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# The Naval Commander and Public Relations

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**THE NAVAL COMMANDER AND PUBLIC RELATIONS**

A lecture delivered  
at the Naval War College  
on 23 April 1953

by  
*Rear Admiral John Livingstone McCrea,*  
*U. S. Navy*

Admiral Conolly and Brother Officers of all Services:

Gentlemen, the subject: "The Naval Commander and Public Relations" covers a great deal of territory. Public relations, like so many command functions, is difficult of definition and susceptible to no firm tests of "do's" and "don't's" — the sort of list on which so many of us from time to time would like to rest our cases. No matter how complex the subject may be, it is most important that a naval commander realize that public relations is one of his important duties; in fact, it is one of his more important command functions. In using the term, "naval commander," I wish to make it clear that the term applies to all in command, whether the naval unit be large or small, afloat or ashore.

Public relations, of course, is a big and baffling subject and reams have been written about it. There is, I think, a considerable artistry to it because, try as they may, some commanders just don't seem to be able to make their public relations click. Then, too, I think that in the not too recent past, at any rate, the navy did not accord to public relations the degree of importance which the subject warranted. The reasons for this were many. First off, did not the navy belong to the profession of arms? Were we not professional men? Did not the professions have codes of ethics about their relations with the public, and would not a spreading of "how-good-we-are" on the record, be a breach of these ethics?

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To be sure, this is a very narrow view since publicity is merely one phase of public relations. The Public Relations Program in the navy continues in the growing stage. The service-wide attitude towards this important problem has changed greatly in the last few years. Much to our credit, studied indifference (and I think that I am correct in using that term) has been replaced by responsible cooperation.

Now, if you please — and in violation of all rules of public speaking — please permit me some pertinent and authoritative quotes. First, the late Admiral Forrest P. Sherman had this to say:

“Matters affecting the relations of the navy and the public are of great importance and constitute one of the functions of command. The personal responsibility of a commanding officer in the conduct of public relations within his command is identical with his responsibility in other affairs. In this connection, attention is invited to the fact that public information officers, when ordered to duty within a command, form a part of the staff’s assistance provided the commanding officer. And the presence of such officers in no way relieves the commanding officer of his responsibility in the field of public relations.”

Another quote, which appeals to me, was made by the late Secretary Forrestal when he said:

“The armed forces of a democratic nation have a positive responsibility to achieve the widest possible public understanding of their missions and operations.”

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Mr. Kimball, our recent Secretary, made this contribution:

“Increase public understanding by making available to the public at large the philosophy of sea power and the need for control of the seas and the indisputable place that the navy occupies on the tripartite defense team.”

I would like to repeat part of that quote again — that is, “Increase public understanding by making available to the public at large the philosophy of sea power and the need for control of the seas . . . .” Nothing could be more important. The philosophy of sea power is not a service tradition or a habit of the past — though, no doubt, there are some who might dispute this. The philosophy of sea power is one of the facts of life itself.

As I go up and down the country, I am somewhat amazed to find so many otherwise well educated and intelligent people almost completely ignorant of the philosophy of sea power. Sea power and its effectiveness — or non-effectiveness — affects all the armed services. Effective sea power is vital to the existence of this country, because without control of the seas the power of this country cannot be projected overseas. Without control of the seas, we may well be deprived — partially or altogether — from obtaining much needed materials: materials needed to maintain our economy, materials needed to supply us with the necessities of war and the necessities of peace. This is the story that must be told and retold — told in such a fashion and in such terms that in the end our public will be made to realize of what vital concern sea power is to each individual; drive home to the public how deeply it is concerned with this problem; impress on the public how greatly our national economy and how greatly our daily living is dependent, either exclusively or greatly, on large imports of

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such fundamental materials as tin, chrome, manganese, vegetable oils, tungsten, bauxite, cobalt, vanadium, and antimony; impress on them that the United States' appetite for these materials is, in fact, Gargantuan; impress on them that unless we have the muscle to insure uninterrupted use of the seas that we could find ourselves in one hell of a fix; tell them about the other side of the coin, as well — that even in the atomic age, a good old-fashioned blockade is still a mighty potent weapon, as potent a weapon as it has been throughout the years of recorded naval history. If anybody wants any first-class information on that, call in our late enemy — the Japs.

