No, you're just not saying it the way that I need to hear it. And so leadership is, as I said, it's fundamentally human interaction. And if you want to lead human beings, you need to understand how they process information, how they take information in. And if you lead me the same way you lead Admiral Perrette, we're different people. We aspire to the same thing, but we communicate a little different. And if you're leading us, you may need to say it a little different to us. If you barge into my office and say, hey, what's going on? You got a bunch on here, I'm like, I'm going to be all about that. But there are other officers that if you do that, that breaks them. That's not something that they value. It's not their strength. And so

you have to understand how to communicate with individuals. And I learned that with Kim. And when I barged into her office. So, Kim, you're listening. I'm really sorry I did that. We built a good friendship over the years, but I think that talks to the the leadership aspect, that it is inherent. You just can't communicate with everybody the same way.

Speaker 3 [00:36:07] So we're winding down on time. And I really appreciate your time and being so gracious with us today. I got two more real quick questions for you. One is, what advice would you give to any college student looking to pursue a career in the military?

Speaker 4 [00:36:19] Yeah, I'll specifically talk about the Navy. The Navy is a land of opportunity. If you want to do something bigger than yourself for the greater good things that you can even see that you can do, and you want to be part of a large family, a large network where you gain friendships that last decades. This is a place for you. I'd also tell them find your purpose, your passion, and accept the lifestyle that goes with it. This is not an easy life, but anything worth doing is going to be hard. And the Navy's no different than any. But this is a it's been a great time. I've absolutely loved my 33 years that they're winding down now, but I look back with no regrets and a lot of admiration for the folks that poured leadership into me and those young people that John O'Connor that's out there in some small town in upstate New York that's thinking about, you know, what do I want to do with my life? Join the Navy?

Speaker 3 [00:37:09] Absolutely. Thank you sir. And lastly, before we go, I'd be remiss to not acknowledge that you're a huge sports fan. And so we got the Caps and Penguins coming up tomorrow night. Who's your pick.

Speaker 4 [00:37:17] Caps up two to nothing. Charlie Lindgren in goal. He gets, 32 saves, shutout and Sidney Crosby gets zero points.

Speaker 3 [00:37:26] I love it I love it, sir. Well, thank you again for your time. We really appreciate it. And thanks for coming on the podcast.

Speaker 4 [00:37:31] Awesome. Thanks, guys.

Speaker 1 [00:37:35] Thanks for joining us in the trading room. For more information about today's guests and topics. Please visit the show notes online at nps.edu/trident Room podcast. The Trident Room Podcast has been brought to you by the Naval Postgraduate School Alumni Association and Foundation. For questions, comments and suggestions, please email us at TridentRoompodcasthost@nps.edu.