



**Commander, U.S. Pacific Fleet  
Fleet Master Chief John Minyard's Retirement Ceremony  
Battleship Missouri Memorial  
Pearl Harbor, Hawaii  
Admiral Cecil D. Haney  
10 May 2013  
As prepared for delivery**

Thank you Master Chief Knudsen for that introduction. I am pleased to see so many here today for this special event.

Admiral Locklear, distinguished guests, senior leaders, shipmates, friends and especially the Minyard family, good morning and aloha! Thank you for being here to honor such a remarkable father, husband, Sailor and leader who has had a spectacular career that has spanned 29 years of service to our Navy and our Nation -Fleet Master Chief John Minyard!

It is fantastic to have all three of his brothers, Scott, J.R. and Bill, from Houston, Texas, here today. I know how much it means to John to have you here. Thank you for coming. I recently learned that Fleet Minyard's brother Scott is no stranger to the Navy or our customs; he's a retired Navy commander. Scott, thank you for your years of service and for any influence you may have had in recruiting your younger brother into our Navy.

When Fleet Minyard was only 20 years old, he was working in a dairy, trying to get through community college. With his older brother in the Navy and doing well, it seemed like a good idea to him to follow. Not only was his rise to Fleet Master Chief quick, but only six days after he decided to sign up he was in boot camp. Talk about fast! Fleet Minyard, what a benefit to us, that you decided to volunteer to enlist in our Navy!

Today we are missing one important Houston resident, Fleet Minyard's mom, Inez. She wasn't able to make the trip, but I have no doubt she is thinking about you on this special day.

Mechele, John's wife, is here with Jessa and Jake, their children. Mechele, always great to see you. This is an important and momentous day for you too.

It's good to see you again Jake. I know you are finishing up your junior year in high school and are looking forward to starting your senior year here in Hawaii. Hopefully you're not missing too much school today. Thank you for supporting your dad.

Jessa, thanks for coming from San Diego to share your Dad's special day. I know I am a day early, but Happy Birthday! Now everyone has a great excuse to keep celebrating tomorrow too. Don't worry, I won't ask how old you are.

Folks what a fantastic family!

Thank you Captain Nicholas Mongillo for highlighting some of the significant parts of Fleet Minyard's impressive career. It is my privilege to pick up the rest of the story by publicly

saluting Fleet Minyard for his outstanding work as the 15<sup>th</sup> United States Pacific Fleet, Fleet Master Chief.

When Fleet Master Chief became #15 in June 2009, he was quoted in the news. He said: “Our Sailors and their families are my #1 priority and whatever I can do to ensure they have the tools, education and skills required to carry out this mission will always be at the top of my list.” I can say unequivocally that he has lived up to that statement through the tenure of three Pacific Fleet commanders, Admirals Willard, Walsh and myself.

Fleet Minyard understands the importance of deckplate leadership to our Sailors and has worked hard to provide over 9,700 Chief Petty Officers serving in the Pacific Fleet with the skills they need to lead our Sailors today.

He worked with MCPON West to develop the ‘CPO Waterfront Training’ to reinvigorate Chief Petty Officers’ deckplate fundamentals, ethics and esprit de corps. We now call this valuable training ‘Fleet CPO Training’ and our emcee, Master Chief Knudsen, is heavily involved with it now.

Fleet also worked with Navy supporters to find innovative ways to use our museum assets to instill Navy heritage and pride in newly selected Chief Petty Officers. I know many here are familiar with ‘Legacy Academies.’ Fleet improved the Legacy Academy at the Battleship Missouri and started new academies at the Midway Museum in San Diego and the USS *Turner Joy* in Bremerton, Washington.

Each of these initiatives are effectively preparing our new Chief Petty Officer talent for the challenges they face during those difficult first years while wearing their anchors, and this in turn benefits all of our Sailors.

I think anyone who knows Fleet Minyard understands that he is a compassionate and caring leader. While visiting the Wounded Warrior Pacific Trials in Port Hueneme, California, he was moved by the efforts of the athletes he saw competing. He made it his mission to move the Wounded Warrior Pacific Trials here to Hawaii, enabling those athletes to compete here, while rewarding them for the efforts they put into their training and sharing their example with Sailors here in Hawaii. Fleet Minyard, I think we were all rewarded by that effort. I was personally moved and inspired by what I saw during my visits to the weeklong series of events and I know many others were as well.

Also, just last month I had the opportunity to participate in the activities associated with the Sailor of the Year announcement. This is a week long program that Fleet Minyard has worked hard to coordinate and improve. It is remarkable how inspiring the week is, not only for those being honored, but by all those who attend the scheduled events. It is a magical experience for our Sailors that leaves an impression in the hearts and the minds of all.

My third priority as the Commander of the Pacific Fleet is strengthening relationships with our allies, partners and friends. Fleet Minyard has clearly worked this, representing the U.S. Navy in official visits and mil-to-mil talks with enlisted leaders throughout the Asia-Pacific.