Of course there are other important aspects about sea power; but they need hardly be recounted here because I think, suffice it to say, that if we have the muscle requisite for the task of using the seas as we wish the other aspects of sea power pretty readily take care of themselves.

Public relations, as I said before, is a function of command. Public relations belongs at the conference tables. Public relations belongs at the policy board. Industry has found this to be so — and the navy, too, must recognize it. Dupont, for one, has a fixed rule that in any action taken by its directors which involves the public, its public relations people must be brought into consultation and the same can be said for most other large companies.

Since its start, the navy stockholders have invested in their navy some 241 billions of dollars. The navy's current plant equipment, as of today, has a net worth of about 171 billions. In over the one hundred and fifty years of its existence, our navy has paid many and worthwhile dividends to its stockholders. Yes, the navy today can produce facts and figures which are irrefutable.

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It is in the dispensing of these facts and figures that the problem faces the naval commander. Our intelligence people want to hide most of the facts, whereas the public information chaps want to shout them to the world. The naval commander must strike some sort of a balance between the conflicting interests and, of course, hope in the end that he is right.

The personnel of the navy are greatly important in so far as day-to-day public relations go. The best public relations is done not by the photographs which we so carefully crank out and distribute to the press in such profusion, nor is it done by the news releases carefully gone over and evaluated by these experts in the field of public relations. Good public relations are helped tremendously by those in the navy. A man or woman wearing the uniform of the service is a marked and conspicuous individual. His or her every action in public is noticed and evaluated by the owners. Their conduct and uniform should be above reproach. They should wear the colors of their service simply, easily, proudly and, above all, inconspicuously. If they do this, they reflect credit on the navy and the navy profits thereby.

Witness the fine public relations value of the outstanding performance of air force personnel stationed in England during the recent storms and the fine job of rescue which the air force personnel did recently in the case of a severe train wreck which took place near one of their bases in England. Think, too, of the discredit that can be brought to the service by an individual in uniform, say, operating a motor vehicle in such a manner as to be dangerous not only to himself but to others; even operating it in a discourteous way contributes to ill will which can accrue to the service of the uniform worn by the driver. Every one in uniform at home or abroad, is an ambassador for good or ill will—

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depending upon the manner in which the wearer conducts himself or herself.

Since World War II, the uncertain question of speed and destination of navy public relations has prompted several surveys, voluminous memoranda and numerous conjectures. Regardless of these probings and proddings, they have largely defaulted because of the simple lack of understanding on the part of the navy that the public has a right to know. The public has this right — and we have got to remember that it has this right. Our story must be so well told and so convincingly told that public reaction will be that we know what we are talking about and that our position is correct. In that way, we will achieve public confidence — and public confidence is essential because in the last analysis the people determine what sort of a navy they want. If we tell our story well, we will tell it in terms of the public welfare — not necessarily the navy's welfare. Above all, our story must be so convincing that the public will believe, as do we, in the functional necessity of a navy.

There are, I think, areas of misunderstanding about the navy that we should do our utmost to clear up. This country is confronted with a heavy tax burden and the press daily demands that defense appropriations be curtailed. The press often forcefully suggests that we are completely without cost-consciousness. I think we should do our utmost to impress on the public our cost-consciousness. I think we should do our utmost to impress on the public that we are, in fact, economy-minded — because, indeed, we are. Furthermore, we must do our utmost to get a dollar's worth of defense for every dollar spent. Good public relations will, I think, do more than tell them — it will do its best to *show* them.

Some weeks ago, the Boston Naval Shipyard was visited



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by a group of men — all members of the Boston Chamber of Commerce. This group of men were shown the many shops and the activities of the shipyard were explained to them. The thought was driven home to this group that every activity of the yard existed for the sole purpose of supporting the fleet. The day following the visit to the shipyard, a gentleman of my acquaintance, a member of the group and the president of one of the large bonding companies of this country, called me on the telephone to this effect. He said: "John, I pass that shipyard twice daily. For a long time now I have been wondering how my tax dollar is being spent behind that wall. After what I saw yesterday, I am satisfied that all is well." This is an example of the benefit of showing them. What that man saw for himself was greatly more effective than all the articles that he could have read in newspapers, magazines, or books.

