An oath of honor, courage, commitment made at 12,400 feet

Story and photo by MC1(SW/AW) N. Ross Taylor, Navy Public Affairs Support Element Japan

After nearly two decades of service to his country, a nearly 12,400 foot mountain of volcanic rock stood between Chief Engineman (SW) David Young, assigned to Space and Naval Warfare Systems Center, Western Pacific, and his goal to pledge an ongoing commitment to the U.S. Navy.

On July 30, the Fort Pierce, Fla. native tackled the daunting task of reaching the summit of Mount Fuji, Japan's tallest peak, rededicating himself to the oath of defending America and the freedoms of its people.

"After 17 years of naval service, this could potentially be my last reenlistment before I retire," Young said. "I wanted to make it as much of a memorable experience as I could."

Young, the son of a retired master chief petty officer, says that climbing to the top of Mount Fuji and reenlisting there was an opportunity he could not pass on and is a milestone that will be etched in his memory forever.

"I take my dedication to naval service seriously and with so much pride and honor," he said. "To have an opportunity to perform this ceremony at the final *Torii* (gate) with friends and coworkers and amongst the thousands of Japanese citizens also making the incredible hike will be something I will never forget."

Fujiyama, as the mountain is called by Japanese, is a national treasure and its name implies "everlasting life." According to Buddhist tradition, Fuji rose from the earth in 286 B.C. after an earthquake that also created Lake Biwa, the nation's largest lake. Some believe the mountain itself is a sacred being, possessing a soul, while others believe it to be a gateway to another world.

(Third from right) ENC David Young, from Fort Pierce, Fla., assigned to Space and Naval Warfare Systems Center Western Pacific, poses for a picture with friends and coworkers after reenlisting at the *Torii* (gate) located at the summit of Mount Fuji July 30. A 17-year veteran, Young was joined by his friends and coworkers who made the seven-hour hike alongside him. Fuji stands at nearly 12,400 feet above sea level and is located 60 miles southwest of Tokyo.

Unlike some sacred mountains, it is not considered sacrilegious to climb Mount Fuji - in fact, Japanese say to ascend to the summit is a journey undertaken to gain divine aid or to demonstrate devotion.

For Young, the colossal undertaking was one that would prove to not only be physically demanding but also a true test of will.

"It was not until we reached the 8th station, a little more than half way, when the exhaustion and mental fatigue really set in," he said. "Each time the clouds cleared, I looked up toward the sky and the seemingly impossible-to-reach summit and it appeared no closer than when I started. It was then, I knew that I just had to take it in steps and focus on the goal and the reward of making it to the top."

When he reached his goal, Young was filled with elation and a bit of heartache.

"My first emotion was sadness, as my wife and best friend April, was not with me. She has been the backbone of our family and a significant factor in any step that I take in the Navy. It was a little disheartening for me to not have her with me at such a crucial and emotional point in my life and career," he explained.

"She is a part of every decision I make and I spoke to her a few times along the way," he said, sighing as his eyes began to swell. "At one point when I was really struggling, I put my rain gear on and in my poncho pocket I found a note that said, 'Honey, I love you. Keep going strong, I am really proud of you.' That helped." Young said that aside from missing his wife as he finally reached his goal, there was a moment when he was filled with an absolute sense of accomplishment as he saw the final *Torii* more than 12,000 feet above sea level.

"With the intense exhaustion that I had experienced along the climb and what it meant to be re-enlisting at the summit of one of the Far East's tallest peaks, I was overcome with joy," he said.

(Right) ENC David Young joins his reenlisting officer, Cmdr. Andrew Gibbons, under the picturesque *Torii* – the final gateway to Mount Fuji's breathtaking summit, to take the oath of enlistment for the fourth time in his career July 30.

After a moment of taking in his accomplishment, Young joined his reenlisting officer, Cmdr. Andrew Gibbons, under the picturesque *Torii* – the final gateway to Fujiyama's breathtaking summit, to take the oath of enlistment for the fourth time in his career.

"This was the hardest thing I have ever done in my life," Young said. "The memory of this almost seven-hour trek to rededicate my service to my country is something I will treasure for a lifetime."

Career Counselor Symposium helps prepare Sailors for future

Story and photo by MC3 Andrew Ryan Smith, Navy Public Affairs Support Element Japan

Sailors at Commander Fleet Activities Yokosuka (CFAY) attended the Career Counselor Symposium Aug. 5-6 to better prepare themselves and those they advise for the competitive environment of the modern Navy.

More than 75 Sailors from commands throughout Navy Region Japan attended the mini-conference, which covered force shaping tools, detailing, career development tools and education opportunities.

"Events like this are important for getting career information out to our Sailors, so they have the most current information available to them," said CFAY Command Master Chief Gregory Vidaurri.

Many of the symposium attendees were not rated Navy Counselors, but command appointed collateral duty counselors who work to help out fellow Sailors by answering their career-related questions and in some cases, pointing them in the right direction.

"A lot of junior Sailors do not take the time to take their career in their own hands because of all the work and knowledge required to do so, that is why career counselors are so important," said Fire Controlman 2nd Class Foushee Roosevelt, a divisional counselor assigned to *USS Shiloh* (CG 67). "The presentation today gave me a better perspective of what should go on an evaluation. They broke everything down and laid out what you need for success."

The objective of presenters was to educate Sailors about career options and the benefits of staying active duty.

"The Navy is always changing and in order to keep up with these changes, Sailors need to be aware of new regulations and different programs that are available that could effect their careers; this symposium is going to help drive them in the right direction," said Vidaurri.

(Right) Commander U.S. Naval Forces Japan Command Career Counselor NCCS Johannes Gonzalez, gives a presentation during the Commander Fleet Activities Yokosuka Career Counselor Symposium Aug. 6. The symposium is designed to inform area Sailors, counselors and leaders about career options and requirements.