Serving Yokosuka for 50 years

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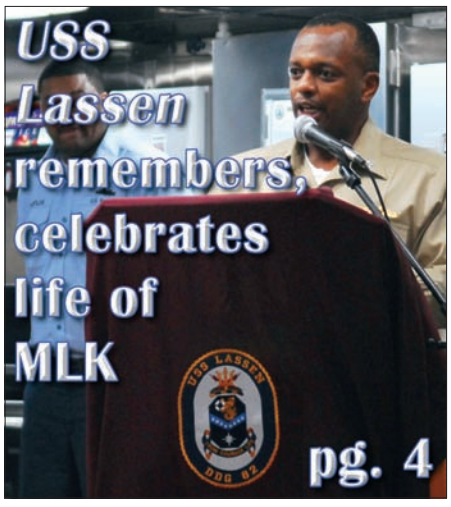

Afloat commands all earn prestigious Golden Anchor

By Commander Destroyer Squadron 15 Public Affairs

For the first time all 13 afloat commands forward-deployed to Yokosuka are recipients of Commander Pacific Fleet (CPF)/ Fleet Forces Command Retention Excellence Award for fiscal year 2008.

> ***"This success reflects the day-to-day commitment of each ship's chief petty officer mess and the sustained leadership of the leadership triad - retention is a team sport."***
>
> ***Commander Destroyer Squadron 15 Capt. Mark Montgomery***

The Retention Excellence Award, also known as the Golden Anchor, is given to commands that meet or exceed re-enlistment and attrition goals in at least two quarters during the fiscal year, earning them honor roll recognition for that particular quarter.

The staffs of Commander Destroyer Squadron (COMDESRON) 15 and Carrier Strike Group 5 as well as the following ships, *USS George Washington* (CVN 73), *USS Blue Ridge* (LCC 19), *USS Cowpens* (CG 63), *USS Shiloh* (CG 67), *USS Curtis Wilbur* (DDG 54), *USS Fitzgerald* (DDG 62), *USS John S. McCain* (DDG 56), *USS Lassen* (DDG 82), *USS McCampbell* (DDG 85), *USS Mustin* (DDG 89) and *USS Stethem* (DDG 63) earned the prestigious award.

"What makes this achievement unique is that we are the only Immediate Superior in Command (ISIC) to achieve 100 percent," said COMDESRON 15 Chief Navy Counselor (SW/AW) Bertha Johnson.

To be considered for the honor roll, a command has to meet certain criteria in three different enlistment zones: A, B and C. To meet zone A, 48 percent of all eligible personnel with no more than six years in the Navy must re-enlist. To meet zone B, 58 percent of Sailors who have between six and 10 years of service have to be retained. Personnel with 10 to 14 years of service make up zone C, which requires 82 percent retention. In addition, the command must maintain an attrition rate of 6.2 percent to be on the honor roll.

"As Sailors become accustomed to the fast paced operational tempo of the forward-deployed naval forces (FDNF), they see the benefits that the military provides and incentives to retain Sailors. We must recognize the hard work and dedication of our career counselors and their retention teams because their hard work made this award possible," said Johnson.

Command Master Chiefs from the staff and seven ships assigned to COMDESRON 15 proudly display their Commander Pacific Fleet/Fleet Forces Command Retention Excellence Award plaques. For the first time, all 13 Yokosuka afloat commands assigned to COMDESRON 15 and Carrier Strike Group 5 are recipients of the 2008 award.

U.S. Navy photo by NCC(SW/AW) Bertha Johnson

Having all 13 afloat commands earn the Golden Anchor is particularly impressive as less than 50 percent of eligible commands are selected. "This success reflects the day-to-day commitment of each ship's chief petty officer mess and the sustained leadership of the leadership triad – retention is a team sport" said Commander Destroyer Squadron 15 Capt. Mark Montgomery.

"The demanding operational environment of the forward-deployed naval forces demands all our 7th Fleet ships to build their crews into strong teams, said Montgomery. "Team bonding has the added benefit of improving retention, decreasing attrition and winning awards like the Golden Anchor. I could not be more proud of my staff and seven destroyers and the other ships of Strike Group 5 that earned this award."

The ships receive plaques from CPF and are authorized to paint their anchors gold for calendar year 2009.

Regional Master Chief Luis Cruz retires after 30 years of service

Story and photo by MC3 Bryan Reckard, Navy Public Affairs Support Element Japan

A standing-room only crowd of U.S. and Japan Maritime Self-Defense Force (JMSDF) chief petty officers (CPOs), officers and Sailors, Japanese and American co-workers and family and friends filled the Fleet Theater Jan. 23 to bid fair winds and following seas to U.S. Naval Forces Japan Regional Master Chief, CNOCM (AW/SW) Luis R. Cruz.

Cruz, the 2008 recipient of the Del Black Award for Deckplate Leadership, was piped ashore to wrap up an extremely challenging and successful 30-year naval career.

Commander U.S. Naval Forces Japan Rear Adm. James D. Kelly, an honorary CPO and guest speaker at the ceremony said Cruz made history in Japan.

"You've got to say that this man is one of those few and one of those proud that have absolutely allowed us to make history - make history here in Japan, make history for the alliance [U.S. Navy and JMSDF] and certainly make history for the United States Navy in Japan," Kelly said.

Cruz's legacy includes streamlining the Homeport Ashore program in Japan, a quality of life improving program that provides a barracks room to single, junior Sailors who serve aboard forward-deployed naval forces ships. His presence on the deckplates and rallying of the CPO Mess helped reduce alcohol-related incidents in the region. Cruz was a champion of strengthening the alliance and improving interoperability between the U.S. Navy and JMSDF, particularly at the CPO level. Perhaps the shining moment of the dynamic duo known as Rear Adm. Kelly and Master Chief Lou Cruz, was their tireless effort to successfully bring *USS George Washington* (CVN 73) to Japan; replacing *USS Kitty Hawk* (CV 63) as the Navy's only permanently forward-deployed aircraft carrier.

CNFJ Regional Master Chief, CNOCM Luis R. Cruz, receives the Legion of Merit award from CNFJ Rear Adm. James D. Kelly during Cruz's retirement ceremony at the Fleet theater Jan. 23. Cruz was piped ashore to wrap up a 30-year naval career that spanned 11 different sea and shore commands.

Cruz attributed his success to those who mentored him along the way, pointing out the ceremony wasn't about him, but the ideal of service.

"To say it has been a challenge or sacrifice would be an understatement," Cruz said, "but I know for a fact, that I would not be standing here today if it were not for the positive influence of so many people, many of which are here today."

While the ceremony celebrated three decades of leadership and service, Cruz turned the spotlight on his family and honored his wife and daughter for their sacrifice and support over the years.

Cruz's daughter Jeannette, the special guest speaker at the ceremony, said that she and her mother appreciate the Navy, but appreciate the work her father has done while serving even more.

"We appreciate everything the Navy has done for us, but even more than that we appreciate the hard work my dad put into the Navy which brought us to where we are today," said Jeannette. "I know he worked hard everyday for his family."

With hardly a dry eye in the house, the obvious trust, fondness and respect shared between Kelly and his master chief and old shipmates crossing oceans to attend the final chapter in Cruz's career, it is evident he worked hard everyday for his Navy family too.