The Harvard School of Business Administration has a course which the young men of that school refer to lightly as "the course for the PBE's"; translated: "for the pot-bellied executives." These men come from all parts of the country, frequently making their first trip to the seacoast. They visit the Boston Naval Shipyard as part of their instruction. The fine letters that they send me from time to time about the yard are a pleasure to receive.

Similarly, the cruises which the Secretary of the Navy has authorized for prominent civilians are greatly effective. Without exception, my experience has been that these guests come back impressed immeasurably with what they have seen. They are impressed particularly with the manner in which we operate our machinery. They are impressed greatly with the high state of efficiency with which our shipboard and aircraft operations are carried out. They are impressed with our marines; they are im-

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pressed with our bluejackets. They are impressed with the fine spirit of camaraderie existing between the commissioned and enlisted personnel. They are impressed with the high state of organization that permits large numbers of officers and men to live relatively comfortably in such cramped spaces.

An operation such as fueling at sea is regarded as just a little short of magic. Yes, these cruises pay off greatly. But there is an aspect to them which may, I fear, cause trouble in the future. The naval command must exercise great care in selecting persons for these cruises. The naval command must recognize that petty jealousies exist even in large metropolitan areas and that there will be — if you will pardon the expression — “men of distinction” who will feel that if John Doe, taxpayer, is invited to go that he, Richard Roe, taxpayer, being “just-as-good-as” John Doe, should be invited also. Well, there just aren’t spaces enough for those who would like to go.

Not too long ago, one of the biggest mid-Western papers — as a matter of fact, I think it probably is the biggest mid-western paper — in an editorial column wanted to know just how one citizen was chosen over another for the high honor of making a navy cruise at the taxpayer’s expense. Don’t forget the emphasis — “at the taxpayer’s expense.” That is the reason that I am fearful that we may run into a little trouble with these cruises.

I stated earlier that every one in the navy uniform was a walking exhibit for good or bad public relations for the navy. The slogan: “Every navy man be a navy booster” is important. It is trite, I know, to remark that how we treat our people in this vast organization is greatly important. The naval commander must so conduct himself that he deserves the respect of his subordinates. Another trite remark you will say — and I will agree —

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but, nevertheless, it is important: I don't recall that anyone shipped over on the CAINE; there should be no Queegs. But in all fairness to Herman Wouk, I must say that I sailed once with a chap who could have taught Mr. Queeg a trick or two. It is the duty of the naval commander to keep his eyes peeled for that sort of thing and to stamp it out with all the vigor that he can muster. And he can do it without being sort of a "popularity Jack."

Not long ago, I read in a Boston paper a particularly well-written letter by an enlisted man. It was written as the result of a letter that had appeared in that same paper which greatly criticized the navy. This long, finely written letter was positively lyrical about the navy and what it had done for the writer — the great satisfaction that had come to him in serving his country in such a fine outfit; the respect which he felt towards his shipmates, officers, and men alike, and the respect with which they in turn held him. There was a navy booster! And he was a booster probably because the naval commanders with whom he had sailed were leaders of high order who had much public relations sense. We cannot overlook the value of such public relations.

On the other hand, we overlook our campaign of "Every navy man a navy booster" if we overlook our navy dependents. So let's make that sentence read: "Every navy family a navy booster." Now, the navy wife encounters the American public much more intimately than her husband. Her attitude towards the navy is going to be a reflection on the navy's attitude towards her. Kick her around, ignore her, and neglect her problems — and she will be just as vehement a navy opponent as some of our more hostile columnists, and perhaps a more effective one. We are all familiar with these advertisements in the NEW YORKER that tell us never to under-estimate the power of a woman — just as though

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any man who has had experience with them ever could bring himself to the point of underestimating the power of a woman!

