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President's Message

What's in a name?

It's my privilege to introduce to you the Association of the United States Navy (AUSN). On 28 March 2009, your representatives at our Spring Conference voted to formally change our name and embark on a new course for our Association.

Why make the change? If you've read my previous columns, you understand that we've been losing membership every month for over four years and have been increasingly cannibalizing our investments to pay for current operating expenses. We have been unable to attract and retain membership from our traditional core constituency, SELRES officers, and in spite of having opened membership to all Sailors, active and reserve, officer and enlisted, we continued to decline. This name change removes a barrier to entry for members who have served their careers in the Active Component and allows us to represent a broader range of legislative issues that benefit the Navy as a whole.

How do we know this will work? I had dinner the other night with CAPT Ed Brewton, who was my CO in 1981 when I was an Ensign. We reconnected a few years ago and have stayed in touch since. Ed is now on the board of directors of Fleet Landing (one of our advertisers), but wasn't familiar with the workings of the Naval Reserve Association. When I showed him my new business card featuring Association of the United States Navy and explained that retirees from both Active and Reserve Components face the same issues, he asked for a membership form and said he'd join to see what we're all about.

I told my uncle, Ralph Hardy, a Pharmacist's Mate from World War II, about AUSN, and he is now a member. I told my mother's boss, Robert Kresse, who also served in the Navy in World War II, and he said he'll join AUSN as well.

I know I've heard some misgivings on the part of members who weren't sure what a name change would do for us, but from my experience, for the first time ever we appeal to former active duty Sailors the way we have to Reservists. We may be poised for rapid membership growth.

Won't we lose our identity? Not at all. All items of our legislative agenda for 2009-2010 pertain to the Navy Reserve and Reserve Sailors. We are firmly focused on issues that concern our membership and will continue to do so.

We are changing our elected offices to realign Vice President positions with our expected roles and missions (e.g., instead of VP, Air Reserve Programs and VP, Surface Reserve Programs, we will have VP, Reserve Affairs.) This realignment will take place at the Fall Conference in San Diego. Between now and then, we're working to define carefully a governance structure that ensures that we will maintain our 55-year old commitment to the Navy Reserve.

What will change? You'll see a new name and logo in our magazine in a couple of months. Our headquarters staff and our transition committee are working on a lot of details. I'm pushing hard to ensure we make the transformation quickly, but correctly, so that we can engage advertisers, sponsors, members, and Congress with our new identity. In addition, by fall 2010 we will align with our Navy "customer" so that our Districts better correspond with Navy Regions.

It is my belief these changes will reenergize our Association in a way we could not otherwise achieve. I've signed us up for a lot of hard work, but a few years from now I think we can look back at this transformational point and agree that this was the day our Association began its return to prominence and relevance in representing you and your families. Thank you for your trust and confidence. As always, let me know what you're thinking.


G. Mark Hardy
President

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