

‘Old Tar’ Designation Passes to Master Chief Bill Smalts



Fleet Master Chief Bill Smalts. *U.S. NAVY*

The Surface Navy Association's (SNA) "Old Tar" designation, honoring the U.S. Navy Enlisted Surface Warfare Specialist (ESWS) serving on active duty with the earliest qualification date, has passed to Fleet Master Chief Bill Smalts. Smalts is currently assigned as the Fleet Master Chief, Commander, United States 2nd Fleet, Norfolk, Virginia.

Smalts is now the 14th individual to receive the Old Tar honor having relieved Force Master Chief David B. Carter, who has recently retired.

"This award is a recognition of the leadership, experience and expertise possessed by a knowledgeable mariner. Master Chief Smalts is such a Sailor and has earned the title an 'Old Tar,'" said Vice Adm. Rick Hunt, U.S. Navy (retired), president of SNA. "This award acknowledges our lore, customs and traditions, and honors the most senior of all our active duty Enlisted Surface Warfare Specialists with the 'Old Tar' designation."

Smalts completed his qualification as an E3 aboard the USS L.Y. SPEAR (AS 36) but was not allowed to be pinned until he was a Third Class Petty Officer on Oct. 18, 1990.

The term comes from the days of sail and wooden ships, when Sailors would board enemy ships in battle and engage in hand to hand combat. Since long hair was the fashion of the era, they would often wear it tied in a knot at the base of the neck. Before entering battle, they would dip this knot in tar that would soon harden and protect their necks from blows from behind. Sailors, therefore, became known as "tars," and an "Old Tar" was clearly one honored and respected for his knowledge, wisdom, and long experience at sea.

The honor is accompanied by a replica of "The Chief" statue that stands at the Senior Enlisted Academy in Newport, Rhode Island, with all the names of the "Old Tars." In a ceremony held at the awardees' command, a miniature replica of the

statue was presented to CMDCM Smalts to display at his command and will be permanently retained by him upon retirement.

SNA also recognizes the "Old Salt" award to honor the Surface Warfare Officer with the earliest date of receiving the coveted warfare qualification.