Again, we must turn to the commander's functions. If, in so far as he can, he sees that dependents have roofs over their heads, facilities that ease the cost of living, and a reasonable opportunity to see their bread winners, he will accomplish two purposes: win a navy advocate and boost the moral of his blue-jackets. Mom and Dad can be brought in to the cheering section, too, by convincing them that son is getting a fair shake whether he stays in the navy or not and that he will be a better man for having served therein.

I have stressed the position of the commander as a policy-maker in conducting his public relations. He has to be that — and more. He must be more than a “thinker” — he has got to be a “doer.” He must be willing to work at his job. He can't always send representations. The navy commander, in conducting his public relations, is going to have to spend a lot of time (and, generally, at inconvenient times) doing things for which many of us have little taste. Americans, as a class, are great joiners. I have no idea of the number of veterans' groups and auxiliary groups that are in the First Naval District. Every so often, I almost think there are too many. Each of these groups is organized to keep alive the spirit of a particular organization or a particular event. These groups are important, and the shore-based commander must pay much attention to them. The average naval commander doesn't like making speeches — but in my book the shore-based commander, and the sea-going commander as well, if he is really working at his public relations aspects of his job will, when practical to do so, make himself available to these organizations in a helpful way. That helpful way to them generally means making a speech.

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I know full well from experience that it is hard work, and I further know full well that the wife doesn't like to sit at home night after night alone—that is the way they are. I know full well that (as I suspect you do) the explanation of you having a public relations job to do is of little avail. I hope that I'm not giving too intimate a picture of my family life but, nevertheless, that is the way it goes. Secondly, these veterans' groups and historical organizations think themselves important—and they are important, I can assure you! And it behooves the naval commander to do well by them in pursuance of his public relations program. The same can be said with equal emphasis as to cooperating with other civic organizations.

Dealing with this broad subject, the naval commander must recognize the difference in "public relations" and "public information." "Public relations" identifies the policies and procedures of an individual or organization with the public interest. It calls for executing programs of action to earn public understanding and support. "Public information" is one of the tools of public relations. It may be described as: "the employment of established means of communications, newspapers, radio, etc., for the practical day-to-day business of apprising the public of the doings of its navy."

Since I am in command of the naval district to which I am assigned, I am the public relations officer. Somewhat lightly, I refer to my position and to that of my assistant for public information as the "bishop and parish priest relationship." As the bishop, I set the public relations program; as the parish priest, he is charged with looking out for public information having to do with our programs—that is said respectfully, too, very respectfully.

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I would suppose that one of the most important ways by which our public finds out about us is through the press. That reminds me. My first midshipman cruise, forty-one years ago this summer, was made in the U. S. S. MASSACHUSETTS. In the ship was a first-class boatswain's mate of Norwegian extraction and accent. He was about in middle life, a fine petty officer, the ship's best seaman. He sported the sharpest red Van Dyke beard that you have ever seen. No professional man could have looked more the part. Smith presided over his part of the ship from his chest, which was so placed that he could see most of the superstructure. That chest was an important fixture in the part of the ship because near it was conducted all the division's business. And on it Smith would lay out his patterns and cut a suit of blues on a rope yarn Sunday for anyone in the division from some yardage of cap cloth just as neatly as you please. Smith was kind to midshipmen in a respectfully suspicious sort of way. He would help them with their problems, but beyond that he had little further truck with them. All I know about knotting and splicing I learned from Smith. I was pretty slow at it and, accordingly, I spent considerable time in the vicinity of that holy of holies — old man Smith's chest. In due course, I was invited to sit on the chest — an honor, I assure you, not accorded to many.

In addition to his being a fine seaman, Smith was quite a naval philosopher. One day he was telling me of the old navy — how wonderful it was. Well, of course, it is always thus. He was telling me of his mild impatience with the young enlisted men of his division. When pressed for his reason, old man Smith, in a rich Norwegian accent, remarked: "Well, Mr. McCrea," he said, "today, too damn many of them can read and write."

