**Episode 23 – Developmental Black Hole**

**INFORMATION:** Discuss what I perceive to be a “developmental black hole” in leadership/professional development training and education in the Navy and what you can do about it.

http://www.ussnautilus.org/undersea/gilmore.html

**History Segment:** CDR Howard Gilmore

The first U.S. submariner to receive the Medal of Honor in World War II, CDR Howard W. Gilmore, lost his life in a selfless act of heroism that has become one of the most inspiring legends of the Submarine Force.

Gilmore was born in Selma, Alabama, in 1902 and served first as an enlisted Sailor before entering the U.S. Naval Academy by competitive examination. He graduated from the Academy in 1926, standing 34th in a class of 456. Before the war, Gilmore had served as the executive officer of USS Shark (SS-174), and in a colorful incident during that time, narrowly survived an assault by a group of thugs in Panama, who cut his throat during an excursion ashore. In March 1942, four months after the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor, he took command of the new USS Growler (SS-215), fourth boat of the 81-ship Gato (SS-212) class and sailed her to the Pacific theater.

Operating out of Pearl Harbor, Growler was one of seven submarines assigned picket duty north and west of the islands as part of the Hawaii defense force during the early phases of the Battle of Midway in June 1942. Later that month, she embarked on her first war patrol in the vicinity of the Aleutian Islands, where Gilmore attacked three Japanese destroyers off Kiska, sinking one and severely damaging the other two, while narrowly avoiding two torpedoes fired at him in return. In early August, Gilmore took Growler on her second and most successful war patrol in the East China Sea near Taiwan, sinking four merchant ships totaling 15,000 tons, before returning to Hawaii in late September.

In October 1942, Growler sailed from Pearl Harbor to Brisbane, Australia, by way of Truk in the Caroline Islands, both to support the blockade of that Japanese bastion and as part of a general repositioning of submarine assets ordered by ADM Chester Nimitz during the early struggle for the Solomon Islands. Gilmore and Growler scored no kills on this third war patrol but arrived safely in Brisbane in mid-December.

Growler departed Brisbane on New Year’s Day 1943 for her fateful fourth war patrol, targeting Japanese shipping lanes between Truk and Rabaul in the Bismarck Archipelago. On 16 January, Gilmore sighted an enemy convoy, maneuvered inside the escorts, and sank Chifuku Maru, a 6,000-ton passenger-cargo ship. He was unsuccessful in subsequent attacks on a small convoy and a converted gunboat, but on the night of 6-7 February, while charging batteries on the surface, Gilmore spotted the 900-ton provision ship Hayasaki and manned the bridge for a surface attack. With Growler still a mile away, however, Hayasaki’s watch saw the on-coming submarine, and Hayasaki turned to the attack herself, attempting to ram her assailant. As the small ship charged out of the darkness, Gilmore sounded the collision alarm and shouted, “Left full rudder!” – to no avail. Perhaps inadvertently, Growler hit the Japanese adversary amidships at 17 knots, heeling the submarine 50 degrees, bending sideways 18 feet of her the bow, and disabling the forward torpedo tubes.

Simultaneously, the Japanese crew unleashed a murderous burst of machine gun fire at Growler’s bridge, killing the assistant officer of the deck and a lookout, while wounding Gilmore himself and two other men. “Clear the bridge!” Gilmore ordered as he struggled to hang on to a frame. As the rest of the bridge party dropped down the hatch into the conning tower, the executive officer, LCDR Arnold Schade – shaken by the impact and dazed by his own fall into the control room – waited expectantly for his captain to appear. Instead from above came the shouted command: “Take her down!” Realizing that he could not himself get below in time if the ship were to escape, Gilmore chose to make the supreme sacrifice for his shipmates. Schade hesitated briefly – then followed his captain’s last order and submerged the crippled ship.

