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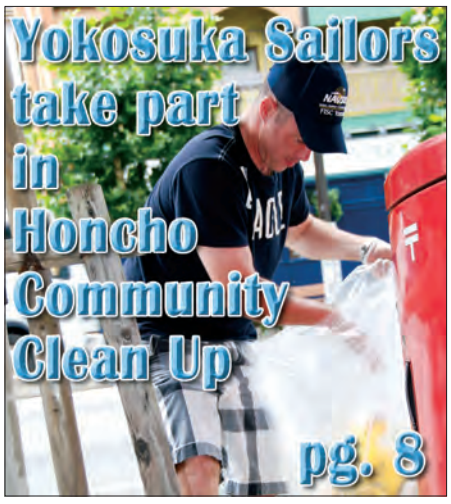

Nearly 62,000 visitors enjoy fun, fireworks during Friendship Day

By Ben Avey, CFAY Public Affairs

Although early weather predictions threatened rain, sunny skies greeted nearly 62,000 visitors aboard Commander Fleet Activities Yokosuka (CFAY) for the celebration of the annual Navy Friendship Day Aug. 1.

"Thanks to your presence here today, you have brought great weather and even more fun to a wonderful Friendship Day event," said CFAY Commanding Officer Capt. Daniel Weed in a speech welcoming visitors on base.

Friendship Day, which has been a Yokosuka tradition for 33 years, is held each summer to celebrate the unique and beneficial relationship that has existed between U.S. Navy personnel and the citizens of Yokosuka since 1946.

Yokosuka city Mayor Yuto Yoshida, who spoke at the official event ceremony, shared his vision for the future of the U.S. - Japan alliance in Yokosuka.

"As good neighbors, who live in the same community, let us all respect and understand each other and build a loving hometown," said Yoshida. "We should continue to interact and understand each other by participating in good, friendly events like today."

Personal interaction and mutual understanding was the overriding theme of the event as gates were pulled back and visitors were allowed to witness the world where U.S. Navy service members and their families work and live.

"We want to foster the relationship between the U.S. Forces and our Japanese neighbors," said Defense Distribution Depot Yokosuka Japan Commanding Officer Cmdr. Paul Bourgeois, who was selling shaved ice at a command sponsored booth. "It's a great opportunity [for service members] to get out there and meet the folks who come on the base and show them what life is like on the other side of the fence."

Nearly 62,000 visitors enjoyed food, fun and fireworks during the 33rd annual Navy Friendship Day aboard CFAY Aug. 1. Friendship Day is held each summer to celebrate the unique and beneficial relationship that has existed between U.S. Navy personnel and the citizens of Yokosuka since 1946.

Photo by John Sullivan

Others view the event as an opportunity for simple fun and great memories.

"I'm out mingling with the Japanese community, having as much fun as they are," said former *USS Blue Ridge* Sailor and 20 year resident of Japan Henry Grays. "I hope [Japanese visitors] come down and see we are people just like they are and we're just as curious about the Japanese culture as they are about ours."

Visitors were treated to American style food and games, watched or participated in cultural shows and dances and were able to take home a little piece of "Americana" through the purchase of Navy souvenirs.

Tours of American and Japanese ships were a major highlight of the day as thousands lined the pier waiting to go aboard *USS Blue Ridge* (LCC 19), *USS Curtis Wilbur* (DDG 54) and Japan Maritime Self-Defense Force (JMSDF) ship *JS Ikazuchi* (DD 107).

To close out the event, Yokosuka city sponsored a fireworks display to commemorate "Yokosuka *Kaikoku* Festival" which is a celebration of Japan's emergence onto the global stage through policies of open trade with other nations and coincides with the Navy Friendship Day.

George Washington, CVW 5 complete Talisman Saber participation

By MC2 John J. Mike, *USS George Washington* Public Affairs

USS George Washington (*GW*) (CVN 73) and embarked Carrier Air Wing (CVW) 5 completed their participation in Talisman Saber 09 (TS09) July 25.

Talisman Saber is a biennial exercise through which Australian and U.S. forces practice interoperability in a variety of mission areas, ranging from combat operations to humanitarian assistance.

CVW 5 Commander Capt. Michael S. White said TS09 tested the *GW* Carrier Strike Group and Australian forces' ability to respond effectively to possible crises or small conflicts in the region.

"The Australian [forces] are very similar to us, in the tactics they use and in the way they fly," White said. "Having Australians work with us on our staff as we develop plans increased the interoperability and the partnership we share."

CVW 5 aviators flew more than 600 sorties in support of TS09. The extra missions gave the air wing a unique opportunity to make multiple strikes on simulated targets in central and northern Australia, said White.

"Typically at sea, we use small islands or rocks for ordnance practice," White said. "TS09 allowed us to use the very advanced ranges in Australia, which forced our aviators to identify the proper target and practice dropping ordnance on it."

According to Bartee, TS09 allowed *GW* Weapons Department an opportunity to integrate its five divisions in order to ensure ordnance worked the first time, every time.

"My Sailors responded well to the combat-like operations," said Bartee. "The process of moving ordnance from the magazines, all the way until it reaches the aircraft, required all divisions to work as a team."

Following the successful completion of the participation of *GW* in TS09, the embarked Australian liaison officer reflected on the underlying themes of the exercise.

Royal Australian Navy Cmdr. Neill Bell, one of seven Australian service members embarked on board *GW* for TS09, said the chance to operate on board the Navy's only permanently forward-deployed aircraft carrier enhanced readiness by promoting teamwork and cooperation between service members of both nations.

BM3 Thomas McKiernan, assigned to the deck department aboard the aircraft carrier *USS George Washington* (CVN 73), prepares to approach the stern dock of *George Washington* in a rigid hull inflatable boat while the ship participates in exercise Talisman Saber July 24.

U.S. Navy photo by MC1 John M. Hageman

"We were lucky to be on board *GW*," Bell said. "We were able to integrate with the *GW*/CVW 5 team and learn how they operate at sea and we will be able to bring those capabilities to Australian ships."

"The biggest thing is we were able to develop friendships through visits made to each other's countries and units, and allowed us to understand our respective cultures and how we work," he added.