But my favorite story has to do with the socials he held at his house during the RIMPAC exercises. He was even able to convince the Command Master Chiefs from the Republic of Korea and Japan, who have their differences, to go hike Diamond Head together. It worked! They had a wonderful time and were all smiles when it was over. This is a great example of an innovative solution to build trust and strengthen relationships between individuals, and over time, between nations.

Fleet Minyard has traveled throughout the Pacific over the last four years. I would love to know how many miles he has driven, flown and steamed as he visited ships and installations to engage the Sailors. On the 26<sup>th</sup> of April he and I performed the unnatural act of riding backwards in a C-2 aircraft, without windows, for an hour, before a controlled crash onto the flight deck of *Nimitz*. It made me thankful that Admiral Rickover chose me for submarines.

We visited the *Nimitz* to interact with their remarkable Sailors while they proceeded west past Hawaii for their eight-month deployment. Once again, it was great to see Fleet Minyard interacting with the Sailors, from the most junior to the most senior. It seems appropriate that USS *Nimitz* was the last carrier that Fleet visited, considering our close association with Admiral Chester Nimitz here at Pacific Fleet.

Every day that Fleet has been out and about taking care of our Sailors, he has worked on Warfighting Readiness. Our business in the Navy is warfighting and we can't do that without the efforts of our Sailors.

I often say that we must always be prepared for surprise and if we are surprised, we must be ready to respond accordingly. From our Pearl Harbor history to more recent North Korean provocations, we must always be ready.

I know that Fleet Minyard has worked extremely hard to make sure the Pacific Fleet Sailors focus on Warfighting Readiness as a priority. As the Senior Enlisted Advisor to the JTF-519 commander, Fleet Minyard played a key role in the aftermath of the surprising triple disaster that occurred in Japan on March 11, 2011, as Japan experienced the devastating earthquake, a tsunami and then a nuclear disaster. Our Naval Forces were there to lend a helping hand in crisis to our closest ally. Fleet Minyard provided Admiral Walsh with critical counsel with regards to the well being of the Pacific Fleet Sailors and their families, contributing to our ability to handle this unprecedented disaster.

One of Fleet's fellow Master Chiefs working in Japan at the time emailed me the following about his work during Operation Tomodachi. He said:

“Every day for the six weeks we were involved in Operation Tomodachi, Fleet would wait up for us to check in. He would not go to sleep until he knew we were all safe and had what we needed. He would check on us during the day and he even went so far as to send us jokes to try to brighten our day. He came out to the Forward Deployed Naval Forces, visiting every base, visiting commands and holding All Hands Calls and thanking every single Sailor and Marine for what

they did. The care and the leadership he provides is genuine and from his heart. He loves his Sailors and loves being one.”

Fleet, I know what an important role you have played in preparing our Sailors. As you retire, know that the team you helped build will remain on watch, keeping our nation safe. Your legacy lives on with all of those you have engaged with both officers and enlisted alike. It will live on and on, sustaining our Navy for generations. I consider myself one of those fortunate Sailors who has benefited from serving with you. Fleet Minyard, will you please join me for a well deserved award.

**[Award Presentation]**

While Fleet Minyard was busy taking care of the Sailors and families in the Pacific Fleet, his wife Mechele selflessly volunteered as the chairperson for CORE, the Continuum Of Resource Education for Hawaii and the Far East. She also mentored the spouses for new Chief Petty Officers as part of the Chief Petty Officers Indoctrination. She has supported John’s career throughout as an Ombudsman, part of the Family Readiness Group, and the chairperson for the Board of Administration for the enlisted Command Leadership Symposium.

Mechele, Bonny and I are especially grateful for your efforts and support for our Sailors and their families – not just here in the Pacific Fleet, but for the support you have given John and the Navy throughout John’s career. Mahalo and congratulations! Will you please join us at the podium?

**[Award Presentation]**

Jessa, Jake, each of you were also important to your father’s success in the Navy. Will you also please join me up here?

**[Award Presentation]**

As I conclude, let me briefly talk about new beginnings. This transition brings new opportunities for both John and Mechele. They are free to pursue their dreams, some old, some new. As they start the next chapter in their lives, it’s wonderful that they are not going very far as they plan to stay in Hawaii as Jake finishes up high school.

But, in the meantime Fleet, your stay here in Hawaii gives you the opportunity to hit the golf courses and work on that handicap. Perhaps I’ll see you out there - Shipmate. As you know, I need to work on my handicap too.

Recently I visited the Pacific Northwest, just before the USS *John C. Stennis* returned from an eight-month deployment. I met many of the families as they waited for their return, I listened to the parents and grandparents of our Sailors. They expressed to me how they once felt reservations about their children joining the Navy, but now they were so thankful that they had joined. Each of them was impressed with the change and development in their children after joining our Navy. Fleet, this is just another example of the effect your leadership has had on the

Sailors of the Pacific Fleet. Those compliments were directed at your contributions as much as anyone. Fleet, your legacy will continue to live on with all the people you have touched. You and Mechele have done an extraordinary job and service to our Nation. I wish you fair winds and following seas!

I thank all of you for being here to honor the career and achievements of the 15<sup>th</sup> Pacific Fleet Master Chief, Fleet Minyard.

May God Bless each of you, our Navy and our Nation.

Mahalo.