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Battle of Midway commemorated at Midway Atoll

Story and photo by MC1 James. E. Foehl

Commander, Navy Region Hawai'i Public Affairs

U.S. Pacific Command Color Guard parades the colors during the Battle of Midway commemoration ceremony on Midway Atoll. More than 1,500 distinguished guests and visitors of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, International Midway Memorial Foundation and U.S. Pacific Fleet, assembled on the atoll June 4, to commemorate the 65th anniversary of the Battle of Midway. Midway Atoll is located approximately 150 miles east of the International Dateline and is a National Wildlife Refuge whose mission is to preserve, protect and restore the biological diversity and historic resources of the atoll, while providing opportunity for wildlife-dependent recreation, education and scientific research.

Distinguished visitors and more than 1,500 guests of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, International Midway Memorial Foundation and U.S. Pacific Fleet, assembled on Midway Atoll on June 4 to commemorate the 65th anniversary of the Battle of Midway.

"We're gathered here today at one of the most remote and special places on earth. Midway, is where the course of history was changed," said Hawai'i Gov. Linda Lingle.

The Battle of Midway was fought June 4 – 7, 1942, and served as a turning point in the Pacific during World War II.

"No one knew it at the time, but the tide of war in the Pacific had turned because of the heroism and sheer determination of those who fought on June 4, 1942," said Dr. James M. D'Angelo, president and chairman, International Midway Memorial Foundation.

"It's not hard to imagine what we would've heard if we'd have been here this day 65 years ago. I can hear the words now. 'Many planes heading toward Midway! Bearing 3-2-0 distance, 1-5-0! Tally-ho hawks at angel 12! Pilots, man your planes! Don't let this carrier escape!'"

Until June 4, 1942, the Imperial Japanese Navy dominated the Pacific. Their plan to cripple the remaining carrier forces of the U.S. Pacific Fleet and capture Midway was to serve as a stepping stone for future attacks on U.S. homeland soil.

"'This scheme of conquest was the most enticing and ambitious and far reaching in modern history… It almost worked and might well have succeeded, but for the United States Navy,'" said Adm. Robert F. Willard, Commander, U.S. Pacific Fleet, quoting the late American historian, Rear Adm. Samuel Eliot Morison, on the significance of the Battle of Midway.

"Our adversary did not count on us breaking their naval code, outflanking them or locating them on time. They did not count on fourteen hundred supremely dedicated shipyard workers at Pearl Harbor (who) performed a miracle by getting USS Yorktown battle-ready in two days. They did not count on, nor could they imagine, our resolve or the bravery of our Sailors and of our Marines. Their spirit and determination carried the day and, when it was all said and done, the Japanese had lost four aircraft carriers, a heavy cruiser, three destroyers, 300 planes and thousands of men," said Willard.

In turn, America lost the carrier USS Yorktown (CV 5), destroyer USS Hammann (DD 412), 145 planes, and 307 brave men.

"It was a miraculous victory by any standard," said Willard.

The Japanese navy would never again regain the offensive in the war against the United States.

"For those of you who are here who fought in that battle, I'm honored to be in your presence," said Dirk Kempthorne, Secretary of the Interior. "All Americans owe you a debt of gratitude for your service and your sacrifice."

In the closing moments of the ceremony, Battle of Midway survivors Rear Adm. John Besson, Ensign William Tunstall and Chief Petty Officer George Chockley were presented a ceremonial wreath by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service.

SECDEF visits Pacific Command

U.S. Navy photo by MC3 Elisia V. Gonzales

Secretary of Defense (SECDEF) Robert M. Gates speaks to U. S. Pacific Command (USPACOM) service members and civilian personnel during a recent visit to Hawai'i. USPACOM is responsible for all American air, ground and maritime military forces in the Asia-Pacific region.

Photo by Lance Nishihara

Storekeeper 2nd Class (SW) Dieu Ngo serves ice cream to a student at Momilani Elementary School. Ngo was awarded the Military Community Service Award for his volunteer work with the school and other community involvement.

