



Jim Bjostad

Chief of Emergency Management

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Born in Petersburg, VA, into an ‘Army family.’ Jim Bjostad reports that his family moved fifteen times before he left home for college...and he and his wife (from a ‘Navy family’) then moved fourteen times during and after his Coast Guard service. He now considers Sanibel, FL, his “home town” because that’s where he intends to stay.

Jim is a 1975 graduate of Virginia Commonwealth University with a BS in Mass Communications... Radio/TV Station/Broadcast Journalism.

Jim notes, he was interested in a career in law enforcement and, to that end, applied to the Park Police in Richmond, VA. He was put on a waiting list, so his first job after college was as a Service Writer in a car dealer’s service department. A year later, the Park Police called and (with the car dealer’s blessing) he reported for duty.

After a year, he was lured back by the car dealer, placed in a management prep program and began work on an MBA in night school. At the college he met a Coast Guard recruiter during a coffee break and, at age 26, signed on for their Reserve program. He was sent to a four month Officer’s Candidate School then spent eighteen months in the Coast Guard Intelligence Service, followed by a career alternating (for twenty-nine years, as he describes it) between Operations (cutters and boats) and Intelligence.

His first operational assignment was aboard the Coast Guard cutter Ingham in Portsmouth, VA in 1982 followed by assignment to the National Intelligence University, where he earned a Master’s Degree in Strategic Intelligence. Just as he was to return to Ingham as Operations Officer in 1988, the cutter was decommissioned, so he was assigned to a Rescue Boat Station based at the Barnegat Lighthouse in New Jersey. After service with the Navy in Key West, and attending the Naval War College, he then was assigned

to Grand Haven, MI, in 1994 to command the nine Rescue Boat Stations on the east side of Lake Michigan.

Now his story *really* gets interesting...he is assigned to work on the Secretary of Transportation’s National Security Staff, then attended the Kennedy School at Harvard University for a year as a National Security Fellow.

In 2000, Jim worked in George W. Bush’s White House, as the Coast Guard representative on the National Security Council Staff, writing intel background papers for Condoleezza Rice and the President. Jim reports that his training in Intel and Journalism really helped there.

In 2004, now a Captain, Jim was named Coast Guard Sector Commander in Mobile, AL. and directed all Coast Guard Operations in Mississippi, Alabama and the Panhandle for the next three years, including the Coast Guard response to five hurricanes.

He returned to Washington as the Military Assistant to the Deputy Director of National Intelligence and, finally, retired from the Coast Guard in 2009.

He next worked at the National Geospatial-Intelligence Agency and spent the next five years—as he puts it—helping the DOD “relate” to state and local First Responders and provide the support they needed following natural disasters.

Jim was interviewed in 2014 by Lee County for a job in Emergency Management and, after several interviews, was hired, primarily because of his “hands-on experience” directing the responses to five hurricanes, including Ivan, Dennis & Katrina.

Jim always remembers his dad’s advice to a young man... “Find interesting things to do and do them!” He certainly took that advice to heart!

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