

MKCM ROGER WARD

Name: MKCM Roger “Buck” Ward

Dates of service: Jan 1966- June 2006

I first met Master Chief when I was a newly minted second class petty officer. I had come to the base where he was the gold badge to write a story about his final enlistment after more than three decades of service.

I didn't have a chief in my office at district, and Master Chief took me under his wing. Any time I visited the base, I'd stop by for a coffee at his office where he worked in the engineering department. It was rare to find him behind his desk; usually he was out visiting the units.

He looked tough as nails; he always wore a sharp uniform with polished boots and he had a reputation for being direct. He did not mince words or blow smoke, no matter who he spoke to. But after a minute or two of conversation, his weathered face would crack a smile and, in his words, you heard his confidence and pride in serving his country. As a chief's chief, his heart and soul were poured into leading and inspiring junior personnel; not just holding them accountable, but teaching them to hold *themselves* accountable.

Master Chief Ward was the first person I saw demonstrate the concept that leaders lead by getting to know their people, more commonly known as “leadership by walking around.” He always ran PT with his crew. He sought out the junior officers, getting them to let their guard down and bring him their questions and leadership challenges, instilling them with confidence to lead and trust. It was truly leadership by walking around.

“Make sure you know the names of their kids, know when they're sick, ask them about that old, ugly dog of theirs,” he would tease.

And he was right. When people know the chief cares about their well-being, the mission takes care of itself.

When I got married, I asked him to walk me down the aisle. When I had to choose between making chief or chief warrant officer, as my mentor, my first phone call was to him.

“Take care of your family first,” he said.

When he retired, he always took time for my phone calls, but now I was senior enough in rank to hear the really good stories of the Coast Guard in the 60s and 70s: port calls in Asia, boxing matches on the fantail of the lightships, his days as mess cook for the chiefs. He would tell me about his own favorite chiefs, who were like fathers to him when he was a young, brash petty officer.

“I'm growing you as a future chief, make sure you're acting like one,” he remembered them saying.

He told me stories about the times when it was hard to speak truth to power, when he had to do the right thing, even if it meant risking damage to his rank. He taught me the importance of helping a new leader find the confidence and drive to find and enact the right solution to a difficult problem. He's one of the most honest people I've ever known, and my husband and I named one of our sons in his honor.

I quoted him in that article I wrote more than 15 years ago as saying, "There's nothing better than our young people. You have to get in good with your people, get below decks and work with them, come on deck and show them. Come down, shake their hand, say good morning; doesn't matter officer or enlisted, just taking the time to get to know people makes all the difference."

Master Chief Ward has impacted many leaders in our service, and I'm honored to be one of them.

<http://www.minnetonkawhec67.org/docs/A%20Legend%20MKCM%20Ward.pdf>

CWO Anastasia Devlin