

Advice for an Older Person

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I am conflicted on writing about this topic. In the circle I swim now, few met are older. There's none to advise. Still, plenty flows up to me.

Besides, my advise has never been that worthy in my mind.

In the WW II Navy I met authority, was never intimidated. Their edicts reasonable. Besides, they never told me how to do my job. Tasks were assigned, material furnished, and we, well trained, were confident that no event would be unmanageable. We weren't cocky either. Senior Officers expected a job well done. For them we were the best for the task.

In the US Navy, the Line Officer is King; Staff Officers have specialities, may even outrank their Captain, do their work under that umbrella, authority. While Captain is a Rank just under Admiral, it is customary to call all Commanding any ship or airplane by that title, Captain, regardless of rank.

Thus it was in WWII, everyone who served in the Navy reported to a Captain. And excepting the few graduates of Annapolis, all Officers were Reservists, the same uniform, indistinguishable.

Major WWII Navy warships were commanded by a four-striper, a Captain. Smaller ships and aircraft were commanded by Officers of lesser rank., still called the Captain. Regardless of the vehicle commanded, the Captain was also **The Old Man**. A term of endearment, not dread. He kept you alive.

On this B-24 **the Old Man** was 27. A Lieutenant. Second tour, following Guadalcanal. He constantly reviewed Crew Training. In six months flying against the Japanese, more than 50 Missions, part of every every take-off included an "Abandon Ship" drill, where, regardless of activity, it was get on the ground away from the aircraft, NOW. The **Old Man** was a relentless fighter; that boring, repetitive training, paid; for his aircraft was shot down twice, crashed, no fatality, not even a scratch for any crewman to get the Purple Heart

On the second occasion attacking facilities in China. Crashed in an open field. Scurry to cover, count blessings again. **The Old Man** assures all of rescue; a distress message had been sent. Thousands of miles from any US Navy facility, this pledge might seem unreasonable; but, **The Old Man** had done it before.

Yes that very morning rescue came from Chinese forces, take all miles further west to a Nanking Airfield.

Hundreds of American military already here.

Those troops mustered by Unit, morning and night; were told little.

The Old Man promised we'd be taken to Manila.

Then this incredible Muser.

THat morning, **The Old Man** had us report with side arms.

The Americans were under the Command of a U.S. Air Corps Colonel.

He looked twenty.

Formalities complete, the Colonel reported "All Present" to the host Chinese General. Then, asks to speak.

He protests. A Chinese transport aircraft bringing Allied troops from India had come under distress the previous night. That Plane Captain panicked, ordered his crew to throw all passengers off to certain death; then safely arrived here.

That's Unacceptable.

The General hesitated. The Colonel emphasized the unacceptability of this atrocity.

The General spoke to a Staff Officer. Then together walked to a group of his younger Officer, says a few words, removed the Pistol from his belt, shoots one man in the head.

In a while, order returned. Our Boy Colonel repeated his insistence on accountability for all Officers without acknowledging or accepting the violence witness by hundreds.

On the tarmac that 1945 morning, that **Boy Colonel Old Man, our Old Man**, protected us; the Chinese General betrayed everyone.