

The Doctor is a Yeoman!

By PA3 Don Wagner, Staff Writer

“What the mind can conceive to believe the mind can also achieve” ... W. Clement Stone, real estate tycoon and presidential confidant.

Dr. Vincent W. Patton carefully files his thesis “Final Analysis of the Enlisted Performance Evaluation System.” He marks a page in an occupational job task analysis. A variety of other research materials detailing human behavior and job performance surround him.

Dr. Patton is neither a college professor nor a civil servant. Nor is it a coincidence that on his desk is a nameplate on which is inscribed YN1 Patton. Dr. Patton and YN1 Patton are the same person.

Of the 31,292 enlisted personnel in the Coast Guard, Patton is the only one on active duty with a doctorate degree, according to CWO Stephen B. Wehrenberg of Personnel Planning Evaluation Staff in Headquarters. There is one other enlisted Coast Guardsman, PS1 David Hume, a Reservist in the 7th District, that has earned a doctorate degree. He said that there are 19 masters degrees and 259 bachelors degrees among enlisted personnel.

“I view my career in the Coast Guard as a learning experience. I have a lot to offer the Coast Guard and the Coast Guard has a lot to offer me,” Patton said.

Patton has been in the Coast Guard for 11 years. He is currently a staff member on the Coast Guard’s Enlisted Performance Appraisal Project.

In ten years he has earned a bachelor of arts degree, a masters degree, and a Ph.D. by attending college part time and by taking correspondence courses and CLEP exams.

“I’ve learned of the educational programs and opportunities on my own,

and wish to help people in this area,” he said.

Being a full-time serviceman “has helped, not hindered me,” Patton said. He took advantage of the Coast Guard Tuition Assistance Program, VA benefits, and the Admiral Roland Student Loan, offered by Mutual Assistance. “I also had a partial scholarship from the United Negro College Fund to help fund my doctorate.”

“Hard work, patience, and motivation were the factors necessary in attaining my educational goals,” said Patton.

“My father told me as a child not to

wait until I was 65 and say I wish that I done so and so,” he added.

Born and raised in Detroit, Patton joined the Coast Guard in 1972 upon graduation from high school. He spent his first three years on board the cutter *Dallas*, at Air Station Detroit, then Group Detroit. He became aware of the service’s educational benefits by reading publications and manuals relating to education in the military. “I also asked a lot of questions,” he said.

Within 18 months he had earned 60 college credits through CLEP exams and DANTES correspondence courses,



YN1 (Dr.) Vince Patton listens to suggestions for improving the new Enlisted Performance Evaluation System forms. Photo by PA3 Don Wagner, Staff Writer

courses at nearby colleges, and credit from his military courses.

"I had the necessary motivation but it was difficult to make the time and study two and three hours daily. Studying soon became an obsession with me and I started spending much more of my free time with the books."

In September 1973, as an RM, he was transferred to Group and Air Station Detroit. He took advantage of flexible working hours by enrolling in evening classes at local colleges — as many as five schools at one time. He also attended college summer classes. Meanwhile, his credits were being funneled and accumulated at Shaw College in Detroit.

Working eight- and 12-hour shifts, attending classes, and then studying several hours a day was difficult. It required a lot of self-discipline and determination.

Within two years he had earned another 60 credits and was awarded a bachelor of arts degree in liberal arts and social work.

As an RM2, Patton was then selected for recruiting duty in Chicago. While recruiting he noticed that only a very small percentage of minorities applying to the Coast Guard were eligible. He created the Youth Motivation Program to help motivate under-educated youth in acquiring vocational skills and in developing educational values. The program was presented in Chicago schools and sponsored by the Chicago Employment Committee.

He was awarded the Coast Guard Commendation Medal for his outstanding service in his work with the community.

Commandant's Bulletin 14-83

Concern with youth education prompted him to enroll at Chicago's Loyola University to pursue graduate-level studies in social work and counseling. Despite working as a full-time recruiter, he again resumed classes and four and five hours of daily study.

Within three years he graduated cum

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laude (3.6 grade point average) with a masters degree.

Though an RM2 and eligible for advancement, he felt he could best use his education within the Coast Guard as a yeoman. He was denied OCS because he is color blind.

Within four years he had advanced to Yeoman First Class and was transferred to Cleveland to act as the career information specialist for the 9th District. There, he assisted Coast Guard members and their families in spreading knowledge of Coast Guard benefits and incentives. He also acted as the 9th District's training and education specialist, drug education specialist, alternate military civil rights counselor and facilitator, DANTES test control officer, educational enrichment program administrator and recruiting supervisor. Although many of these jobs are usually full-time positions, he held all of them as collateral duties at the same time. He was awarded the Coast Guard Achievement Medal for superior performance of these duties.

"I can gain valuable experience to benefit me later in life," he said. "I'll be 37 years old when I retire and still be young enough to pursue another career with 20 years of experience behind me. That's what the outside job market is looking for, and I'm patient enough to wait."

"We are the mirror of life and we should make an effort to do the best we can," said Patton.

His future goal — "I want to be the Master Chief Petty Officer of the Coast Guard." Any bets?

Ed. note: See the related education story in this issue's Quality of Life department on page 38.



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