Sailor receives Military Community Service Award

Jim Murray

Fleet and Industrial Supply Center, Pearl Harbor

Storekeeper 2nd Class (SW) Dieu Ngo, a logistics support specialist with the Fleet and Industrial Supply Center (FISC), Pearl Harbor was recently awarded the Military Community Service Award during a ceremony held May 24 at the Hilton Hawaiian Village. The event was sponsored by the Chamber of Commerce of Hawai'i.

Ngo was not blessed with the upbringing that many of us enjoyed. He was born in Saigon, Vietnam and when he was still an infant, his parents immigrated to America, leaving him behind in the care of relatives. He remained with them for the next 10 years.

For most of his childhood, he did not know what it was like to have parents. He had no one to look up to and no one to give him guidance. He did not attend school because his relatives were poor and could not afford to send him; therefore, he says, "I just survived."

It was, however, because of that upbringing that he is probably FISC Pearl's most active military volunteer, particularly at Momilani Elementary School with whom FISC has had a rewarding eight-year educational partnership.

"I want to be sure the kids at Momilani have someone," he said. "I want to be there for them when they need guidance or when they just need to know someone cares."

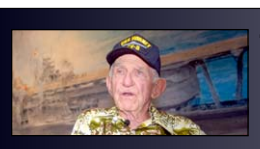
In his regular visits to Momilani, Ngo reads to students, joins them in physical fitness training, and assists with Drug Free Awareness and Stay in School programs. He also helps with beautification efforts at the school, including painting and weed whacking.

His urge to help the Momilani children was bolstered after he was in a serious traffic accident about six months ago. While he was hospitalized, the kids and staff at Momilani each donated a dollar to him and the final tally exceeded $400.

"Getting that check from the kids really made me want to work harder for them," he said.

In the end, however, Ngo and his wife decided the school needed the money more than he did so he wrote a check for the same amount and donated it back to the school.

Ngo's community involvement does not end with Momilani. He also actively supports the Hawai'i Food Bank, Special Olympics, the Rotary Club, the March of Dimes Ride to Save Babies, and various other community endeavors coordinated by FISC. In addition, his wife, a licensed practical nurse, is the FISC Pearl ombudsman.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Torpedo Squadron 8 plane captain relives 'Battle of Midway'

Story and photo by MC1 (AW/SW) James E. Foehl

Commander, Navy Region Hawai'i Public Affairs

William A. Tunstall, an aviation machinist mate second class from Springfield, Mass. who was assigned to Torpedo Squadron (VT) 8 during the Battle of Midway, tells the story of his involvement during the war in the Pacific during a visit to the Pacific Aviation Museum on historic Ford Island at Pearl Harbor on May 30. Tunstall received a field commission before retiring from naval service in 1945 and visited Pearl Harbor for the 65th Anniversary Commemoration of the Battle of Midway.

On June 4 more than 1,500 distinguished visitors and guests gathered on Midway Atoll to commemorate the 65th anniversary of the Battle of Midway.

The sacrifices of those U.S. Sailors who fought so valiantly during that battle at sea June 4-7, 1942, will continue to be commemorated every year by the Navy as the critical turning point of the war in the Pacific - a battle that changed the course of history.

The story of the battle begins months earlier when a daring bombing raid on Japan was launched from U.S. aircraft carriers, led by then U.S. Army Lt. Col. Jimmy Doolittle, striking America's first blow in the Pacific after the surprise attack on Pearl Harbor.

One of the Sailors who participated in both the Doolittle Raid and the Battle of Midway spoke of the sacrifices of heroic Sailors.

"The day of the [Doolittle Raid] launch was a rough day. There was some speculation of fishing boats that were out there who would alert the Japanese of what we were doing and what type of ship we were," said William A. Tunstall, an aviation machinist's mate second class from Springfield, Mass., who was assigned to Torpedo Squadron 8 (VT-8).

