



Memorial Day ceremony honors fallen service members

Story by Ben Avey, CFAY Public Affairs

Memorial Day is more than just another day off; it is a day of honor, a day of thought and a day to remember those who gave all in the service of their country.

That was the theme of the annual Memorial Day ceremony aboard Commander Fleet Activities Yokosuka (CFAY) May 25.

Naval Facilities Engineering Command Far East Senior Chief Construction Electrician Cajan Nelms (SCW), who was the event coordinator, arranged the

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*Commander Fleet Activities Yokosuka
Commanding Officer Capt. Daniel L. Weed*

ceremony to bring respect and dignity to those they honored and help people understand the magnitude of the holiday.

"I'm standing here today because of the people who have passed before me," said Nelms. "I want [guests] to come here and think about what Memorial Day means to them and why they're here."

CFAY Commanding Officer Capt. Daniel Weed, who attended the ceremony as the guest speaker, shared his thoughts on the purpose of the ceremony

during his remarks.

"We're here today, to reflect on a somber and sacred part of our American history. Rendering honor to those who came before us and selflessly laid down their lives for our country," said Weed.

In addition to remarks by Weed, the ceremony, which was held at the Oneida Monument in Kosano Park, was a solemn event and included traditional military Memorial Day honors.

Nelms read aloud a poem titled "Freedom Is Not Free" by Kelly Strong.

Marines from the U.S. 7th Fleet, Fleet Antiterrorism Security Team (FAST) laid a wreath at the monument during a wreath laying ceremony and rang a ceremonial bell during a two-bell ceremony in honor of the fallen.

Then CFAY Chaplain Lt. William Stewart offered prayers which touched the hearts of everyone in attendance.

"Every time we get the opportunity to honor those who came before us, I know Marines always jump at the chance," said Marine Corps Sgt. Daniel Reich, 7th Fleet FAST Headquarters Company, who participated in the event.

"It made me feel unbelievable. I couldn't ask for anything better," Reich said.

Concluding the ceremony was the playing of "Taps" by a lone U.S. 7th Fleet Band bugler.

There are many ways to celebrate Memorial Day, which is considered by some to coincide with the unofficial start of the summer season, such as barbecues, family outings, ceremonies or parades, and there is no "right way" to mark the occasion.

Aboard CFAY, however, the day was celebrated with quiet reflection and joyous remembrance.



Sgt. Daniel Reich, from 7th Fleet FAST Headquarters Company, lays a ceremonial wreath during a Memorial Day ceremony held at the Oneida Memorial on Commander Fleet Activities Yokosuka May 25.

Photo by MC3 Charles Oki

Local Sailors, civilians receive awards for good deeds

Story and photo by Mark Elrod, CFAY Public Affairs

The Zenkokai Association of Japan recently recognized local service members, civilians, and organizations, along with Japanese nationals, during a commendation ceremony held at the Meiji-Jingu Shrine in Tokyo May 23.

The Zenkokai Association consists of many members who do volunteer activities. The organization has been giving awards and recognizing those who have been doing volunteer activities and good deeds for many years, according to Zenkokai Association Executive Director Tsutomu Kojima.

This is the 59th year that the association has held the biannual ceremonies.

In 1955 the award was opened to honor foreigners who contribute to the improvement of life in Japan.

Among the 12 awardees representing the military, four were Navy, four were Air Force and four were civilian.

"I'm very, very honored, said Information Systems Technician Seaman Justin Alred, who is stationed at Misawa Air Base and was accepting an award on behalf of the Misawa Sailors of Security Hill association. "We don't do it for the award. We do it because we care."

"I just think, for what I've gotten in my life, I want to give back just as much, or even more," Alred continued. "I'm always trying to help other people and I think

everyone should have that kind of mindset."

Because cultural sensitivities in Japan can sometimes lead people to assumptions, keeping a helpful attitude and engaging in the local community can be beneficial.

"One thing of the things that I dislike that happens a lot here is a few bad apples make

it bad for the service members in Japan," said Lt. Doug Szwarc, from Submarine Group 7.

Szwarc accepted an award on behalf of himself and his shipmates who climbed Mt. Fuji four times in one day and raised \$11,000. The money was divided and donated to the Shunkou-Gakuen Orphanage in Yokosuka and the South Carolina Guardian Ad Litem program for abused and neglected children.

"There are over 25,000 or so of us and just a few who make the papers for doing less than smart things that gives a bad stereotype to the rest of us," said Szwarc. "However, we're the same as the people of Japan. We just want to live our lives and have a good life with our families. So, doing good deeds like this shows that we have the same common values."

During the ceremony, the awardees received a congratulatory address from

Japan Minister of State for Gender Equality and Social Affairs Yuko Obuchi.

After receiving their awards, all in attendance were treated to music by an elementary school brass band, a Zenkokai song and a magic show.



Sailors and civilians accepted Zenkokai, or good deeds, association of Japan awards during a ceremony held at the Meiji-Jingu Shrine in Tokyo May 23. The association has been giving awards those who have been doing good deeds with biannual ceremonies for 59 years.