USS Blue Ridge finalist for 2010 Capt. Edward F. Ney award

Story and photo by MC2(AW) Cynthia Griggs, *USS Blue Ridge* Public Affairs

Food service inspectors came aboard *USS Blue Ridge* (LCC 19) Dec. 8 to evaluate the ship for the 2010 Capt. Edward F. Ney Award for Food Service Excellence in the large afloat ship category.

(Right) CSCM Michael Carter, an inspector for the Capt. Edward F. Ney Award for Food Service Excellence, speaks to *USS Blue Ridge* (LCC 19) culinary specialists Dec. 8. *Blue Ridge* is a finalist for the award in the large afloat ship category, competing against the amphibious assault ship *USS Wasp* (LHD 1).

Blue Ridge, which represents the U.S. Pacific Fleet, is competing against the amphibious assault ship *USS Wasp* (LHD 1) for the Ney honor.

"This is just regular routine for us," said Culinary Specialist 1st Class (SW/AW) Egbert San Pedro, mess deck master-at-arms. "It's the *Blue Ridge* standard. Of course there are a few minor tweaks, but there's no doubt in my mind we're prepared and will not fail. We execute, execute, execute every day."

Blue Ridge has won the Ney award twice in its history and is looking to win it for the second time in three years, having won it in 2008.

Senior Chief Culinary Specialist (SW/AW) Michael Morgan, *Blue Ridge* assistant food service officer, said the food service division has been working countless hours since September, with additional assistance from the engineering, medical, administration, supply and mass communication services departments to prepare for the inspection.

"We are always working to be 'Ney ready' every day," Morgan said. "The tempo and pace we move at is a little higher since we would love to bring home the trophy again, but our preparation is the same."

Culinary Specialist Seaman Anthony Hubbard, a member of the S-2 division, said working the long hours has been very stressful, but ultimately worth it.

"We had to make a lot of sacrifices, especially in the last week leading up to this, but it will be worth it in the end," Hubbard said. "I am very happy and proud to be part of something this big."

Blue Ridge and *Wasp* beat out 178 ships in the Pacific Fleet to become finalists for this year's competition. Morgan said being a finalist is significant in itself because it is the highest honor given in the Navy for food service.

"It's great to be able to say you served on the finest ship in the fleet, eating the best that food service has to offer," Morgan said. "It's the best morale booster for all."

The Ney Award winners will be announced February 2010, and a representative will be flown out to Reno, Nev., in April. A win would also mean an opportunity for a few culinary specialists from the ship to attend advanced culinary training.

The Ney award was established in 1958 by the Secretary of the Navy and the International Food Service Executive Association, and recognizes overall food service excellence and sets up guidelines to become a legendary five-star galley.

SHAREM exercise training opportunity for U.S. Navy, JMSDF Sailors

Story and photo by MC2 Byron C. Linder, NPASE Japan

Sailors aboard the forward-deployed guided-missile destroyer *USS Fitzgerald* (DDG 62) completed the Ship Anti-Submarine Warfare Readiness and Evaluation Measurement (SHAREM) 163 exercise Dec. 7, off the coast of Okinawa, Japan.

Fitzgerald; joined by Destroyer Squadron (DESRON) 15 guided-missile destroyers *USS Curtis Wilbur* (DDG 54) and *USS Lassen* (DDG 82); Seawolf class submarine *USS Connecticut* (SSN 22); Japan Maritime Self-Defense Force (JMSDF) destroyers *JDS Inazuma* (DD 105), *JDS Samidare* (DD 106) and *JDS Sazanami* (DD 113); and Oyashio submarine *SS600 Mochishio*; used the bilateral exercise to focus on developing and evaluating antisubmarine warfare (ASW) tactics and watch stander proficiency, and build on the relationship between the JMSDF and the United States.

Chief Sonar Technician-Surface (SW/IUSS) Patrick Bright, *Fitzgerald* Combat Systems Anti-Submarine Warefare (CA) Division leading chief petty officer, explained the many opportunities the exercise provided.

"It's an ASW intensive exercise," Bright said. "It gives us the opportunity to test tactics and plans, and get a sample of the environment we can conduct ASW tracking exercises in, so we can get a good picture of what's going on."

The exercise also provided the opportunity for the U.S. Navy and JMSDF to observe and learn about the two services' ASW methods. Three JMSDF sailors from JDS Atago (DDG 177) boarded Fitzgerald to cross-train with *Fitzgerald* Sailors.

JMSDF Petty Officer 2nd Class Yukihiro Nakaume, a sonarman, expressed his appreciation to see the exercise from a different perspective.

"It is a great honor to be aboard. I have never been on a United States ship, and it's very interesting for me. The crew is very friendly and kind," Nakaume said. "Our ships have similar systems, but we have different tactics and watch rotations. I would like to learn how to operate many different sonar systems."

Ensign Matthew Hottle, a Seattle native and *Fitzgerald* antisubmarine warfare officer, explained the importance of being able to work with real targets and with the JMSDF.

"These events are great training for our people. There's so much we don't get to do on a regular basis, and this is the one exercise that's entirely focused on ASW, and provides us with a lot of rare opportunities," said Hottle. "It's always great to work with the Japanese, and the riders have been very helpful when it comes to communicating and learning about the way they do business."

JMSDF Petty Officer 2nd Class Yukihiro Nakaume boards a rigid hull inflatable boat from guided-missile destroyer *USS Fitzgerald* (DDG 62) off the coast of Okinawa, Japan while participating in the ASW cross-training exercise SHAREM 163 Dec. 7.