Three decades of experience: Chef's history with the Navy in Yokosuka

Story and photo by Joe Schmitt, CFAY Public Affairs

Chef and cook foreman, Fugio Takahashi, prepared a cheesy hamburger casserole in Commander Fleet Activities Yokosuka's (CFAY) Matthew C. Perry General Mess kitchen September 29. Takahashi has been working in the kitchen of the command's general mess for the last 32 years.

Chef and cook foreman, Fugio Takahashi, cuts a honeydew melon into the shape of a flower in CFAY's general mess the "Jewel of the East" Sept. 29. Takahashi has been working in the base galley since 1979.

When Takahashi started working on CFAY in 1979, it was the same year that Sony released the "Walkman" portable personal stereo in Japan, Michael Jackson released his first big hit album "Off the Wall" and western movie star John Wayne died. He has been working at the mess through all of the '80's, '90's and '00's.

Though he enjoys his profession, it is a career that started by chance.

Through a translator Takahashi said he had grown up near Yokosuka but he never had any real experience with the U.S. Navy. His was interested in becoming a chef. So, he took class at a school in Yokohama to learn how to cook.

After taking the class Takahashi looked for work but saw an add in the local paper to start working as a mechanic on CFAY. Through working as a mechanic on base he found out about an opening at the galley and applied for the position.

Takahashi said that there was a lot less people working on base back then. He remembered that the base galley used to be part of the first floor of the Marines' barracks that are across the street from where the general mess sits today. He said that the first few years he worked as a basic cook but worked his way up through the ranks to become the cook foreman.

Takahashi continues to work and look for ways to improve the dining experience at the general mess. In the last few years he has started recycling pieces of the packaging that protects food when it is shipped. He has shaped, cut, colored and styled Styrofoam, paper, plastic wrap and cardboard into pieces of art that look like the food Takahashi serves. There are sets of sushi, fish, eggs, yakitori and more that look almost real.

Takahashi said the he got the idea from cutting the vegetables and fruits that are usually placed near the serving line as decorations. He said that those only last a few days before they need to be replaced but, the ones he makes now can last forever.

Takahashi said that he wants to people to enjoy looking at the creations and have a better atmosphere while they are eating at the galley.

"It's truly a great asset to have a person with so much experience here at the galley," said Culinary Specialist 2nd Class Krystle Nattia, galley supervisor who works with Takahashi. "Sailors, active duty, we come and go every two or three years but he has been here doing his job and will be after we leave. He's got to love and respect this place, what he does and who he has worked with to keep doing it for so long."

Takahashi said that he plans to retire in a few years to spend time with his family. He said he enjoys surfing and fishing and looks forward to doing more of both with his friends and relatives.

MWR Yokosuka hosts run to promote suicide awareness

By MC3 Andrew Ryan Smith, Navy Public Affairs Support Element, Japan

More than 90 members of the Fleet Activities Yokosuka (CFAY) community participated in a suicide awareness 5k/3k run/walk at Purdy Fitness Center Sept. 28 sponsored by the CFAY's Morale Welfare and Recreation (MWR) fitness department.

Participants were all given free event T-shirts as they signed up for the run. Event coordinators also provided brochures and other educational information to participants.

"We had a very good turnout for the run today," said Donna Carter, fitness event coordinator with MWR fitness. "We feel that it is important to spread the awareness of suicide and the signs that accompany it."

Suicide Prevention is a top priority in the Navy. The Navy has a Suicide Prevention Program that offers basic information Sailors should know through the acronym AID LIFE: Ask, Intervene and Don't keep it a secret; Locate help, Inform the chain of command, Find someone to stay with the Sailor and Expedite help.

Members of the Commander Fleet Activities Yokosuka (CFAY) community participate in the Suicide Awareness 5K/3K walk/run at CFAY's Purdy Gym Sept. 28. The event, sponsored by CFAY's Morale Welfare and Recreation department, aimed to inform the community about suicide prevention.

"Suicides are a growing problem in the military," said Capt. David Owen, CFAY's commanding officer. "It is good to see MWR is helping to spread knowledge about this issue. MWR is very engaged with the community, they organize a wide variety of physical activities and events that inform and provide positive outlets for our Sailors."

Future events sponsored by MWR fitness will include a body builder's competition Oct. 2, at CFAY's Fleet Theater, a Captains' Cup 10k Oct. 8 and a half marathon Oct. 15.

Participants said they were pleased with the efforts of MWR fitness that promote a healthy lifestyle and physical fitness.

"I greatly appreciate all MWR does for everyone at CFAY," said 7th Fleet Command Master Chief Tyler Schoeppey. "Being forward deployed can create many challenges for Sailors and their family members, but MWR continuously creates events which maintain a strong community here in Yokosuka."