Surfacing some time later in hope of reattacking the Hayasaki, LCDR Schade found the seas empty. The Japanese ship had, in fact, survived the encounter, but there was no sign of Gilmore, who apparently had drifted away in the night. Schade and Growler’s crew managed to control the ship’s flooding and limped back to Brisbane on 17 February. Taken immediately into dry dock, Growler was repaired and fought again – at first under the command of LCDR Schade, and then under CDR Thomas B. Oakley, Jr. Sadly, she was lost on her 11th war patrol in November 1944, while attacking a Japanese convoy south of Mindoro in the Philippine Islands. Growler received eight battle stars for her role in the Pacific War.

For sacrificing his own life to save his ship, CDR Howard Gilmore was posthumously awarded the Medal of Honor. Subsequently, the submarine tender Howard W. Gilmore (AS-16) was named for him and sponsored by his widow. Even today – over 50 years later – “Take her down!” remains one of the legendary phrases of the U.S. Submarine Force.

Medal of Honor Citation for Commander Howard W. Gilmore:

For distinguished gallantry and valor above and beyond the call of duty as Commanding Officer of the USS Growler during her Fourth War Patrol in the Southwest Pacific from 10 January to 7 February 1943. Boldly striking at the enemy in spite of continuous hostile air and antisubmarine patrols, CDR Gilmore sank one Japanese freighter and damaged another by torpedo fire, successfully evading severe depth charges following each attack. In the darkness of night on 7 February, an enemy gunboat closed range and prepared to ram the Growler. CDR Gilmore daringly maneuvered to avoid the crash and rammed the attacker instead, ripping into her port side at 11 knots and bursting wide her plates. In the terrific fire of the sinking gunboat’s heavy machineguns, CDR Gilmore calmly gave the order to clear the bridge, and refusing safety for himself, remained on deck while his men preceded him below. Struck down by the fusillade of bullets and having done his utmost against the enemy, in his final living moments, CDR Gilmore gave his last order to the officer of the deck, “Take her down.” The Growler dived; seriously damaged but under control, she was brought safely to port by her well-trained crew inspired by the courageous fighting spirit of their dead captain.

**I. Introduction**

A. Attention (Naval enlisted leadership is evaluated on their performance as leaders with virtually zero actual formal leadership development or education.)

B. Motivation (Junior Sailors should take time to understand the importance of leadership development and what they can do on their own to fill the void in order to become the best possible leaders for their Sailors.)

C. Overview (I haven’t been able to get this concept out of my head as of late. It’s the reason I created this medium for you. It’s more and more maddening to me. As I watch leaders fail. As I hear from junior Sailors that are increasingly frustrated with poor leadership. As I FAIL as a leader and wonder what I could have done to prevent it. As I work for horrendous leadership in senior positions and it affects my charges negatively. As I continue to hear senior leadership speak about how important leadership development is and continue to fall short in taking action on their words. IT IS TOO IMPORTANT TO SCREW UP. The effects are so far reaching. Poor leadership is 100% avoidable and we don’t do anywhere near enough to prevent it. We CAN do better and we HAVE TO. So lets talk about how…)

D. Plug “Ask DGUTS!” segment. dontgiveuptheshippodcast@gmail.com

**II. Body**

A. Main Point 1 (Navy Enlisted Leadership Development) – So in my mind-bending frustration I vented to friends who listened intently but then always asked, “well what are we doing now?”. I have a pretty good understanding of this question’s answer but I think it’s important to always check, because I sure as hell don’t know everything. So I looked into it and, what do you know? I learned something. In 2013, CNO Greenert released what he titled “The Navy Leader Development Strategy”. Within that document he stated how important he believes this to be numerous times stating “developing enlisted and officer leaders must be one of our top priorities”. It also, surprisingly, referenced an OPNAVINST which I’ll talk about also. The short of it is there is a plan, and it’s a plan developed because senior leadership understands how important this is. The question I feel we all ask ourselves, or at least I do, is why doesn’t it feel like it on the deck-plate?