General reading, as time goes, is a relatively modern accomplishment. Not so many decades ago, there were few books and

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fewer newspapers. The family was fortunate to possess a copy of the *Bible* or a copy of *Pilgrim's Progress*, and maybe a *Home Remedy* book. The reading that was done was an event — and it was probably done by an older member of the family, with the others sitting around listening. Nowadays, everybody reads — and what they read! Books on every conceivable subject — fiction, fact, history — come tumbling off the presses with a speed that is frightening as well as challenging. As for newspapers, the speed with which editions follow one another leaves a reader bewildered. At any rate, the printed word is greatly impressive; it carries with it much authority and people are greatly liable to believe what they read in the papers. It would be some sort of a minor sacrilege, I suppose, to hope that the day will come when people won't go hook, line and sinker for all that they read in the papers. If that millenium is ever reached, journalism in this reading world of ours may have to re-appraise its responsibility to the public. I am fully aware that that sentence could probably precipitate some sort of a row.

It is the duty of the naval commander to see to it that the press gets the truth about this navy of ours, and that is as it should be because the public — our public, our owners if you please — are entitled to the news, the good and the bad about this navy of theirs. They are the stockholders and they are entitled to a stockholder's report. As stockholders, however, they are entitled to a *statement of facts*. They should be able to distinguish between facts and editorial columnists' and commentators' opinions. Note that I say they *should* be able to make this distinction, but it just isn't that easy. Since they "read-it-in-the-paper," they are liable to believe it. And in this manner opinions become facts for many, and sad to relate for most. Good news is rarely exciting; good news will, therefore, rarely get the play that bad news gets. Good news

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will be usually found buried some place inside the paper, but the bad news makes the attention-arresting headline. And the one that is about the navy — how it hurts!

I hate to say this, but in my heart I feel that many editorialists twist and distort facts to the point that the public is often presented with an editorial which is greatly biased. Now, why do they do this? The reasons, I suppose, are many and varied. The owner or the publisher may have an angle to play. Many of them like to think of themselves as crusaders or guardians of the public and protectors of the public from the shortcomings — real or fancied — of those so-and-so's who administer the armed forces. They, or some of their friends, may feel that they have suffered injustice at the hands of the services. At this point, I wrote in here this morning coming down, a query: Is it that we might be smug to a point that annoys them? Then, again, the editorial writer may just want to be different.

A case in point: Accompanying Operation MAINBRACE, there were some thlrty-eight American newspapermen. They did a good job of covering the operation and, far and by, thought well of it. One prominent Eastern paper (which had no newsman of its own at the operation) printed a series of three editorials which proceeded to tear Operation MAINBRACE to pieces. In an unguarded moment, the youthful editorial writer stated that he based his editorial on a news dispatch that he had read in a foreign newspaper. On the basis of that, he was moved to write three attention-arresting editorials that appeared on three successive days in his paper. That series of editorials was widely read. Many a prominent citizen asked me: "Are the facts, as presented, true? Is the criticism justified? Is that the sort of performance for which taxpayers have to pay their money?"



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Well, what was the answer? My answer was this: "The paper evidently has available to it information which was not available to the navy." Then, fortunately, I was able to cite other newspapers' comments and articles which were highly laudatory of MAINBRACE.

That which may be said of the irresponsible editorial writer may be said of the irresponsible columnist. We must remember that to many we are "brass hats" and nothing more—we are just really and truly "brass hats." The term, so far as I'm able to understand it, carries with it no idea of endearment or, for that matter, even mild respect.

On the other hand, we must not forget that there are papers which are careful to maintain a scrupulously fair editorial policy. The "twisters," of course, will insist that they are fair, as well. I know of no way of dealing with the "twisters," especially the columnists. In appraising their activities, I suppose that they have a tough time of it. Every so often, they must view something with alarm and the services are always a sure-fire target. However, in the field of journalism I think, upon reflection, that there can be greater offenses than dangling participles and split infinitives.

Again, I say that I have no remedy for dealing with these features of our problem. The best that we can do, I think, is to cultivate good, personal relations with the owners, with the publishers, with the editors and with the newsmen—and impress on them that the navy commander's door is always open to them and that we will help them in every legitimate way to get a story. We must impress on them, however, that we, too, work for a boss and that classified material is not in the public domain.

