USS George Washington holds frocking ceremony

Stor and photos by MC2 Alexander W. Cabrall,
***USS George Washington* Public Affairs**

The nuclear-powered aircraft carrier *USS George Washington* (CVN 73) conducted a frocking ceremony held in the ship's hangar bay Dec. 9.

A total of 376 *George Washington* Sailors were promoted to the ranks of third, second and first class petty officer during the ceremony.

While standing before the entire ship's crew with a giant American flag serving as a patriotic backdrop, *George Washington*'s Executive Officer Capt. Kenneth Reynard presented a certificate and congratulated each newly frocked Sailor for their achievement.

"Never in a million years did I think I would pick up second class," said Personnel Specialist 2nd Class Vanessa Ortiz, who works in *George Washington*'s personnel office. "It took me at least four tries to make petty officer 3rd class."

In the Navy, a frocked Sailor is authorized to wear the rank of the next higher pay grade, yet does not receive pay for that rank until their official date of promotion, which happens in three increments throughout the fiscal year.

"Wearing a new uniform comes with greater responsibilities and higher expectations," said Ortiz. "Keep on studying, don't sell yourself short, and find a mentor that will push you."

George Washington uses a command program known as 'School of the Ship', lead by the ship's chiefs. The chiefs conduct training on materials and information from the Sailor's advancement bibliographies specific to their rate.

"School of the Ship helped a lot," said newly frocked Aviation Boatswains Mate (Fuel) 3rd Class (AW) Zaira Liraanaya, who works in *George Washington*'s Air Department. "My first class petty officers and fellow boatswains helped motivate me along the way."

George Washington advanced 25 percent more Sailors in 2011 than 2010, partially thanks to programs like School of the Ship. The number of advancements across the fleet also increased; an average of 20.8 percent this cycle versus 18.6 percent last year.

The next advancement cycle is scheduled for March 2012.

Sailors stand in formation during a frocking ceremony in the hangar bay onboard the nuclear-powered aircraft carrier *USS George Washington* (CVN 73) Dec. 9. *George Washington* frocked 376 Sailors to the next higher paygrade following the September 2011 exam, a 25 percent increase from 2010.

Master chief petty officer of the Navy sends holiday message

From MCPON (SS/SW) Rick D. West

WASHINGTON (NNS) – Master Chief Petty Officer of the Navy (MCPON)(SS/SW) Rick D. West released the following holiday message to the Fleet Dec. 12.

"Shipmates and Navy families,

"Can you believe another year is almost over? It's amazing how quickly time passes when you're staying busy! It seems we were kicking off 2011 just yesterday and here we are, about to usher in 2012.

"With the traditional festivities of December upon us, I want to wish you all the happiest possible holidays, and to say thank you for the outstanding service and support you provide to our Navy and nation. I continue to be humbled by your selfless dedication and the outstanding job you do every day around the globe.

"We faced some challenges this year and will continue to do so for the foreseeable future, but we will get through them together as we have done for the past 236 years.

"The Navy, after all, is a team sport and in 2011, we enjoyed many operational successes together that are worth celebrating. They are your legacy ... the deployments, the steady presence in difficult places, the helping hand when natural disasters left vulnerable people in their wake.

"You and your Shipmates worked hard and sacrificed often. As you visit with loved ones, scour the shopping malls, or hit the ski slopes during these joyous weeks, take a moment to reflect on the special appreciation America has for you and your family.

"Be proud of your accomplishments, and share sea stories with moms, dads, siblings, aunts, uncles, and old buddies.

"Most of all, be safe and enjoy the holiday season to its fullest.

"Celebrate responsibly: You are important to our Navy family and we need every one of you to return recharged for the next adventure.

"Don't let bad judgment ruin the New Year or your life. Look out for each other, and keep an eye on your Shipmates who may be having a difficult time.

"It's also important that we remember the thousands of our Shipmates who are deployed, on station around the world vigilantly keeping the watch, ready to answer our nation's call.They are there ensuring we have this chance to deck the halls, gather around family dinner tables, and belt out Auld Lang Syne in a storm of confetti.

"Thank you again for serving our great Navy and preserving our nation's freedom. Sailors and families, you are truly among this country's greatest gifts.

"Happy holidays Shipmates and Hooyah!

"Very Respectfully, MCPON"

During a recent visit to Yokosuka October 2011, Master Chief Petty Officer of the Navy (MCPON) Rick D. West finishes a physical training run with chief petty officers (CPO) and first class petty officers at Commander Fleet Activities Yokosuka.
U.S. Navy photo by MC2 Kenneth R. Hendrix