**Episode 20 - Rating Modernization Outline**

**INFORMATION:** Discuss the recent “Rating Modernization” announcement and address the concerns of junior Sailors.

https://www.history.navy.mil/browse-by-topic/heritage/uniforms-and-personal-equipment/petty-officer-rating-badge-locations-and-eagle-designs.html

**History Segment:** The uniform regulations of 19 February 1841 introduced a sleeve mark for the uniforms of petty officers consisting of an eagle facing left (from the wearer's perspective) with wings pointed down, while perched on a fouled anchor. It was to be worn half way between the elbow and shoulder on the front of the sleeve. Boatswain's Mates, Gunner's Mates, Carpenter's Mates, Masters at Arms, Ship's Stewards and Ship's Cooks wore it on the right sleeve while Quarter Masters, Quarter Gunners, Captains of the Forecastle, Captains of Tops, Captains of the Afterguard, Armorers, Coopers, Ship's Corporals and Captains of the Hold wore it on the left sleeve. It was difficult to distinguish between different ratings using this system.

The uniform regulations of 1 December 1866 introduced a system of rating badges, with eight specialty marks. Depending on design and where these badges were worn, thirteen ratings could be identified.

A petty officer rating badge incorporating an eagle, specialty mark and chevrons with points down was introduced in the uniform regulations of 1886. The eagle faced left with its wings pointed horizontally to the sides. The regulations specified that petty officers of the starboard watch were to wear rating badges on their right sleeves. The left sleeve was to be used for those on the port watch.

General Order 431, dated 24 September 1894, changed the eagle's wings to point upward, though the eagle continued to face to the left.

The uniform regulations of 25 January 1913 changed the location of rating badges so that ratings badges were no longer worn on the sleeves corresponding to assigned watches. Right arm rates were to signify men of the Seamen Branch; left arm rates were to be used by personnel of the Artificer Branch, Engine Room Force, and all other petty officers. The eagle continued to face left on all rating badges.

The uniform regulations of 31 May 1941 specified that the eagle was to face to the left in the rates comprising the Seaman Branch: Boatswain Mate, Turret Captain, Signalman, Gunner's Mate, Fire Controlman, Quartermaster, Mineman and Torpedoman's Mate. All other rating badges were to have an eagle facing to the right.

Right arm rates were disestablished 2 April 1949, after having been eliminated by Change #1, dated 24 February 1948, to the 1947 uniform regulations. All rating badges were to be worn on the left sleeve with the eagle facing to the right.

**I. Introduction**

A. Attention (Change is constant. So long as you stay in this Navy, it will change all around you and look like a different place at the end of your career than it did in the beginning).

B. Motivation (Junior Sailors should always question everything, but when the change is delivered – like it or not, need to embrace it…use it, to leave behind the best Navy you possibly can.)

C. Overview (It took me about five days to process what just happened. It came out of nowhere – from what I can tell, NO ONE got any advance notice. Not COs, CMCs…no one. We got blindsided. It happens. But once I got past my initial, visceral reaction of anger I realized that this, like many things, are beyond our control. I talk about it all the time, how you need to control what you an control and make lemonade, right? Well, this feels different in ways. But it’s not – not entirely. I’m going to get into all of that in hopes of easing some of the panic!).

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**II. Body**

A. Main Point 1 (What is “Rating Modernization”?)

1. Sub-point (Blind-sided.) – The question everyone seems to be asking themselves is “What is rating modernization?”. Part of the reason there is such a confused, panicked, frustrated reaction is that we were all blind-sided. ALL OF US. I was on a phone-con with my CMC that afternoon and he had no idea this was coming. I strongly disagree with how it was delivered – but I can’t speak to why. And keep in mind while I struggle to envision a good reason for doing it the way they did, LEADERSHIP PERSPECTIVE IS IMPORTANT. I do not have the same perspective as the SECNAV, CNO or MCPON. It’s safe to say they know a lot we don’t. So, give them the benefit of the doubt.

2. Sub-point (Policy) – The actual guidance released included a video with the SECNAV, CNO and MCPON discussing vaguely what was coming and why. Also, a NAVADMIN was released, NAVADMIN 218/16. Equally vague. I was able to get my hands on some amplifying information from a fellow Chief in DC. Still vague, but it did have a timeline laid out on when more amplifying information was coming. So my advice is just keep your ear to the ground, watch the social media accounts of NPC, All Hands Magazine, CNO, MCPON, etc. and you’ll see it as soon as it’s on the street.

2. Sub-point (Stated goals.) – So the actual stated goals of the program are to open up career and advancement opportunities for Sailors while putting the right Sailor in the right job with the right training. This includes increased advancement opportunities in career fields that are “locked up” due to lack of quotas from over manning. How does this work? Well, we don’t know yet. But based on the general over-arching concept of rating modernization, by not artificially pigeon-holing you into one specific job inside a broader field, you will have a greater opportunity to advance by being part of a larger competitive group. Also, and the Navy has been talking about this for a long time, is what is now being billed as “Ready Relevant Learning”. This concept will include credentialing Sailors in their career fields in line with their training and experience to provide greater level of knowledge and opportunity to translate that training and experience to a civilian occupation.