Furthermore, I think we naval officers should remember

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that we, like the navy itself, are in the public domain. We belong to the owners — they pay the freight. Accordingly, the free press of the country, in its position of guardian of the public interests, feels quite at liberty to kick the navy and ourselves about from time to time. We must admit that we are thin-skinned about this and, furthermore, that we are resentful of anything derogatory about our navy or ourselves as a class. Why are we thin-skinned about this? Because of our deep and abiding affection for the navy and all its works. We believe in the navy and we believe in the people who populate it. We believe that officers and men — marines and Waves, all — set a high standard for private and public institutions.

Dealing with the press is not a new problem. After a good deal of experience with a hostile and quite often scurrilous press, Thomas Jefferson was moved to remark: "Where the press is free and every man is able to read, all is safe." And so it is with the navy. The observation of boatswain's mate, Smith, must perforce give way to those of Thomas Jefferson because the privilege of reading the free press — even if we think it be distorted — is one of our greatest heritages.

I suppose the personalities of naval commanders and the public information officers have considerable to do with the effects of public relations. Opinions vary. Most public information officers need and want and assume they will obtain guidance. The commander should, I feel, give policy guidance, exercise partial control, but stand clear of the working level. The public information officer should be allowed a measure of autonomy beyond the commander and Washington.

Just what comprises public information? Well, it is obvious that the commander cannot take the full advice of the intelligence

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people — conceal everything, both good and bad — nor can he attempt to appease the public information fellows by publishing everything. As I said before, there is a happy medium — and we must find it!

I suppose I should illustrate what I mean. Last summer, we had an unfortunate case of sabotage in the Boston Naval Shipyard. Some bolts and nuts were tossed into the gear boxes of a destroyer and, needless to say, caused considerable damage. An investigation was ordered. I was advised by the intelligence people not to release anything to the press until the investigation was well underway. Realizing that this was "Real News," I talked to my public information fellow and said: "How about going out in town, seeing the newspapers and asking them to keep it out of the papers until our investigation is completed?"

He advised against it, saying: "These fellows live by stories — this is a story, it will get into the papers no matter what they promise." He suggested giving them some of the story. The district Intelligence Officer said: "No!" Well, there I was. I took the advice of the D.I.O.

In about ten days, much to my chagrin, headlines appeared in an afternoon paper: "Sabotage in Navy Yard: Reporters from this paper have uncovered what the navy has been hiding for weeks," etc. So that's the way they go. What to do? There is not a clear-cut answer. The only thing I can suggest is the personal touch.

I think that the day has long since gone when I, as a senior commander, may state: "Don't do as I do, but do as I say." I think that I must, in advance, lay down lines of guidance as to what I want done and what I want left undone. I think the naval com-

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mander must set the example by being a good public relations man, calling in his public information people to sit down and talk at the conference table where policy is formed; to have his public information people examine the policies which he is setting forth and give him the benefit of their experience.

By the same token, as I would be most loath to examine all the details set forth by the logistics people on my staff—for it is intricate and detailed; I would never have time for it, so I take their word for it—the time has come, I believe, to set forth distinctive policies in public relations, to ask and obtain guidance from those persons who are on my staff for such purposes, and to abide by their decisions in so far as they make sense. The basic purpose of public relations is a function of command and carries with it the premise that the public relations program must be logical. Of course, what is “logical” may mean many things to many people. In my judgement, the public relations program, above all else, must be a program of common sense.

Another factor that enters into the field of public information is “timing.” I know that there are many stories about the navy which are considered good and which, for some reason or other, just didn’t get published. Leaving out the fact that our public information people are on a good working basis with the press, there always exists the element of chance.

A short time ago, we were going to commission a ship—the NORTHAMPTON. Certain details of construction of this new class of ship had leaked to the press unbeknown to my PIO people, much to the distress of CHINFO in Washington. However, that in itself wasn’t too bad. But I had the (then) new Secretary of the Navy coming to this area on one of his first trips, outside of official Washington, to make one of his first major addresses.