"Capt. Marc Andrew Mitscher [Hornet's commanding officer] came on and told us the reason the airplanes were on our flight deck was that we are going out and bomb Japan," said Tunstall. "We went up on 40 [degrees] north and started to cross the ocean. When we got to 180 [degrees], lo and behold, there's another aircraft carrier."

From the flight deck of USS Hornet (CV 8), the U.S. Army Air Force B-25 bombers launched what would prove to be a greatly embarrassing attack to the Japanese on their homeland soil.

"When these [B-25] aircraft started to launch, I went up to hangar deck, then on up to the catwalk. When the bow went down, [the landing signal officer] would tell them to launch. When the deck came up, they'd be right in a position to take off," said Tunstall.

The strike was a success. Shocked that their home islands were vulnerable to attack, the Japanese now knew that the U.S. carrier forces in the Pacific posed an immense threat, which they had to eliminate.

After the Doolittle Raid, the Japanese devised a plan for an attack on Midway, designed to cripple the U.S. Pacific Fleet carrier forces and capture Midway Islands, which could serve as a launching point for further attacks on Hawai'i or the U.S. mainland. Japanese submarines would be sent to intercept carriers from Pearl Harbor to Midway, and as attacks on Midway began, the Pacific Fleet carriers would be ambushed as they attempted to come to the island's rescue.

However, unknown to the Japanese, superior American communication intelligence gave the edge to U.S. Pacific Fleet Commander Adm. Chester W. Nimitz. Nimitz used information gleaned from decoded Japanese message traffic to strategically position his fleet for battle with the unsuspecting Japanese carrier forces while keeping the American fleet out of reach of the Japanese submarines.

USS Enterprise (CV 6) and Hornet quickly moved from Pearl Harbor, heading to a point north east of Midway, with USS Yorktown (CV 5) following soon after.

The stage was set.

"June 4, 1942, I was on the flight deck of [USS] Hornet," said Tunstall. "I was a plane captain of a TBD [torpedo bomber]. It was a fine old airplane, I had flown a lot of hours in it and flying the middle seat as a bombardier when it was needed.

"When they announced they had found the Japanese and their ships were coming closer, within range of our airplanes, they sounded general quarters and we went up and got our planes ready to go," said Tunstall. "I had my airplane ready to go. I said to [my pilot] 'Mr. Abercrombie, I want to wish you the very best. Good luck.'"

The planes were all quickly launched and formed up with the other squadrons to head off the Japanese Fleet.

"Waldron, commanding officer, VT-8, found [the Japanese Fleet] and called in all the available aircraft he could get," said Tunstall.

VT-8 received the Presidential Unit Citation, which was awarded on April 5, 1943, for their attack that day. The citation gives a vivid account of the squadron's desperate and, ultimately, doomed attack which led the way for other air attacks to succeed.

"Flying low without fighter support, Torpedo Squadron (VT) 8 began the perilous mission, 'Intercept and attack!' First to sight the enemy, the squadron attacked with full striking power against crushing enemy opposition, scoring torpedo hits on Japanese forces. Realizing to a man that insufficient fuel would prevent a return to the carrier, the pilots held doggedly to the target, dropping torpedoes at pointblank range in the face of blasting anti-aircraft fire that sent the planes, one by one, hurtling aflame into the sea."

Following the brave attack by VT-8, dive-bombers from the Yorktown pummeled Japanese carrier Soryu, making three lethal hits with 1,000-pound bombs that turned the ship into an inferno.

Meanwhile, Enterprise planes hit Japanese carrier's Akagi and Kaga, turning them into scrap metal within a short period of time.

Within a span of minutes, three squadrons of SBD scout bombers, two from Enterprise and one from Yorktown, successfully bombed and set ablaze three of the four Japanese carriers and crippled the Japanese carrier forces at Midway.

As a final effort, the remaining Japanese carrier, Hiryu, launched an attack on Yorktown.

