

100 Great Coast Guard Chiefs in 100 Years
Nomination of BMC Ed Melega, USCG (Ret)
Submitted by Dan Kehlenbach

It is a pleasure to nominate BMC Ed Melega, USCG (Ret) for consideration of the 100 Great Coast Guard Chiefs in 100 years. I served with BMC Melega at the Coast Guard Training Center Cape May from 1996 until his retirement in 2000, and as a non-rated member, BMC Melega had a tremendous impact on my development in the Coast Guard.

While my tenure serving in the Coast Guard was quite short, BMC Melega's impressions have been continual guiding factors in both my professional and personal pursuits. Perhaps the greatest lesson that BMC Melega has shared with me is the importance of trust and empowerment. As a young non-rated member, BMC Melega, without hesitation immediately placed me in a prominent leadership role in which I was directly responsible for the supervision of a company of recruits, despite the fact I had graduated from the same training program a mere few weeks before. His trust in me was empowering, and I dedicated myself to become the best instructor I could possibly be. He never looked over my shoulder, yet like the chain fouled in the Coast Guard Chief's Anchor representing "Sailor's disgrace," was always there to provide support and guidance during my inevitable mistakes and shortcomings as a junior service member.

Outside the work environment, BMC Melega and I had a strong relationship, and one experience still brings a smile to my face, nearly 20 years later.

In the summer of 1998, BMC Melega and I participated in a 5-day sea kayaking trip in the Bay of Fundy, in Nova Scotia, Canada. The day before we were scheduled to depart, BMC Melega and I were going through our list of recommended gear for the trip. All the paddling gear would be provided for us by the outfitter, but we were responsible for the tent and our personal gear. BMC Melega said, "Hey Dan-o (his name for me, to this day), I got a new tent for our trip!" "Great" I said, "should we set it up in the yard to make sure everything is ok?"

"Nah - it's a brand new one, we'll be fine" replied BMC Melega.

"Sounds like a plan" I said, and we packed the car to head to Nova Scotia.

Two days later we were on the beach with the outfitter and packing our kayak for the first day's paddle. It was a wonderful day in a spectacular setting, and when we got to the campsite in the late afternoon, we worked together in setting up our tent.

Everything went well in assembling the tent, but something just *felt* off. When the last peg was staked into place, we both stepped back a few paces, looked at the tent, then looked at each other.

"Looks a bit small, doesn't it?" BMC Melega said softly.

"You're right" I said, and double-checked the instruction sheet for the tent, and simultaneously we noticed the instructions for the tent, which directly on the top of the sheet depicted "Child's Camping Tent"!

"Hmm, I guess we'll be a bit close!", chuckled BMC Melega.

Indeed we were, and indeed we still are to this day.

Thank you for this opportunity to support BMC Melega, and thanks to all other U.S. Coast Guard Chiefs who proudly contributed much to our nation.

With much gratitude,

Dan Kehlenbach