1. Sub-point (Navy Leader Development Continuum) – The continuum itself is broken into four “Core Elements”: Experience, Education, Training and Personal Development. These Core Elements are then divided into paygrade ranges of E1 to E3, E4 to E6, E7 to E8 and E9. Experience contains elements like specific technical and leadership qualifications and service in particular billets such as WCS or LPO. Education exclusively references online PME, the Senior Enlisted Academy and the SEA’s Keystone Course. Training references things like RTC, NMT, Command Delivered leadership development and “C” schools, CPO 365 and the Fleet CPO Training Team and “Command Leadership School” which is simply another course at the SEA. GMT also falls into this category. Personal Development references your Learning and Development Roadmaps, Professional Qualifications (again, but non-technical in nature), professional reading (on your own time) and TA (so off duty education). The obvious problem is, nowhere in here is a leadership education actually provided. Some fundamental real life experiences that can be important additions and developmentally important factors, yes, but not an education!

2. Sub-point (Instruction) – OPVNAVINST 5351.2A, Navy Enlisted Leader Development Continuum. The OPNVAINST is what you would expect, short and intentionally vague in nature. It is a whopping 11 pages long as compared to the well thought out and articulated Marine Corps Order which is 42 pages long. I will provide links in the show notes to both the pamphlet and the OPNAVINST but there’s not much meat there. But while they populated a chart showing that we’re doing something in each area, it’s massively deficient.

B. Main Point 2 (So what’s the problem?): Sounds like a well thought out plan that addresses Sailors at every level, right? Wrong. And I think we all know just how badly this falls on its face in actual day-to-day practice.

1. Sub-point (Training vs. Education) – This is something I first heard at the Senior Enlisted Academy, which in and of itself is a problem. But it’s a pretty big deal and the thread that ties this whole thing together. The difference is simple: training is providing specific information on specific competencies, and drilling that, getting in repetitions to increase your proficiency at that competency. Education teaches you HOW TO THINK. It shows you how to develop your intellect and problem solving skills and how those are applied to further the mission. Now, which one sounds more suited to building leaders? The easy answer is education. Yet what is it we do from day one? Training. If we do anything at all.

2. Sub-point (Command Delivered Training) – Here’s where we fail. At some point, someone decided that leadership education was, in fact, NOT that important. Once upon a time, MCPON Bushey pushed the importance of leadership development so hard it lead to the creation of what we used to call NAVLEAD. It was brick and mortar schoolhouses that I was fortunate enough to catch the tail end of in my career. They had courses specifically for Work Center Supervisors, Leading Petty Officers and Leading Chiefs. They were NOT perfect. But they were something. They were a foothold. I attended the WCS course as a CS2 in Groton, Connecticut and I got something from it. I remember learning there. Well, like everything, budget cuts came around and someone on high decided these courses were expendable. But we couldn’t just erase enlisted leadership development. Something had to take its place, and that something is what we call “Command Delivered Training”. Petty Officer Indoc for PO3, PO2 and PO1 and CPO Selectee Leadership Course. CPO 365 Phase 1 and 2 also fall into this category. The problem with this is the burden. We dropped the whole of enlisted leadership development on Petty Officers and Chiefs in the Fleet that barely have time to get their maintenance done. I’m obviously pretty passionate about this topic and I can barely find time to fit in CPO 365 Phase 1 training of substance. If and when I do, it’s generally after my Sailors have put in at least eight hours and just want to go home to their families. You think they want to sit there and listen to me talk about “Institutional and Technical Expertise”? You think they’re receiving me? OF COURSE NOT. And who can blame them? Petty Officer Indoc rarely happens, and at the commands where a strong FCPO Mess is leading the way…while valuable, it’s just not enough.