Despite hits from dive bombers and going dead in the water, Yorktown regained 20 knots and launched her aircraft to intercept inbound Japanese torpedo bombers.

Two Japanese torpedoes opened a huge hole in Yorktown's midships port side and left her with a severe list. Fearing the ship would roll over, abandon ship was ordered.

Enterprise planes, which now included 10 refugees from the Yorktown, answered Hiryu by putting more than four bombs into her, destroying the forward flight deck and setting her ablaze.

Shocked and overwhelmed, Japanese Combined Fleet Commander Adm. Isoroku Yamamoto ordered a retreat and his Midway operation was called off.

Recounting what happened to his own squadron, Tunstall said, "All our (VT-8) planes were shot down. The one [pilot] that came back, parachuted into the water and his name was [Ensign] George Gay."

The sacrifices and daring action by the vastly outnumbered U.S. fleet proved decisive in a way few battles ever have; Japanese plans to extend their empire across the Pacific Ocean by sinking the remaining U.S. Pacific Fleet carrier forces were smashed. The heroic actions of the American Sailors in the Battle of Midway set the stage for the ultimate victory in the Pacific theatre of World War II and left a legacy of valor for future generations of U.S. Navy Sailors.

(Some of the information used in this story was provided by the Naval Historical Center).

Ombudsmen play important role in disaster preparedness, recovery

Zona Lewis

Commander, Navy Installations Command Public Affairs

The significant role ombudsmen play in family readiness was recently reaffirmed when changes were made to the Navy family ombudsman instruction effective March 30, requiring commands to include ombudsmen in disaster preparedness planning and exercises.

"The new ombudsman instruction states a couple of pretty important things that I would like to emphasize," said Vice Adm. Bob Conway, Commander, Navy Installations Command. "It says literally that every family member must have access to a family ombudsman, that commanding officers must have and maintain a registry of all their ombudsmen, and that every ombudsman must be armed with what they need to do their jobs."

Conway stressed the importance of the ombudsman registry.

"It is the network that we need when there is an emergency or crisis. The ombudsmen on this registry are the touchstones to our families regarding communications from the command," Conway said.

The importance of the ombudsman's role in a disaster was echoed by Meg Falk, Fleet and Family Readiness Community Alliance program manager.

"The ombudsman is often the very first line of information for command and unit families. They are expected to stay in touch with the command [following a disaster] so when a family member calls, they get the latest and greatest [command] information."

Ombudsmen assist Navy families in two ways, educating Sailors and families on being prepared for potential disasters and supporting them during the recovery phase.

Being prepared for a disaster is essential to shortening the Navy family's recovery phase once disaster strikes. Navy ombudsmen educate families new to the area on potential hazards in a region, such as hurricanes on the east coast, mud slides on the west coast, or tsunamis in the Far East. Each geographic area of interest (GAOI) has unique natural hazards.

"Following the 2005 hurricane season, the role of the ashore command ombudsman became apparent," said Christine DeGraw, Navy family ombudsman program manager. "Previously, many believed only deploying commands needed an ombudsman."

Ombudsmen provide Sailors and families with information on command mustering procedures, evacuation routes, safe haven and shelter locations, and mass notification systems. They also educate families on the need for a family communication plan and emergency kits.

When disasters are unannounced, families may be separated - kids may be at school, spouses may be at work, Sailors may be at sea. Ombudsmen work with families to ensure everyone has practiced their family communication plan and is carrying an emergency contact card.

Following a disaster, ombudsmen support families during the recovery phase by providing families with updated command information and guidance and by helping families connect with resources they need to return to a steady state.

"Ombudsmen in our Navy today have the job of cutting through the bureaucracy - getting the uncluttered, unfiltered, essential information into the hands of our families - quickly," said Conway.

In the aftermath of Hurricanes Katrina, Rita and Wilma, command ombudsmen supported local community support centers, helping to match the needs of Sailors and families with the right military, local and national resources to get their needs resolved.

