Fleet Activities, Yokosuka, Japan

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Obon season celebrated during Negishi *Bon Odori* Festival

Story and photo by Dan Bowen, CFAY Public Affairs

Commander Fleet Activities Yokosuka (CFAY), Negishi Housing Detachment celebrated the *Obon* season with their 45th annual *Bon Odori* Festival held in the parking lots adjacent to the community center Aug. 21.

The event included entertainment by the 7th Fleet Band and other musical acts as well as a variety of traditional Japanese entertainers, including *Taiko* drummers and a *shishimai* (lion dance) performance.

The hot summer day provided the more than 3,300 CFAY and local Yokohama residents the opportunity to get together and share each other's cultures. Guest speakers for the event included CFAY Commanding Officer Capt. David Owen and Naka Ward Director General Naoshi Nakagami.

"Although this is my first time to attend this event, I sincerely would like to thank you all for your strong support and mutual cooperation in making it possible for this event to continue for many years," said Owen. "I strongly believe that our community relationship here in Yokohama is very solid and is represented by the various joint community activities that have taken place. In October, we will be supporting the Hello Yokohama festival, the Yokohama Cemetery clean-up program, the Halloween event and many more."

The festival was especially meaningful for CMDCM Rachel Costello, *USS Mustin* (DDG 89) command master chief. *Mustin* chiefs sold smoothies all day from their booth at the festival to raise funds for the Khaki Ball and other activities the crew conducts throughout the year. Costello, who was born and raised in Kobe city, relished the chance to show the chief inductees and their sponsors the festival and interact with Negishi residents.

(Left) Yamate Deputy Police Chief Hiroshi Kodaira, President of AIU AHL Co. in Zushi, Kazuko Kosugi, who graciously donated the sake barrel for the event, CFAY Commanding Officer Capt. David Owen and Negishi Housing Detachment Officer in Charge Lt. Cmdr. Rome de las Alas perform the traditional breaking of the sake barrel to kick off the 45th annual Negishi *Bon Odori* Festival Aug. 21.

"I wanted our selectees to see the *Bon Odori* because it is not really a tradition back in Yokosuka," said Costello. "Culture exchange here is wonderful; I was born and raised in Japan. For me seeing the *Bon Odori* was part of my upbringing, so for me to see it and to have them see it is very meaningful especially with the [50th] anniversary of the United States-Japan Security Alliance."

Obon is one of Japan's three major holiday seasons. Throughout the country, *Obon* is celebrated at different times and in slightly different ways depending on the region. The purpose, however, is the same wherever you go. It is a time to remember and honor one's ancestors whose spirits are believed to return to this world to visit their relatives. Traditionally, lanterns are hung in front of houses to guide the spirits home, *obon* dances, or *bon odori*, are performed, and offerings of the deceased's favorite foods are made at grave sites and house alters. At the end of *Obon*, floating lanterns are put into rivers, lakes and the ocean to help guide the spirits back to the spirit world.

For those in the community that missed the *Bon Odori* Festival, there will be plenty of opportunities to join in intercultural activities. Throughout the year, CFAY hosts several events where Japanese and American residents have the chance to enjoy engaging each other in cultural exchange. The next big cultural event is the *Mikoshi* Parade, which will be held Sept. 19. For more information on base events, pick up the Morale, Welfare and Recreation (MWR) magazine, "Focus."

George Washington offers ship tours during Singapore port visit

By MC3 Charles Oki, *USS George Washington* Public Affairs

Sailors from *USS George Washington* (CVN 73) welcomed aboard Singapore residents for public tours of the aircraft carrier Aug. 14 as part of the ship's port visit to Singapore.

The tours provided people a chance to experience a small portion of life aboard an aircraft carrier.

Among the visitors were local families and students, youths from the Jamiya Children's Home, members of the Navy League, the Singapore military and other various organizations.

"It's definitely been a great experience," said Cmdr. Paul Haycock, a British Royal navy liaison officer living in Singapore. "The entire tour has been extremely well organized, and we learned a lot from the Sailors giving the tours."

"I really enjoyed seeing all the jets and learning about how they shoot off the ship," said Haycock's son, Matthew.

Of the tour groups visiting the ship, the deepest impression might have been for the children of the Jamiyah Children's Home. The home hosts children, age 2-19, who have lost their parents or are from unstable families.

"I think that this is a great experience for the kids," said Md Irwan Masop, senior welfare officer of the Jamiyah Children's Home. "I feel that this is a great learning experience, and it gives them a great chance to see what the U.S. military is like. We were invited to visit an aircraft carrier six years ago, and we were happy to give the children the opportunity again."

The tour groups visited several spaces on the ship, including the hangar bay, flight deck and navigation bridge where children got the chance to sit in the captain's chair.

"I really enjoyed being able to see and learn how the jets take off and land on the ship," said 15-year-old Muhammed Farhan. "I think this might be a once in a lifetime experience, and I've enjoyed seeing things in real life that I'd only seen on TV. I hope I get the chance to see a ship like this again."

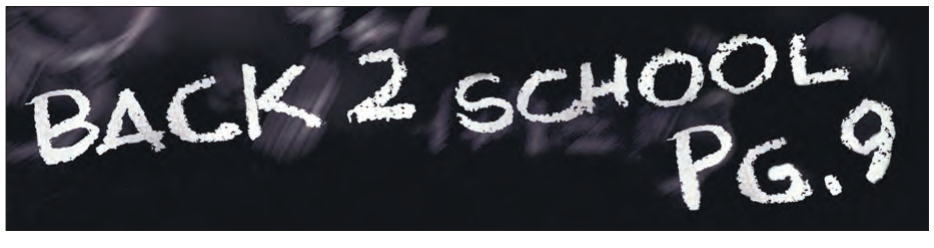
The tours also provided Sailors the opportunity to meet with the citizens of Singapore.

"First and foremost we're Sailors, but a close second is that we are ambassadors,"

MC2 Carlos Gomez explains the functions of the tail hook on an F/A-18C Hornet aboard the aircraft carrier *USS George Washington* (CVN 73) to the children and staff of the Jamiyah Children's Home during a tour as part of the ship's port visit to Singapore Aug. 14.

said Boatswain's Mate Seaman (SW) Latoya Towns, from Orlando, Fla., and a member of *George Washington* Deck Department. "I really enjoyed showing the people what we do because not a lot people in the United States even get to see what we do so showing someone who knows nothing about us really made it a great time."

INSIDE

USS Blue Ridge arrives in Busan, Republic of Korea

***USS Blue Ridge* (LCC 19) arrived in Busan, Republic of Korea, Aug. 13, in support of Commander U.S. 7th Fleet participation in the exercise Ulchi Freedom Gold. Pg. 4**