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The Life and Service of Lt. Kevin Adcock

This interview recorded the story of an outstanding veteran, a man and true patriot. Lt. Randall Kevin Adcock, born in 1968 in Fayetteville, North Carolina, served in the U.S. Navy for eleven years. He tells us that his father and his grandfather were both in the military, in the U.S. Air Force and the U.S. Navy, respectively. He remembers his grandfather telling him stories of WWII. His earliest childhood memories are of the drive to Rockingham, where his parents are both from; there his grandfather would tell stories specifically of Guadalcanal, one of the major Pacific campaigns. The tales made a lasting impression on Lt. Adcock, fostering a respect for military service at a young age.



“After he passed away, I had my grandfather's record entered into the Navy Memorial archives in Washington, D.C.,” Lt. Adcock explains. “He was a big influence on me joining the Navy.”



Lt. Adcock does not remember how he came to hear about The Citadel, but he was living in Fayetteville, North Carolina, and he was looking for a change. He came to visit Charleston and The Citadel; it was not the school that made him want to stay, but the city. Lt. Adcock talks briefly about how the South Carolina Corps of Cadets is much more regulated now than it was when he was a cadet in Charlie Company. Lt. Adcock began his career at The Citadel in 1986, finishing in 1990. He was a member of the rugby team during his senior year and participated in intramural sports throughout his time as a cadet, all while having a Navy contract. He began his cadet career as an electrical engineering major but learned later on that it was not for him. Luckily, the transition from EE to mathematics was fairly smooth after two and a half years.

After graduating and commissioning, he went to flight school in Pensacola, Florida. There was a surplus of pilots in the Navy at the time, so he came back to Charleston for a year, answering phones at a medical institute before he was actually able to participate in flight school. He was winged in February of 1993. He was selected to go to a fleet replacement squadron in Mayport, Florida, where he selected helicopters and he completed his training in the H-60 Bravo.



Lt. Adcock was then deployed to the Mediterranean by way of the Suez Canal and the Gulf, each for about six months. He was also on two anti-drug cruises throughout the Caribbean. Being away from home was hard. He was not married during the time, but he had girlfriends. The lack of internet made care packages interesting because he would get boxes that had new seasons of shows on VHS, and there would be magazines with news articles of current events that he would have had no idea about prior to receiving them in the mail. He enjoyed writing and receiving letters because, despite being with the other men who were deployed, he was lonely. But the aspect of working with people in other countries during deployment was amazing.

Much of the training Lt. Adcock went through is the same training that is still implemented with today's Naval pilots. During his training at flight school, he flew the T-34 Charlie. The Bell Jet Ranger is what he flew for helicopter training, and he believes that is the same platform they use today, though the T-34 has been replaced. The T-6 is the new platform; it

is very similar to the T-34, but essentially “on steroids.” The plane does not look different on the outside, but the control panels on the inside are much more high-tech. Technology has come a long way, he said. The training today is also more diverse with the collaboration between Navy and Air Force bases and joint training operations, he explained.

His primary role in the U.S. Navy was as a helicopter pilot, though there were secondary jobs called “collateral duties.” He was recommended by his peers to do these jobs for reasons that he is not entirely sure of. He believes it may have been his ability to write well. He often wrote articles for the others on his crew, and he was always the one with the camera.



It is through words that Lt. Adcock came to know Admiral James B. Stockdale, a man who would come to greatly influence his life. Admiral Stockdale was the president of The Citadel for a year in the early 1980s, but, while he was a cadet, Lt. Adcock did not know that much about him. Later in Lt. Adcock’s career, while he was teaching at flight school, he learned more about James B. Stockdale through conversations about Stockdale’s experience as a Prisoner of War. Lt. Adcock knew then that Stockdale would be his hero.

