

# From The Captain's Chair

This article appears in your ship's newspaper under the title "From the Captain's Chair." When the ship is at sea engaged in ASW operations, I find myself pretty well tied to the bridge and spend a lot of time in that chair. This means that there is very little time available to move about the ship and observe at first hand how you are all doing and what is going on.



However, perched in my chair, I am able to make many observations which give me a good insight into the variety of types of individuals we have on this ship. An incident occurred the other day which interested me because, although very simple in nature, it was a good character study. Let me tell you about it.

The ship had just completed a routine recovery of aircraft, and there was quite a bit of activity on the flight deck. One man was walking forward with a generous number of clean rags held rather carelessly in one hand. Three or four of them fell from his grasp, were blown against his trouser leg and then started to tumble down the deck. He turned around, watched the rags tumble for a few seconds and then proceeded on his way. Several other men moving in the same general direction saw the rags adrift, hesitated a minute to look at them and then moved on. Finally, one man emerged from the base of the island, gathered up the rags and returned to the island.

Here we have three types of individuals:

1. The rag dropper - a brown shirt
2. The rag passers - blue and red shirts
3. The rag picker-upper - a yellow shirt

All of these men had been briefed and re-briefed about articles adrift on the flight deck of a carrier being a hazard to the operation. Yet you could almost hear what they were thinking:

1. The dropper - "The recovery is over. There are no aircraft tuning up. It's only a couple of rags. Maybe someone else will pick them up."
2. The passers - "I didn't drop them. It's not my fault. Let someone else pick them up."
3. The picker-upper - "Adrift on the flight deck! Correct it!"

I have told you that the pick-upper was a yellow shirt and the others were brown, blue and red

shirts. He didn't get to be a yellow shirt because he likes to pick up rags. He got to be a yellow shirt because he has a basic character trait which the others did not have - A sense of responsibility. This same man does a lot more than pick up rags. He gets back to the ship on time, he is always present at quarters for muster, he gets his training courses in for advancement to the next higher rate, he prepares carefully for personnel inspection, he takes pride in his performance and derives a lot of real satisfaction and happiness from it. He has self-respect and that makes him feel good.

Whether you are a picker-upper, a passer, or a dropper depends a lot on training -- how you have been brought up and what you were taught. If we had all picker-uppers on the ship, it would be wonderful from my viewpoint. But the competition for advancement and selection for the better jobs would be terrific. The "picker-uppers" are just as glad that there are plenty of "passers" and "droppers" around, because that always leaves plenty of room at the top.

Don't forget that this little analogy applies to civilian life, and that there too, the sense of responsibility reaps the reward.