

IUSS/SOSUS DINNER SPEECH, 50TH ANNIVERSARY

SEP 18, 2004

By Mr. Ernie Castillo

Good evening.

First, I would like to thank Jim for asking me to say a few words this evening, and I promise it will be just a few words.

When I was a Watch Officer at NAVFAC Ramey, in January 1958, the system was not even 3 ½ years old. At that time, there were just 10 NAVFACs from Barbados to Shelburne, and all of the NAVFAC buildings were Quonset huts. The stations resembled WWII sites. As much as we thought that we knew operationally, trust me, we were really in the dark ages of the system. We were actually still learning what the system could do and how best we could do it.

One predicament was the fact that there were two Evaluation Centers, one in New York City, and the other in San Juan, Puerto Rico. You won't believe the problems we had with two Centers. New York was suppose to handle the northern facilities contacts and San Juan the southern facilities, but invariably the southern stations held contact in the north and the northern stations held contact in the south, and each Center would put out it's own evaluation, and they usually never agreed. What a night mare. By mid 1958, it was decided to create a single Evaluation Center in Norfolk, VA., and that eliminated those problems.

One story from when I was stationed at Ramey.

We received a message telling about one of the U.S.

Navy people stationed in Shelburne, Nova Scotia, that lived in a trailer. He had gone on leave and returned to find all of the water pipes frozen. His solution to the problem was to get under the trailer and heat the pipes with a blow torch. Well, as you might expect, he wound up setting the trailer on fire. Everyone really felt sorry for him and his family. What a horrible thought to live in Nova Scotia in a burned trailer. My wife and I were so thankful that we had a house in sunny Puerto Rico.

In July 1960, I received orders to Shelburne. Now, when Shelburne was first built, it had been a joint US-Canadian station with half US Navy

personnel and half RCN personnel. They had two Commanding Officers for the one facility and the two didn't necessarily agree on many decisions. By 1960, it had been determined that Shelburne should be entirely Canadian manned and the name was changed to HMCS Shelburne. I was sent there to be the Liaison Officer and I would now be the only American at that facility.

My first problem was finding a place to live for my wife and 11 month old daughter, who had been born at Ramey. Unfortunately, Shelburne was not like Ramey where everyone had government quarters. Finding a place to live in Shelburne was most difficult and we finally discovered that the only place available was a trailer which had been used by one of the U.S. Navy people earlier. Yes, you guess it. That was the same trailer that had burned. Well we moved in even though they hadn't made any major repairs, but we managed until we were able to rent Janet McKenzie's little cabin by her motel.

We still stay in contact with some of the people I worked with in Shelburne back in 1960. We exchange letters with Mike & Glenn Ciz. Mike was the Operations Officer at Shelburne, and later came to Norfolk to the Staff. Mike eventually returned to Shelburne as Commanding Officer. Several years ago, while we were in British Columbia, we saw Mona Jones, the wife of Fred Jones, who was one of the system pioneers serving on the COSL Staff and later Fred was Commanding Officer in Shelburne.

Some great memories from years ago.

As I finish I would like to say that I spent a total of 38 years working in SOSUS and IUSS and during all of those years I found that, without exception, we were most fortunate to have, year after year, some of the most talented and dedicated people in the U.S. Navy working in the system. What a joy to have been associated with so many highly qualified and talented individuals whose primary goal was to make SOSUS and IUSS such an outstanding and respected Navy command. You are all real professionals and it was because of you that this system was able to achieve the remarkable success that it did.

Thank you.