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That in itself was noteworthy and surely it was newsworthy. However, at the time of the occasion Joe Stalin elected to pass to the Great Beyond, and Joe stole effectively the headlines right out from under any news which we might have been able to have created by the special event. My own PIO tells me that this is only one of the many situations which can exist. There are many editions of metropolitan newspapers where the stories that appear in one edition may be omitted from later editions. I know this to be true because often I have asked him for things that I have thought he should clip which he hadn't clipped and, upon investigation, we would find that news stories were eliminated from one edition to the other in great rapidity.

At this point we should direct our attention, I think, to the navy information's mission and see if what we have said here is in consonance with that mission. The mission reads:

“To keep the public informed of the activities of the navy as an instrument of national security and to disseminate to the naval personnel appropriate information on policies and progress of the Navy Department.”

Notice that the sinew of that mission is to inform the American people of the navy. Keeping that foremost in our minds, and donning our economy-minded spectacles, we might now ask ourselves three questions. The first question is: Are we presenting the proper material to obtain goodwill? Now, only a public opinion poll could accurately determine the answer to this question — the proper material to put before the public — because, unlike the automobile manufacturer, we cannot measure our results in terms of sales. However, the kind of thinking that should accompany the solution to this question can very well be illustrated. For example:

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A naval aviator, recently returned from Korea, reported that remarks of reporting mammoth bomb drop tonnages may have rated a good public relations in World War II but that today, in his judgement, a much better job was done in describing the good results obtained with a minimum of bombs. In view of General Van Fleet's recent remarks, that probably makes good sense. In other words, pointing up to the navy's bomb accuracy as a measure of materiel economy.

The second question: Are we using the proper means of presenting the material? This question, like the first, can only be answered by a public opinion poll. However, there are some guide lines. One of them is American leadership habits. Surveys are available showing how much time people spend with newspapers, magazines, radio, television, movies, etc. These can be carefully and thoughtfully scrutinized. Beyond leadership hides an intangible: The impacts of various *media* on the individual. Newspapers have been singularly ineffective in influencing national elections. That prompts a question: Do they pack much more of a punch on other matters? Just what are the issues and what type of presentation?

Books — particularly novels — profoundly affect thinking. *Uncle Tom's Cabin* inflamed the North; *Caine Mutiny* inflamed the navy; Nicholas Monsarrat's *Cruel Sea* found a wide recognition among naval personnel, but sold thousands fewer copies than did the *Caine Mutiny*. However, a book can be a powerful, promotional device.

At this point, a parenthetical word about the sea. The sea has been the subject of countless stories, books, and plays. Why? Well, I suppose that great romance is the answer. The average

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chap, I suppose, likes to escape from the humdrum of his daily life and there is nothing to accomplish that like going to sea — even if it is only in a book. In addition to those books listed above, a long list could be added: *Captain Hornblower*, *The Sea Around Us*, *Under the Sea Wind*, *The Old Man and the Sea* — just to mention a few. Until something better makes its appearance, *Moby Dick* will probably hold first place as the great American novel. *South Pacific* and *Mr. Roberts* will do, for the moment, as examples of plays.

The navy has a truly wonderful backdrop against which this action takes place because throughout recorded history the sea and the men who sail it have had attached to them an aura of romance. The navy should make full use of this romantic setting, in so far as common sense dictates, in promoting its public relations programs. Other media include television, radio, movies, plays, commercial advertising — which frequently hang on to military subjects, especially naval and sea subjects.

To be realistic, the seldom-used avenue of public relations is military philosophy. Americans, as a people, are peace-loving but a look at their war-studded history proves that they are not peaceable people. Historians too frequently devote volumes to economics and sociology with almost complete disregard for war. Of course, our citizens detest war — and rightly so — and many, therefore, just like to dismiss it from mind just like a foolish person might disregard, say, cancer just because he loathes it. Unless we are to win a lasting peace and security, the public must comprehend the causes of war and the degree of security that will prevent it or win it with the least cost to be considered.