3. Sub-point (Leadership Education) – So is there leadership education? YES. There is. The crime being it’s locked up at the Naval War College for Chiefs only (basically). When I attended the Senior Enlisted Academy in early 2016 it consisted of 9 weeks of distance learning on Blackboard (think online college classes). Then three weeks in residence in Newport, Rhode Island. The Blackboard portion consisted of writing essays, reviewing lectures and articles and participating in conversations on discussion boards. It was awesome. Then I got to spend three weeks in Newport with over a hundred Chiefs, Senior Chiefs and Master Chiefs listening to amazing lectures from experts, motivational speakers, the Chief of Naval Personnel, Chief of Chaplains, Command, Force and Fleet Master Chiefs and so on. It was by far and away the best experience I’ve ever had. I learned a ton, felt completely immersed and wish I could have stayed far longer. And the whole while I kept thinking “WHY THE HELL ISN’T EVERYONE DOING THIS?”. The model could work, adapted to every level.

C. Main Point 3 (What can YOU do about it?): Because it’s cathartic and I’m dumb enough to think someone will put me in charge of fixing all of this at some point, I’m going to talk a little about how “Big Navy” could and should fix it. It starts at RTC. We have to spend time building the foundation there. Teaching Sailors how to receive, understand and communicate constructively with their leadership. And in their defense, the Navy is very slowly realizing this and attempting to update the curriculum to include things like what we now call Life Skills and the Naval Military Training environment at “A” Schools – but again, the curriculum and execution fall woefully short of addressing the bigger issues; it’s not “education”. Then we look to the other services for answers. The Army has formal, brick and mortar leadership schools at every level. NCO Academies that are mandatory prior to being promoted to the next rank. The Air Force has it’s own Community College as well as mandatory leadership courses at similar NCO Academies. They also have what’s called an Airman Leader School for junior enlisted Airmen to learn the basic principals of leadership. The Marine Corps has Senior NCO Academies on six installations, required in residence or distance learning courses starting at Lance Corporal and extending all the way to Command Sergeants Major in addition to mandatory PME online and attendance at any services Senior Enlisted Academy. We’re behind. So far behind. There should be Petty Officer Leadership Academies in fleet concentration areas that are mandatory attendance. Mandatory TAD either during a PCS or prior to promoting so the Sailor can focus on the education they are receiving full time, as it’s happening. There are SO MANY answers to saving money and making the delivery more efficient. The SEA is a perfect prototype in its use of Blackboard to maximize throughput. Then we move to mediums the kids are using these days. Youtube, smart phone apps, podcasts, etc. We haven’t even dipped our damn toe in the water here! The potential is MIND-BLOWING. Why do we not have apps with leadership education material readily available and free for download! WE can do better. We MUST do better.

1. Sub-point (Read) – Read! Read EVERYTHING. The CNO’s Professional Reading Program is outstanding! Your command should have these books readily available, a new list comes out each year and each command can get a set FOR FREE. Shipped straight to your command. There’s a good chance these books are sitting around in your ship’s library somewhere. If NOT, you can find them online for FREE! Login to NKO and find the e-library link on the main page! Follow it, register an account and commence learning. There is a tremendous amount of information out there and so many lessons can be learned from these resources. Always be reading.

2. Sub-point (Self-educate) – Leverage the resources available to you. Youtube is one of my favorite. Specifically the Naval History and Heritage Command and Naval War College channels. There are amazing lectures from War College professors and guests, and plenty of them. Take the time to explore the library, there is a wealth of knowledge in it. And learn your heritage with the History and Heritage Command! They literally release a daily video titled “This Day in History”. Take the two minutes and watch. You won’t regret it.

3. Sub-point (Strong Mentorship) – Strong mentorship goes both ways. Seek it. I won’t belabor this because I’ve spoken on its importance more than once. But look around the room, find a leader that is what you see in your mind’s eye when you picture yourself in that position, and FOLLOW THEIR EXAMPLE. And when you ARRIVE at that place, pay it forward. Mentor the next generation and TRAIN YOUR RELIEF. Be the leader you always wished you’d had on your way up the ranks.

