Serving Yokosuka for 50 years

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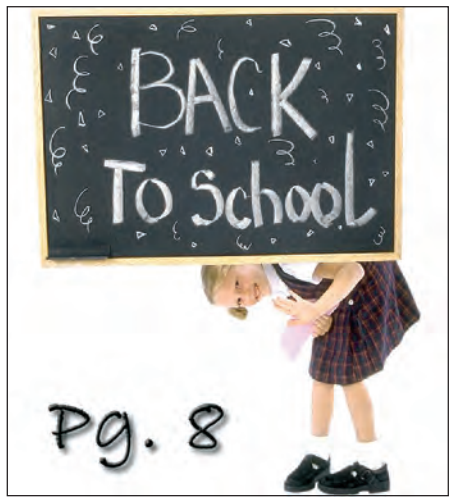

Nimitz Sailors carry on admiral's legacy; give back to community

Story and photo by Ben Avey, CFAY Public Affairs

While on a port visit to Commander Fleet Activities Yokosuka (CFAY), 120 Sailors from USS Nimitz (CVN 68), continued the work of the namesake of the ship, Fleet Adm. Chester Nimitz, when they crossed Green Bay to spend a day repainting the Japanese museum ship *Mikasa* Aug. 25.

"The *Nimitz* Sailors are excited, enthusiastic and motivated," said project coordinator and ship Chaplain Lt. Cmdr. Mary Zepeda. "They are excited about the special connection that we have, as *USS Nimitz* Sailors, with the *Mikasa* ship museum, being that Adm. Chester Nimitz helped to restore the *Mikasa*."

Nimitz, who was honorary president of the Naval Historical Foundation and served for eight years as a regent of the University of California after retiring from the Navy, played a crucial role in raising money to help restore *Mikasa*, which served as Japanese Adm. Heihachiro Togo's flagship during the Battle of Tsushima Straits in the Russo-Japanese War. Nimitz's work to restore *Mikasa* was considered a major step in continuing to build the U.S. - Japan Alliance in the years following the conclusion of World War II.

However, the current community relations project was fueled by more than a desire to honor the work of the past, it was an example of the current positive relationship the Navy has with the community of Yokosuka.

"We are here today to give back to the Yokosuka community as an expression of thanks and goodwill for the warm welcome we have received," said Zepeda.

Prompted by an invitation from the *Mikasa* Preservation Society, the Sailors aboard *Nimitz* jumped at the chance to help the community. Offering to forgo a day of leave, more than 300 Sailors volunteered to fill the 120 available positions on the project to repaint the exterior of the entire ship.

"It seems like we're serving a purpose," said project volunteer Machinist's Mate Fireman Chelsea McCray. "To hear what this ship means to the U.S. Navy and what it means to the world, it kind of makes you stand proud."

Bringing a festive ambiance to *Mikasa* Park during the project, nine members of the U.S. 7th Fleet Brass Band were on hand to provide entertainment with traditional New Orleans style jazz music.

Prior to the start of the project, volunteers were treated to tours of *Mikasa* and a brief lesson on its history. Preserved in a permanent berth in *Mikasa* Park, *Mikasa* is one of the last remaining pre-dreadnought class battleships in existence. The deck and cabins of the museum ship are open to the public for an admission fee. Admission to *Mikasa* Park is free.

Nimitz, home ported in San Diego, Calif., made a port visit to Yokosuka Aug. 24-28 while on a Western Pacific deployment.

Prompted by an invitation from the *Mikasa* Preservation Society, Sailors from *USS Nimitz* (CVN 68) paint the 6-inch guns on the Yokosuka museum ship *Mikasa* during a community relations project Aug. 25 while on a port visit to CFAY.

Chief selects build mental, physical mettle with Mount Fuji climb

Story and photo by MC2(SW) Gabriel S. Weber, Navy Public Affairs Support Element Japan

Chief petty officers (CPO) and CPO selectees from Yokosuka scaled Mount Fuji Aug. 24 in an effort to test their mental and physical mettle and build camaraderie along the trail.

The annual climb to the 12,388-foot summit of the tallest mountain in Japan is part of CPO induction season for selectees in the region and is designed to teach teamwork and challenge the participants, according to Chief Information Systems Technician (SW/DV) Kimberly Mickna, one of the event's coordinators.

"It's about helping each other up the mountain" she said. "You're working together to accomplish the mission of reaching the top, but it's important to know when you've reached your individual limits. You're pushing yourself past the point of wanting to quit, but you also need to know when to ask for help."

"There's a lesson to be learned from every evolution during the induction process," said Master Chief (SW) Ed Purdy, command master chief of Navy Information Operations Command in Yokosuka. "The climb up Mount Fuji is no different; there are times when you want to stop, but you band together with your fellow chiefs to accomplish the task."

Like every physical training element of the CPO induction process, tackling one of Japan's treasured landmarks also provides a valuable opportunity for CPOs to test and improve the fitness of selectees.

"Physical and mental toughness is an important part of being a chief," said Senior Chief Mass Communication Specialist (SW/AW) Mike Raney, a veteran of Mount Fuji climbs and races. "These Sailors are supposed to set the example for the Sailors they'll be charged with leading, so this climb is a great opportunity for us to push them physically and mentally beyond what they think they can do. I think tackling a task as daunting as this mountain is also a good lesson in both humility and self-confidence; two good traits of a CPO."

Chief petty officer (CPO) selectees pass through the final *torii* or gate to reach the 12,388-foot summit of Mount Fuji Aug. 24. The climb is an annual tradition for CPO selectees and sponsors from Yokosuka and around Japan as part of CPO induction season.

Throughout the induction process, each CPO selectee is designated a sponsor who is already a member of the Chief's Mess. For the sponsors, events like the Mount Fuji climb provide opportunities to mentor the selectees, but also to reflect on their own responsibilities and experiences as chiefs.

"For those of us who are already chiefs, getting involved in the induction process reminds us of what it means to be a chief petty officer and reinforces the values that are part of being a chief," said Purdy. "It relights the fire inside us - it charges us up."

"I thought the climb was challenging, but it taught us that we are more capable than we think we are" said Intelligence Specialist 1st Class (SW) Lakaysha Jones, a CPO selectee. "It taught us teamwork. Having other people to walk with and supporting each other motivated us and helped us get to the top."