Our third question: Have we placed our personnel to the best advantage? Theoretically, a public relations man should be

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— and I quote from Mr. T. R. Sillis' *Public Relations* (and as a quote, I think it is a dandy!) He says:

“A public relations fellow should be well educated with more than a foundation in psychology, sociology, politics, labor relations, history, finance, mechanics, engineering, all sciences, law, physiology, a few common foreign languages, literature and grammar.

If he could also be versed in art, music, domestic science and etiquette — it would help. He would be an articulate and sincere speaker in conversation as well as on the platform, a good mixer, able to please all types of personalities, a writer equal to Steinbeck, a super-salesman of interesting editors and stories as well as perspective appliances in any service; a sports enthusiast, a mental catalogue of publicity outlook with personal acquaintance among the executives of every big newspaper, wire service, magazine, radio station, syndicate, trade journal, newsreel and movie production right and legislative committees.”

Powerful man, this fellow! Well, of course no individual comprises more than three or four of the combine set above. Just as in the navy a task force comprises ships of many types with a single over-all objective, in civilian life the public relations firm ties together five or six people who in the aggregate furnish most of these required characteristics.

Frequently, in navy information, older officers — I am aware — hold billets (and rather grimly at that) which are unsuited to them and to which, may I say, they are almost totally unsuited — particularly with regard to their public information talents. We



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must take care in placing our public information people and we must be ruthless in removing them if they are not suited to the billets to which they are assigned.

Again, I must repeat that public information is a function of command. Despite everything that I have said here this morning, I profess to know little about public relations. I have professional support in that observation, because on two important occasions I was told by professionals that I didn't know much about public relations. Any observation that I make in this field should, therefore, be taken with a grain of salt and taken merely as a seaman's idea, if you please, of a great and important subject. As an aside, and in my own defense, I might add that on the occasions referred to above it turned out that I was right. As in other matters, differences of opinion are important in public relations.

I think that all will agree what we want and what we strive for is goodwill for the navy. Goodwill must be *deserved*—goodwill must then be *sought*. Goodwill must be *gained*—and goodwill must be *held*. Faith in the navy and belief in its functional necessity should comprise the propellant of our public relations program. But faith in the navy and belief in its functional necessity cannot, in my judgement, justify a running fight with a sister service. Put the navy forward in the finest possible light. Be alert to do this and grasp every opportunity to do so; but whatever you do, do it in good taste and make certain that the story is the story of the navy, and not the story of the naval commander.

Thank you!

## BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH OF LECTURER

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Rear Admiral John Livingstone McCrea was born in Marlette, Michigan. He entered the U. S. Naval Academy in 1911 and was graduated in 1915, receiving a commission as an Ensign. He advanced to the rank of Vice Admiral on September 16, 1946. Upon assuming duties as Commandant, First Naval District, in February 1952 he reverted, as is customarily the practice, to the rank of Rear Admiral.

During the first World War he served in the USS NEW YORK, the flagship of Battleship Division 9, which operated with the British Grand Fleet throughout the war.

Between wars he served in many types ships and had assignments throughout the naval establishment. On January 3, 1942 he was appointed Naval Aide to President Roosevelt. In February 1943, on return from Casablanca where he accompanied President Roosevelt, he assumed command of the USS IOWA. While in command of the IOWA, he transported the President and the Joint Chiefs of Staff to Oran for the Cairo and Teheran Conferences. He commanded IOWA when it participated in the major assaults and engagements of the Pacific, including Kwajelein, Truk, Saipan, Hollandia, Palau and other assaults up through the Battle of the Philippine Sea. In 1944, as a Rear Admiral, he assumed command of a task force which operated against Japanese strongholds in the Kurile Islands in the North Pacific.

Admiral McCrea has been decorated not only by the United States, but also by many foreign governments.

While on duty in the Office of the Judge Advocate General he attended George Washington Law School, receiving the degree of Bachelor of Laws in 1929. On a later tour of duty in Washington he pursued further the study of law, receiving his Master of Law degree in 1934. He is a member of the Bar in the District of Columbia and has been admitted to practice before the Supreme Court of the United States.