Serving Yokosuka for 50 years

Seahawk 海鷹 Umitaka

U.S. Fleet Activities, Yokosuka, Japan

Vol. LX, No. 7 www.cnic.navy.mil/yokosuka Feb. 20, 2009

Nagasaki locals welcome *Blue Ridge*, 7th Fleet Sailors

By MC3 Matthew D. Jordan, *USS Blue Ridge* Public Affairs

USS Blue Ridge (LCC 19) and embarked 7th Fleet staff Sailors engaged the local community Feb. 5-9 through community service programs and cultural exploration while on a routine scheduled port visit of Nagasaki, Japan during their annual spring patrol.

While in Nagasaki, Sailors participated in Morale, Welfare and Recreation (MWR) tours, played games with Japan Maritime Self-Defense Force (JMSDF) members and the Nagasaki "*Jitsunen*" (senior citizens).

Upon arrival to Nagasaki, *Blue Ridge* Commanding Officer Capt. Thom W. Burke held a press conference on the ship's flight deck.

"This is a rare opportunity for my Sailors to see such a historic city. We are very excited to be here in Nagasaki," he said.

Blue Ridge and embarked 7th Fleet staff crew members kicked off their first full day in port, literally, with a soccer match at Ohmura Air Base against JMSDF allies followed by a basketball game the same day. The *Blue Ridge* basketball team won 89-77, and the JMSDF soccer team won 2-1. After the games the teams gathered for a curry and barbeque lunch followed by a gift exchange between the players.

Sailors participated in two community service projects Feb. 7. Sailors volunteered at the Nozomi No Mori Senior Citizens Home and the Myojoo-en Children's Home.

At the Nozomi No Mori Senior Citizens Home, Sailors played games and danced with the residents as the 7th Fleet Dixieland Band played songs including, "*When the Saints Go Marching In*" and "*Bourbon Street Parade*." The band also played "*Funky Liza*" that was translated into Japanese by a 7th Fleet Band musician.

Before departing, Lt. Steven T. Benefield, *Blue Ridge* chaplain, spoke to the home's director and residents.

"Next time the *Blue Ridge* is in Nagasaki, hopefully we can visit you again… thank you for being our friends." Benefield then presented the home's director with a plaque featuring a photo of the ship signed by Burke.

Capt. Thom W. Burke, *USS Blue Rige* (LCC 19) commanding officer is presented flowers on behalf of the Seihi-Kai Home for Senior Citizens after mooring pier side in Nagasaki Feb. 5. *Blue Ridge* is in Nagasaki for a scheduled port visit during their annual spring patrol.

U.S. Navy photo by MC3 Daniel Viramontes

On the same day approximately 30 *Blue Ridge* and 7th Fleet staff Sailors played games and spent time with children at the Myojoo-en Children's Home. The 7th Fleet Band brass quintet played several children's classics. Sailors also played games with the children, including tag, tug-of-war, and "Duck, duck, goose."

Fukuoka, Japan U.S. Consulate Representative Takafumi Sato observed the quality interaction between the children and the Sailors.

"All the children were so excited about having the exchange with the crew members. They were able to have a really good time," said Sato. "The Sailors did a good job. Today was fantastic. We appreciate the Sailors spending time with the children and we hope to have another exchange soon."

As the Sailors left they gave their ball caps to the children as a keepsake to remember them and the time they spent together.

The Yokosuka Intramural Softball Champions, the "Hitmen," comprised of *Blue Ridge* and embarked 7th Fleet staff Sailors, also got a chance to play a friendly game of softball against the "Jitsunen." The Jitsunen, meaning "senior," are a local team with an equally impressive record. They are three-time national winners in Japan and the team consists entirely of men aged 50 and above. *Blue Ridge* lost the first game 14-13 and the second game 19-7.

Sailors also visited sites of historical and cultural importance while on liberty; the Nagasaki Peace Park, the Nagasaki National Peace Memorial Hall and the Lantern Festival.

Fitzgerald visits Otaru

By Lt. j.g George Laue, 7th Fleet Public Affairs

USS Fitzgerald (DDG 62) arrived off the coast of Otaru, Japan Feb. 5 for a scheduled port visit.

During their visit, *Fitzgerald's* crew of 300 Sailors had a chance to meet the citizens of Otaru and experience the world-renowned Susukino Ice Festival held nearby in Odori Park of Japan's fifth-largest city, Sapporo.

The crew also participatd in a series of community service projects, including snow shoveling, a sports day with the children of the Wako Gakuen School and a visit with Japan Maritime Self-Defense Force counterparts at nearby Yoichi Naval Base.

Additionally, *Fitzgerald's* Commanding Officer Cmdr. Richard Dromerhauser attended the opening ceremonies for the ice festival and conducted office calls with local officials to further strengthen the strong ties between the U.S. and Japan.

NFL superstar Franco Harris visits CFAY, talks football with Sailors

Story and photo by Dan Bowen, CFAY Public Affairs

National Football League (NFL) hall-of-famer and Super Bowl IX most valuable player Franco Harris visited Commander Fleet Activities Yokosuka (CFAY) Feb. 12 as part of a tour of Far East U.S. military installations organized by California Sunshine and the Defense Commissary Agency.

The star running back, who won four Super Bowls with the Pittsburgh Steelers in the 1970s, spent his day on board CFAY touring the base and the *USS George Washington* (CVN 73), sitting down for an interview with CFAY Channel 12 as well as meeting and greeting Sailors and family members at an autograph session at the commissary.

The tour, sponsored by California Sunshine - a supplier of eggs and milk to the commissary, enabled Harris to return to the Far East after first visiting three decades ago. “I was here in the ‘70s when I was playing. [I] came over here and did a tour, here in Japan and Korea,” said Harris. “Loved it then and I love it now.”

Harris’s love was reciprocated by Steeler Nation residents of CFAY. A line of fans, stretching from the dairy section, down the frozen foods freezers and all the way up the bread aisle, waited happily for their chance to sit down with the NFL legend. Commissary Store Director Totolua Ripley was very pleased with the reaction to Harris’s visit. “More than 300 people showed up,” said Ripley. “It was a great success; it was a great response from the community.”

Storekeeper 1st Class Tim Greene had a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity to talk football with Harris while conducting an interview with him for the Yokosuka Report. A die-hard Steelers fan, Greene was especially enthusiastic about the chance to meet and interview Harris. “I grew up and was raised a Pittsburgh Steelers fan. If it wasn’t black and gold in my house then something was wrong,” he said.

During the interview, Harris spoke about his career, his tour of the region, his pride in being a part of the Steeler football tradition and his respect for those who serve in the armed forces. “I tell people that I’ve been on some great teams, played against a lot of great teams, but I know the greatest team in the world is our armed forces. I know that,” said Harris.

NFL Hall of Fame running back and Pittsburgh Steelers legend Franco Harris autographs a photo and shares a laugh with one of the more than 300 fans who attended the autograph session held at the commissary Feb. 12.