While stationed in California, Lt. Adcock read a book written from the perspective of Stockdale and his wife during the war. He wanted to meet Stockdale in person and, since the book mentions where they lived, Lt. Adcock would look for him as he would drive down that street; he did not encounter him there, though. Lt. Adcock then randomly came to meet



Stockdale while on a trip to the commissary to buy nacho chips. Lt. Adcock was approached by a woman who worked there; she asked if he needed any help. After a moment, Lt. Adcock asked her if she was Sybil Stockdale. She was. Mrs. Stockdale asked how he knew her, and he mentioned that he had read the book and told her how much he admired her husband. Mrs. Stockdale walked Lt. Adcock over to the ice cream section

where Admiral James B. Stockdale was standing. He was finally able to meet his hero.

Lt. Adcock recounts that Stockdale was a humble and quiet man. Because of the incredible stories about the Admiral, Lt. Adcock imagined a larger person, but the Admiral stood about five feet tall. After returning home, Lt. Adcock found his copy of the Stockdales' book, *In Love and War*, and sent it to them asking for their signatures; it was returned within a week. Lt. Adcock admires the Admiral because of his courage and selflessness: Not many have ever been in a situation that could compare to wanting to take your own life to save your men. Lt. Adcock has read many of the same works as Stockdale, and he uses those to inform the way he lives his life.



After leaving the Navy, Lt. Adcock had no intention of returning to The Citadel. He started working for an airline at the time. But airline work was not all it was cracked up to be. He remembers his airline employment as was one of the worst jobs he ever had; most people believe piloting is glamorous, he explained, when, really, it is dreadful. The pilots do not get to fly to amazing places and explore.

Instead, they typically sit in a room and watch a small TV, nap, or grab something to eat until the next flight is ready to depart. When Lt. Adcock was laid off, it was a sign to return to the Lowcountry. He moved back to Charleston because he loved the city, and the cost of living was cheaper than that of D.C., where he was living when working for the airline.

When Lt. Adcock first began looking for a job, he searched to no avail. He was constantly turned down because not many people know what to do with someone who had a background in aviation. It seemed as though employers were not looking at what he could bring to the table until he saw an ad on Craigslist for a personal training job. He had learned from people who had degrees in biochemistry and physics, people who really knew how the body worked. Personal training was appealing to Lt. Adcock because of his own interest in fitness. He met a lot of different people through that work, but after two years of doing that, he



realized that personal training wasn't what he wanted to do long-term.

Then Lt. Adcock saw an ad for the PACE program, which allows someone to become a teacher without the traditional education degree. He thought the process would be longer than it was, but he was hired and began teaching within three weeks. He had to learn how to manage a middle school classroom on his own. He never had an issue standing in front of groups of people, so teaching came naturally. He did have to learn patience quickly because he has no children of his own. He chose to teach middle school because the little kids were too small and the older ones can be too argumentative. He taught at Military Magnet.

After teaching, Lt. Adcock explored returning to The Citadel. During his time as a cadet, Lt. Adcock knew TAC officers to also be the ROTC instructors. When he found out that those jobs are now separate, he decided it would not be a bad idea to apply for the available TAC officer position, a position he now holds in the South Carolina Corps of Cadets' Mike Company.

Lt. Adcock says that his friends would describe him as the one who is most involved in community service. This began when he was a cadet by simply giving blood. He admits that he did it for no other reason than to get the free overnight pass, which is what many cadets still do today. But when he was in the Navy, he was a Public Affairs Officer, and this position lent itself to involvement with the community. He would take the guys who were new to the squadron down to the jail and do a visit similar to that of "Scared Straight" in order to show them consequences of misbehavior; Lt. Adcock jokes that he was more afraid than they were. He was also in charge of finding volunteering opportunities for them as well. Much like the Krause Center does today at The Citadel, they even had their own version of Leadership Day. Now a champion of community service at The Citadel, he encourages his cadets to give back. He says he gets the same feeling volunteering that many would get eating a cupcake.

In his mind there are many things that he would have done differently. He feels as though that is a double-edged sword because there are things he would have liked to have done differently, but at the same time he would not want to change anything that would jeopardize who he is today. Based on his own life experience, Lt. Adcock encourages people to do what makes them happy. For him, that is a life of service.

