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RADM Callo

Change

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The following article is adapted from a virtual speech recently made by RADM Callo to the Phi Gamma Delta fraternity chapter at Colorado State University

Change. We live with it every day in our personal lives, businesses, and in military operations. To expand that thought I spoke to three individuals who deal with change constantly.

First was former Secretary of the Navy and former Ambassador to Norway Ken Braithwaite. He was direct:

"The only constant in life is change. I learned that truth early in my professional career. It helped me to be prepared to meet change in the succeeding chapters of my life. I was a new 'nugget pilot' in my first squadron, VP17. We were in a stand-down period, and I was looking forward to my first leave with my family in Michigan. As my leave approached, the Soviet Navy deployed two new Delta III SSBNs right up against the Aleutian Island chain. For my squadron it was *All Hands on Deck...General Quarters*. The CO called all the pilots together and told us leaves were cancelled, we were heading north from Hawaii to Adak, Alaska. Stunned, what does a young pilot do? I shuffled into the Ops Officer's office to ask if what the Skipper said applied to me.

"His reply, 'Braithwaite, what the hell don't you get? We can't control the Soviet Navy. Our job is

to defend the U.S. Get your ass down to the flight line and get your plane ready to go! Oh, and one more thing son, in this man's Navy everything's a crap shoot with a ton of change coming your way. If you can't embrace that you're going to have a sh...y life!'

"It was a lesson I took to heart and through all the ups and downs and all the change along the way. I've lived life prepared for change, thanks to the lesson OPS taught me that day."

My second resource was Father Gerald Murray, the pastor of a major Catholic parish in New York City, one that largely serves members of the United Nations community. His Parish of The Holy Family is an epicenter of cosmopolitan life. He warns:

"At the root of our search for change for the better is a healthy dissatisfaction with the way things are at present...Not all changes are improvements."

Father Murray focuses on improving "the way things are," but he goes on to say "We need the *wisdom* to judge whether the change we have in mind will really improve things or not, and the *courage* to act, or not act, based on that

judgement. As I said, not all changes are improvements." For Father Murray, *wisdom* and *courage* are essential enablers, and *we should beware of change for its own sake*.

One of my daughters, Kathleen, who lives in London, provides a third view. Kathleen, most recently a journalist with Reuters, has had assignments to the Philippines, Belgium, Vietnam, and London.

Kathleen offered the following: "Technological change over the past decades has had the life-altering impact of the Industrial Revolution of the 1800s. Technological innovation has altered the way people live, work, travel and spend leisure time. In the process technology has transformed the way we create, learn, communicate...and view community. Trying to cope with unrelenting change can seem as daunting as leaping onto a moving skateboard...but it is worth the effort."

Kathleen's focus is on *technology* as a powerful agent of change in our lives, and she shows optimism blended with realism when she says: "Even when tsunami-style transformation appears negative, remember that positive outcomes may well follow."

My own thoughts about change:

Recently, while walking on New York City's Madison Avenue, I passed Brooks Brothers, the venerable men's clothing store. Through one of the large display windows, I could see into the store's entire first floor. It was empty: no merchandise, no salespeople, no customers. It was *completely changed* from what I would have viewed a year ago. The Brooks Brothers scene is multiplied many times throughout New York City and the United States.

Beyond the obvious facts, what does that radically changed scene mean? It screams at us that tens of thousands are suddenly unemployed. Lives in the U.S. have been abruptly changed.

There is a very different and very interesting story about radical physical and mental change and how they are intertwined. It's the story of Pete Gray, a one-armed outfielder, who played baseball for a major league team in St. Louis years ago. When asked by a reporter if he might have been a better player with two arms, Gray responded that if he had not suffered the loss of his arm, he might have been less determined, *and not made the team in the first place*.

Gray's emphasis was on *inspiration* and *determination*, and how those qualities can be paramount, even in the face of traumatic changes.

Change *is a constant*, and it is a factor dominating our culture, with the impact of digital technology perhaps being *the* major factor. When all is said and done, questions about change relate not only to the "how and why," *but to how we manage* change that counts.

Make no mistake, our times are changing at flank speed. But far more important than the *existence* of change, is *our reaction to it*.

I'd like to share an admonition that I received years ago from retired Major General Bob Scales, author and former Commandant of the U.S. Army War College. It's straightforward and warns us to avoid over reaction to the inevitable *changes* that come our way.

Scales' admonition was: "The main thing is to keep the main thing the main thing."

So, is there a "main thing" about change? I suggest the following:

Change is a rapidly growing factor in our lives, and it will probably be an increasingly significant factor for generations to come. Change is a constant. We need to *embrace* it, or *accommodate* it, but at all costs, we should avoid being *victims* of it.