B. Main Point 2 (So why is everyone so upset?)

1. Sub-point (Heritage) – The biggest complaint I see is that the Navy just erased 241 years of heritage. Shut up. Stop talking. That’s the most ridiculous thing I’ve ever heard. You sound like petulant children that just had their toy taken away. My rating has changed names many times. Ship’s Cook, Officer’s Steward, Commissaryman, Mess Management Specialist and finally, in 2004, to Culinary Specialist. They did that to better align us with our civilian counterparts. A stated goal of Rating Modernization. No where, in all of that change, has any of the heritage been lost. EVERYONE still knows who Dorie Miller is. Or at least they SHOULD. That’s my next problem with this argument. I’m one of the most knowledgeable people you will ever encounter outside the Navy History and Heritage Command on my Navy rating and it’s heritage. Very few people in my rating KNOW THIS HERITAGE. They know who Dorie Miller is, but that’s about it. WHAT DO YOU KNOW? What do you KNOW about your ratings heritage? The heritage that you are infuriated about the Navy “destroying”? MOST PEOPLE ARE CLUELESS! And that’s a crime, because you are a part of that story. You are a part of that story and everyone in the future Navy Occupational Specialty tied to that rating is part of the continued story! NO ONE CAN TAKE THAT FROM YOU OR ME! So stop whining and go learn your story! Be a good steward of the continuation of your specialties story by learning it and passing it on! Because that’s not happening NEARLY enough now and it just became infinitely more important after this announcement.

2. Sub-point (Pride) – This is what everyone actually MEANS when they talk about the destruction of heritage. People take tremendous pride in being apart of a rating – whether they understand WHY they have that pride, they do. People like to belong to something greater than themselves. They like to know they are contributors to a cause. That concept is amplified when you look at the demographic. The Navy is 100% filled with volunteers in a service based career. So we have an intense and deep attachment to the things we BELONG to. If the Navy got rid of Submarines tomorrow, I’d be PISSED. I take a tremendous amount of pride in being a Submariner. So I get it. You’re mad! And you have every right to be! I will in no way, shape or form try to convince you that you shouldn’t have heartburn over this. I do. I loved being a CS…and an MS before that.

3. Sub-point (Shock) – No one had any idea this was coming. This is what I think I take the most issue with. In my opinion, this should have and could have been managed far better. Why they didn’t put far more time and thought into preparing and crafting the message is beyond me. They could have packed that NAVADMIN full of more information, timelines, resources, etc. They could have briefed FLTCMs and FORCMs that could then have then held All Hands Calls in fleet concentration areas. They could have done SO MUCH MORE to calm the storm and they didn’t. Everyone is scrambling for information, for answers to obvious questions that I’m certain they saw coming. Again, I’m sure there was a reason they did it the way they did, I can’t even fathom what it is and I believe, knowing all this, that it was a mistake on their part. And I’m confident they now realize that.

C. Main Point 2 (What can you do about it?)

1. Sub-point (Feedback) – Let them know how you feel about it. Now, there are ways to do that and not to do that. For some reason, junior Sailors feel this immunity to accountability when on social media platforms. DON’T DO THAT. You’re a United States Sailor, all the time, everywhere you go. Even online. So be professional…please? Express your opinion with tact. Now that I got that out of the way, do it effectively. The Navy is monitoring social media – I know this for a fact based on the document I received regarding the program. I says it, right in there under their timeline for communication. Now, they can’t see your timeline or feed, so what does that mean? Go to the CNO, MCPON, SECNAV and NPC on social media and EXPRESS YOUR OPINION PROFESSIONALLY. PROVIDE THEM THAT FEEDBACK. If you have the opportunity to go to an all hands call in your area, do that! If you chain of command solicits input at some point in the future, participate!

2. Sub-point (Think.) – Think. THINK, THINK, THINK! Use your brains. Analyze this. Tear it apart and put it back together again. Come to a conclusion. What’s really happened here? The stated goals, if executed as stated, are a huge and productive step forward for modernizing Navy training and advancement. It will provide opportunities that an old hand like me couldn’t possibly imagine! Opportunities I complained about incessantly on my way up. You’re about to have those opportunities! Change is always hard. It’s often ugly and confusing. But you’ll look back in fifteen years and wonder why the hell we ever did it a certain way. Will you do it about rating modernization? Who knows. I don’t know that I will. But I won’t be here in fifteen years. You will. So be good stewards. Be good stewards of change.

**III. Conclusion**

A. Summary (We talked about…)

1. What “Rating Modernization” actually is, to our knowledge…

2. Why there is such a visceral response to the announcement and what we believe it means…

3. And what you can do about it…

B. Re-motivation (Junior Sailors should always question everything, but when the change is delivered – like it or not, need to embrace it…use it, to leave behind the best Navy you possibly can.)

C. Closing – I said it a few times just now, BE A GOOD STEWARD. WE create our Navy’s culture. The policy direction may come from the top, but the culture created by it’s implementation is owned by YOU. By ME. By US. Uniforms change. Job titles change. Tradition and ceremonies change. You own HOW they change. Are you going to allow a A440 to not have pride in their job? A B650 is a Navy Cook. So is a Ship’s Cook. A Steward. A Messman. It’s another step in the evolution of OUR STORY. You can call me whatever you want, it’s MY STORY. How it evolves and is perceived by future generations is something I own. I take it very seriously. And in that way, NOTHING has changed.

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