



DCMA BOSTON COMMANDER 'LIVING THE AMERICAN DREAM'

By Ann Jensis-Dale, DCMA Public Affairs

If you had asked Navy Capt. Sidney Kim, Defense Contract Management Agency Boston commander, in the 1970s if he ever thought he would be a U.S. military officer, Kim would have asked if you were dreaming. Today, Kim is self-proclaimed proof that the American dream can come true.

"If someone asked me how I feel today, I would say that I am living the American dream — a dream well beyond my childhood imagination," Kim confessed during his recent assumption-of-command ceremony.

Kim arrived in the U.S. with his family in 1973 when he was 13 years old after his father was invited by his uncle to teach Tae-Kwon-Do (a Korean martial art) in Texas — a transition that was especially challenging for the teenager. "When I started seventh grade at Landrum Junior High School (Houston, Texas), I used a Korean-English dictionary to translate one word at a time," he explained. "Without knowing grammar, it would take me hours to translate one paragraph in a textbook. It was like fitting a jigsaw puzzle together."

Persevering through the language, Kim made his way through school



Marie Greening, Defense Contract Management Agency Aeronautical Systems Division director, passes the DCMA Boston flag to Navy Capt. Sidney Kim during his change-of-command ceremony. (Photos by Ann Jensis-Dale, DCMA Public Affairs)

to the University of Houston, where he received a bachelor's degree in chemical engineering. During his time at the University of Houston, Kim worked several odd jobs, including a stint on a "refinery labor gang" to pay for his education.

While attending graduate school in the 1980s, jobs were scarce due to the recession and Kim's money was running low. Military service never entered his mind until one day when his graduate school research advisor, a retired Navy submarine captain, convinced Kim that he would make a great naval officer.

Kim decided to apply to both the Air Force and Naval Officer

Candidate Schools and was eventually accepted into both. With a recommendation from his advisor and a particular female classmate — who thought the Navy had the best uniform — Kim chose the Navy.

It has been 25 years since Kim set foot on the U.S. Naval OCS grounds in Newport, R.I., the location where Navy officer recruits are trained. When he graduated from OCS in 1984, his family could not afford the airfare to attend his graduation.

The week before his assumption of command for DCMA Boston, Kim took his mother, Hoonam, wife, Helen, and sons, Joshua and Joseph, to the U.S. Naval Station,

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Newport, R.I., for a visit. “It felt like time had stood still. The facility looked the same as it did 25 years ago,” Kim said.

When his family toured the facility, he felt old memories rushing back. “When I first arrived at OCS, it was a subfreezing winter day. I was being yelled at and just hoped I would graduate. Back then, a Navy lieutenant looked like a god to me. I would never have imagined that I would be back as a Navy captain,” Kim remarked.

He said his mother was grateful for the opportunity to see where her son’s naval career had begun and often had “a hard time holding back tears. She always felt so bad that she could not attend my OCS graduation,” said Kim.

Kim truly believes he is living the American dream and is proud of what this country offers. According to Kim, he cannot think of many countries that are gracious enough to provide this kind of opportunity. “I think the moral of this story is that you will never know how far you can fly until you spread your wings,” he remarked. “But, before you can spread your wings, someone has to give you a chance. This country has given me the chance to spread my small wings.”

Kim’s immediate plan as commander for DCMA Boston is to visit as many locations as possible to get to know his people and industry partners and learn what is on their minds — something he hopes to do “before the first Nor’easter.” ☀



Navy Capt. Sidney Kim’s family, from right to left: son, Joseph, mother, Hoonam, and wife, Helen, proudly look on as he assumes command of the Defense Contract Management Agency Boston office.



Navy Capt. Sidney Kim, Defense Contract Management Agency Boston commander, sits in his office overlooking the historic Boston Harbor.