

## “Hail to the Master Chief!: Respected Sailor’s Sailor and Mentor to Retire after 43 Years of Distinguished Service under Nine Presidents”

*By LT Kurt S. Lowry, PAO, NR Fleet Public Affairs Center Pacific, San Diego*

*“Ask not what your country can do for you! Ask what you can do for your country!”*

And how?

On March 4, 2005, Utility Construction Master Chief, Seabee Combat Warfare Specialist David Jensen will retire from the United States Navy’s Reserve after exactly forty-three years of distinguished service to his country under nine presidents.

In January of 1961, President Kennedy’s inaugural eloquence was not lost on then Eagle Rock High School of Los Angeles student David Jensen.

“People were energized when President Kennedy delivered his inaugural address, and young people knew from an early age what they wanted to do for a career,” said Master Chief Jensen.

The military draft helped people make up their minds. For Jensen, the military was not an untenable option.

“My dad served in the Army Signal Corps during World War II, and my brothers and I watched ‘Victory at Sea’ and John Wayne on TV. I was intrigued with the Navy early on,” Jensen said.

When recruiters visited Eagle Rock High School, young Jensen filled out an interest card. On 5 March 1962, high school junior Jensen enlisted as a seaman recruit and was assigned to Naval Reserve Surface Division (NRS) 11-04. From March 1963 to March 1965, he was assigned to *USS COLAHAN* (DD658), a “Reserve” AntiSubmarine Warfare (ASW) ship homeported at Naval Station, Long Beach, CA. By 1965, President Lyndon Johnson had escalated the war in Vietnam; and Jensen received a first-hand look at war when his ship, the *USS AGERHOLM* (DD826), provided fire support for Marines off the coast of South Vietnam in 1966.

“Viet Cong guns were silenced with just four rounds of 5-inch gunfire,” stated Jensen.

Jensen returned to San Diego and was released from active duty in February 1967, but resumed duty in a reserve status in June 1967. He was assigned to the Reserve Naval Mobile Construction Battalion (RNM) SIXTEEN, wherein his unit completed community improvement projects in Los Angeles and at bases in Oxnard, CA, and Hawaii.

Jensen cross-rated and advanced to Construction Electrician 1st Class (CE1). When President Nixon’s “freeze” on military promotions was lifted, he advanced to Construction Electrician Chief (CEC) on 16 February 1974.

After the “hollow force” years of the Ford and Carter administrations, President Reagan ushered in a new wave of optimism. “The Navy loved Reagan and Bush forty-one. Under their leadership, we became the largest fleet in the world, and our confidence grew,” said Jensen.



**Eagle Rock High School of Los Angeles junior David Jensen, 17, is sworn in to the US Navy at the Naval and Marine Corps Reserve Center, Los Angeles, at Chavez Ravine, on 05 March 1962.**

Jensen’s career flourished, too. His experience as an amateur radio operator resulted in the first Commander, Construction Battalion, U.S. Pacific Fleet (COMCBPAC) instruction covering the Military Affiliated Radio System (MARS). Additionally, the Master Chief completed Enlisted Intelligence Assistant school and was believed to be the only SEABEE to qualify as an EIA at that time.

In October 1983, Jensen reported to NR Public Works Center, Guam, Det-C, located at Naval & Marine Corps Reserve Center,



**UCCM (SW) David Jensen and his wife, Anne, celebrate the Master Chief’s forty years of combined service in the Navy and Navy’s Reserve, on 5 March 2002, at Naval and Marine Corps Reserve Center, Encino, CA.**

Encino, where he supervised and inspected civilian and military installations. In May 1985, Chief Jensen became the Command Career Counselor for the 31st Reserve Naval Construction Regiment (RNCR) at Port Hueneme, CA, where he assumed responsibilities for detachments in California, Arizona, and North Dakota.

In May 1986, Jensen advanced to senior chief and in April 1989, he was selected to master chief petty officer. In September 1991, Master Chief Jensen was recommended for assignment to the RNMCB-16 detachment at Naval & Marine Corps Reserve Center, Encino, with indefinite temporary duty as the RESCEN SELRES Command Master Chief. In July 1992, having reached high year tenure, he transferred to Voluntary Training Unit 1902-G and was in the first group of Reserve SEABEES to earn the then newly established SEABEE COMBAT WARFARE pin. In April 1999, Master Chief Jensen again went TAD, wherein he provided organizational and leadership training for personnel. He returned to the VTU in April 2000.

Under Presidents Clinton and Bush forty-three, the military has endured “right sizing” and now confronts global terrorism. “We’ve got to maintain our outstanding morale and sense of purpose for winning the war on terror, which will present challenges for years,” said Jensen.

