

Senior Chief retires after 23 years of service

A Cold War-era sailor, educator and devoted family man, Mass Communication Specialist Senior Chief Donald F. Smith retired from the U.S. Navy at the Defense Information School Oct. 24 in Fort Meade MD.

Smith was sent to shore by the chief petty officer mess after 23 years of dedicated service.

“I was only supposed to join the Navy for five years and be on my way. Turns out five years just weren't enough,” said Smith during remarks to his guest in attendance.

Smith's journey with the U.S. Navy began a short drive from where it ended. In August 1986, the native Washingtonian entered the Navy from Baltimore, MD. Upon his completion of basic training in Orlando, Fla. he then graduated from Photographer's Mate "A" School with honors in December of 1986. His first assignment was to report to the Fleet Intelligence Center Europe and Atlantic in Norfolk, Va.

In 1990, Smith was assigned to the Fleet Imaging Center, Detachment Roosevelt Roads in Puerto Rico. As the Leading Petty Officer, he developed a specialized forensic photography process that supported all medical photographic requirements for the Armed Forces Institute of Pathology.

He returned to the continental U.S. in 1993 where he was assigned to Naval Submarine School in New London, Conn. as the lead instructor of Periscope Photography. Reminiscent of his academic success in his first school in the Navy, Smith was selected for submarine service after three years of instructing students and receiving his Master Training Specialist qualification in 1995.

For the next four years, he served the U.S. Navy as the Graphic's Division Leading Petty Officer on board the USS PARCHE (SSN 683).

His first assignment to DINFOS was in 2000. Smith served as the lead instructor for the Digital Multimedia Course and the academic director for the Multimedia Department. He was a key player in the development and implementation of the Master Training Specialist Program and DINFOS' Master Instructor Program.

In February 2004, Smith was assigned to his first nuclear aircraft carrier, USS ENTERPRISE (CVN 65). In 2006, ENTERPRISE deployed on a world cruise in support of the Global War on Terror, fighting battles on two fronts simultaneously in support of Operation Enduring Freedom, Operation Iraqi Freedom and Operation Medusa.

After his deployment on the ENTERPRISE, he returned to DINFOS in 2006 where he served as a Noncommissioned Officer in charge to the Director of Training for DINFOS.

Despite the countless promotions and awards Senior Chief Smith has received in his lifetime, including the Presidential Unit Citation Award, he remained a humble sailor during his remarks.

“I love being a chief,” Smith said. “I would not have been able to be this successful had it not been for a lot of support from people like you all in this audience today.”

To add a little humor, he promised the audience he would not "loose it" on the podium while he spoke. After two sips from a bottle of water, he began to get emotional as he spoke about his passion for teaching.

“I like taking care of sailors. I love to watch them grow. I like to see them accomplish things they initially thought they could not,” Smith said. “Although I picked up the nickname “the evil one” from some of my students, passing the knowledge on that the Navy has given to me is well worth it.”

Following a few deep breaths and pausing to gaze into the audience as some of his shipmates from the USS ENTERPRISE wiped their tears away, Smith regained composure and looked over at his wife, Allyson, of more than 12 years, and their three children, daughter Taylor, and sons Joshua and David.

“You all are my reason for everything,” he said. “Being able to know that I had you in my corner when I was home, and when I deployed meant the world to me. Being a Navy family requires a lot of sacrifice and you all have put it with so much. I just wanted to publicly thank you for your support of my career over these years.”

Smith highlighted his father-in-law; a retired Navy senior chief during his remarks. He said his father-in-laws' motivation during his advancement days to chief petty officer and senior chief petty officer was greatly appreciated.

Guest speaker, retired Master Chief William Reed, spoke at lengths about Smith's character, passion for teaching and family values.

“Don and I met in Submarine School in 1994. Even then I saw his leadership capabilities,” Reed said. “He has always enjoyed passing on his knowledge to others. It is no surprise to me that he came to DINFOS. He and his loving family have truly served together these years he has been in and the Navy. He has indeed made the Navy better.”

Smith will continue to work at DINFOS, this time as a civilian. He looks forward to spending more time with his family, and the opportunity to continue educating the future defenders of the United States.

In a closing statement to Smith,” Reed said, “While you are retiring from the Navy today, your role as a leader has not ended, it's in your DNA to be a leader.”