4. Sub-point (Command Delivered Training) – But wait, you just said it’s “not enough”…well, yes, I did. And it’s not. But it’s what we have. So, since that IS all we have at this moment, we need to make it a priority. This is something FIRST CLASS PETTY OFFICERS should take ownership of. There are messes Fleet-wide that should be taking the lead on this, under the guidance of a senior CPO or a SCPO with the approval and support of your CMCs. Stay with me FCPOs, because I know you’re competency in leadership and your drive and determination to develop your Sailors is there. And there’s a reason why I say you should be the ones OWNING this. But you NEED TO INVOLVE THE CHIEFS. What do I mean by this? Well, several things. Bring them in when needed as a technical advisor or guest speaker. They just have more experience in some areas as well as insight you won’t have based on access. USE THEM AND THEIR EXPERIENCE TO BETTER YOUR SAILORS. The second and most IMPORTANT reason is SUPPORT. Who decides whether Sailors will be present? Whether their attendance is prioritized over maintenance or a work list? Who decides at a command level if that support is given? You guessed it. The Chief’s Mess and your CMC. INVOLVE THEM. Show them your plan, show them your passion, get their stamp of approval and ask for their support! That’s the only way a command delivery of leadership development succeeds.

**III. Conclusion**

A. Summary (We talked about…)

1. What the current system of enlisted leadership development looks like…

2. What the problems with our current system are…

3. And what YOU can do about it to ensure you are the best leader possible…

B. Re-motivation (Junior Sailors should take time to understand the importance of leadership development and what they can do on their own to fill the void in order to become the best possible leaders for their Sailors.)

C. Closing – I want to first take the opportunity to address anyone this topic may have rubbed the wrong way. I am in NO WAY trying to take anything away from the amazing deckplate leaders out there, Chiefs and Blue Shirts, that are out there making our Navy better by professionally developing their Sailors at a high level. I get it. There are absolutely commands out there killing it. But they are rare. And that is the specific problem that I’m addressing, along with the fact that you having to prioritize this along with the ridiculous list of other responsibilities you have at an operational unit is just wrong. We should be exploiting every possible avenue. We, the enlisted force, should get similar dedicated classroom style education received by Naval Officers throughout their careers. By our sister services throughout their careers. I believe we could do this and touch EVERY SINGLE SAILOR DOING THIS JOB. I believe we could do it by exploiting the mediums the junior enlisted folks gravitate to already. Make it operate through their phones! It’s how I’m reaching them with this podcast. So too could a staff of strong mentors with “Big Navy’s” blessing and backing. Apps. Youtube. They can get it while they drive home. While they PT. Limiting the amount of time needed in a classroom but NOT REPLACING IT. Because you just can’t, there’s no replacement for 1-on-1 learning.

HOWEVER, I did learn something incredible this week. If you are a FCPO or a Chief and you have not participated in training delivered by a mobile training team called the “Fleet CPO Training Team”, DO IT. NOW. SERIOUSLY. They were the Navy’s answer to this gap, and while limited they are COMPLETELY DEDICATED TO YOUR LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT AND EDUCATION. Contact them, they will schedule the time and fly to your command on THEIR DIME, LODGE THEMSELVES and come spend an entire 8 hour day with your Chiefs and ANOTHER full day with your First Classes. It was outstanding. All of my Chiefs and FCPOs came out of the training BEAMING, with ear to ear smiles. I couldn’t have been happier with the EDUCATION these amazing Command Master Chiefs delivered.

Lastly, never stop chipping away at this. When you think about it, as leaders, this is our PRIMARY MISSION. This IS our EVERY DAY GRIND. Constantly pushing this. Constantly finding new and creative ways to develop our Sailors. We will very likely NEVER get the brick and mortar classroom training back. Barring a catastrophic failure of enlisted leadership in an armed conflict, and I KNOW YOU WILL ALL RISE TO THE OCCASION if that happened. So, we continue to grind out progress. Proactively improving your command delivered training is that progress. Your own professional development by exploiting professional reading is that progress. The Fleet CPO Training Team is that progress. And YOU, finding innovative ways to use what we have to solve new problems and meet new leadership development challenges is that progress. Keep pushing yourselves. Keep pushing your leadership. And keep pushing me.

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