For his part, Master Chief Jensen has always been available. “Master Chief Jensen goes beyond what is expected to better the lot of the Reserve community and his fellow Sailors. There is no finer Master Chief in today’s Navy’s Reserve,” said his former VTU Commanding Officer, CAPT Joseph von Sauers. In October 2000, Master Chief Jensen was recalled to Active Duty to fill a critical billet vacancy at RESCEN Encino. Following his release, Jensen served briefly with NR Naval Construction Force, Support Unit Two Detachment B at Encino, until he returned to the VTU in October 2002. Since then, Master Chief Jensen has held many official and unofficial assignments, including

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# Naval Reserve Sister Act

By CAPT Paige Saunders, USN (RC)

**Naval Reserve Captains Robin Brake (left) and Caryn Barry at the recent Program 38 leadership conference in October.**

**A**mazing coincidences abound in this story of two sisters, Caryn Barry and Robin Brake, both captains in the Naval Reserve, both interested and highly educated in the sciences, and both selected to serve in the ONR science and technology Reserve program through APPLY, the Naval Reserve senior officer and command selection process. Barry commands an ONR Reserve unit in Monterey, CA; and Brake was selected to join the program's headquarters unit in Washington, DC. This is the first time in their careers that they have served together.

They were both commissioned in the Naval Reserve in 1980. Barry had been a heavy duty mechanic for four years when one day she took her two kids to a Blue Angels air show. She was captivated by the thought that she could make a contribution to the Navy using her expertise. She thought, "I could be working on airplanes!" She enlisted and spent nine months drilling as an aircraft mechanic at Naval Air Station Alameda, CA. When the Iran Hostage crisis and unsuccessful rescue attempt happened in 1980, she felt she just couldn't stand by and watch . . . she had to get involved as an officer. She applied for Aviation Officer Candidate School in Pensacola, FL, where she was accepted, successfully completed the school, and was commissioned

as an Aircraft Maintenance Duty Officer.

About the same time, Brake, eight years younger than Barry and working for the National Park Service in New Jersey, became interested in the Navy and the Air Force. She made many lists of pros and cons that always had the most pros on the Air Force side, but she couldn't shake the feeling that she just didn't want to go into the Air Force. She really wanted the Navy, and Barry was encouraging her to join. "It was a very subjective decision that didn't make logical sense," she recalls. She had her degree already, so she applied and was accepted to go to Navy Officer Candidate School in Newport, RI. She says it was definitely the way to go.

The similarities don't end there.

They both have spouses who have served as officers in the military. Barry's husband, John, is a retired C-130 Air Force pilot. Brake's husband, Dan,

was a surface warfare officer and is now retired from the Naval Reserve.

And to follow his mother's and his aunt's lead, Barry's son, Paul, joined the Navy. He's now a lieutenant and an intelligence officer. Like his mother, he started as an enlisted sailor on a submarine as a storekeeper. He later got his commission through Officer Candidate School, and Barry was there to commission him when he graduated.

All of them seem to be following the tradition of serving in the military. Their father, Stephen H. Fitch, was a corporal in the Army at age 19 in France during World War II. He was a 60mm mortar gunner and squad leader of the 347th Regiment, 87th Infantry Division. His combat experience included the Battle of the Bulge and the occupation of Germany. He and their mother, Joan LaFehr Fitch, live in Nevada City, CA, and, needless to say, are very proud of their daughters. Their grandfather and step-grandfather also served in the Navy in the Pacific theater during WWII.

Barry has a bachelor's in wildlife management and a master's in educational foundations and is looking to start Ph.D. work in cognitive science. Brake has a bachelor's in biology, a master's degree in education, and is in the final stages of a master's in biology and is also currently working on a Ph.D. in environmental science. Barry lives with her husband in Tehachapi, CA; and Brake and her husband and two children live in Bluemont, VA. ↴

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sounding board for former NMCRC Encino Commanding Officer, LCDR Lisa Rawson.

"Master Chief Jensen's experiences and example are an inspiration to all Reservists, and he will be very much missed after he retires," said Rawson.

Master Chief Jensen credits his family for his successful career.

"I could not have pursued my Naval career had it not been for the support and understanding of my wife and family."

Master Chief Jensen and his wife, Anne, have a son, William, who is an Aviation Structural Mechanic – Safety Equipment, 1st Class, who currently serves with VR-55 at Point Mugu, CA, and a daughter, Donna, who is a medical data analyst. They have two grandchildren, Louis and Nicholas.

When asked how he might describe his career, Jensen waxed nostalgic as he harkened back to one of his boyhood hero's last moments on the silver screen.

"Just before Gary Cooper died, he narrated a television special during which two old western frontiersmen lamented the end of the old west and the inevitability of the industrial age. Cooper, playing the role of one old-timer, says, 'Look at all we've done and what we've accomplished. Wouldn't it be fun to tear it all down and start all over again?'"

At his retirement, Master Chief Jensen will have served in the Navy and Navy's Reserve exactly 43 years, 0 months, and 0 days. The last 31 years and 16 days of that time will have been served as a chief petty officer.

Fair winds and following seas, Master Chief Jensen . . . and happy trails to you. ↴