"Today's ombudsman is better trained and better prepared to respond to disasters," said Falk. "Thanks to the efforts of the CNO (chief of naval operations) and a whole host of other people, they have been given the tools, training and equipment to do the job."

Ombudsmen are trained in their role in disaster preparedness and response during ombudsman basic training. Additionally, they work with installation emergency managers and the command to provide the most up-to-date command policies and procedures to service members and families.

"Ombudsmen continue to receive additional training at ombudsman assemblies and during ombudsman advanced training," said DeGraw. "Bases, such as Norfolk, include ombudsmen in crisis response training."

Ombudsmen are lifelines for all families, especially those whose service member is deployed, on extended travel or on individual augmentee assignment. Ombudsmen make sure they are ready for the short and long hall during disaster preparedness and recovery.

"Most of our families are self sufficient," said Falk. "For them, the ombudsman is a resource. It is not because they are unable to take care of themselves that they seek recovery assistance. It is because they are smart enough to reach out to resources available to them."

Navy families need to muster, complete NFAAS in case of disaster

Zona Lewis

Commander, Navy Installations Command Public Affairs

There are two things Navy families should do immediately following a declared disaster - muster with their command and complete a needs assessment with the Navy Family Accountability and Assessment System (NFAAS).

"Mustering and NFAAS should be household terms," said Meg Falk, Fleet and Family Readiness Community Alliance program manager. "Service members must ensure their family knows the command's muster procedures in case they are not together during a disaster."

All commands are responsible for implementing and administering muster procedures for determining the status and whereabouts of Navy personnel following a catastrophic event.

After a catastrophic event, all Navy personnel deployed to or working within the affected geographic area of interest (GAOI) are required to personally check in either in person or phone with their command at the first available opportunity.

If the service member is deployed, on temporary additional duty, or on individual augumentee assignment outside of the GAOI, and has left a family within the affected area, the family should muster with the service member's command.

It is equally important for the service member or family member to do a needs assessment in NFAAS following a disaster.

"If they have needs, the Navy has resources that can come to bear to support families who have suffered a loss during an emergency," said Falk.

NFAAS is a survey tool to assess disaster-related needs of the Navy family. The system allows families to assess 19 categories, including: medical, missing family locator, transportation, housing and personal property, financial, employment, child care, education, legal services, counseling, and mortuary and funeral assistance.

"Navy leadership is sincerely concerned for our Navy personnel and their family members in an area affected by disasters and catastrophic events," said Vice Adm. Bob Conway, Commander, Navy Installations Command. "NFAAS allows us to provide the Navy family with continued support through the recovery phase."

NFAAS was developed by Task Force Navy Family following the major hurricane season of 2005. The task force identified the need for a single reporting system for Navy family members to inform the Navy regarding their status and needs after a declared emergency or catastrophic event.

NFAAS is a Web-based application used in conjunction with, or independently of, the BUPERS online (BOL) disaster muster tool (DMT). BOL DMT is an online mustering tool for commands to account for active duty, selected Reserve, and Department of Defense civilian (appropriated and non-appropriated fund) employees and their family members.

Personnel mustered through BOL DMT may go directly to the NFAAS Web site to assess their needs. Family members will need their sponsor's social security number and date of birth to access the site.

NFAAS can also be utilized by retirees and contractors and their family members (excluding foreign nationals OCONUS). These members of the Navy family should visit their local Fleet and Family Support Center (FFSC) for their initial NFAAS assessment. Once in the system, they may update their status online as it changes until they are assigned a case manager. Once a case manager is assigned, they become the Navy family member's single point of contact to update the status of their needs.

Connectivity may be a challenge following a disaster. If Internet and transportation are not available, personnel and families in the affected area may contact the emergency call center at 877-414-5358 (the TDD number is 866-297-1971) to assess their needs.

"I encourage everyone to visit the NFAAS Web site at www.NavyFamily.navy.mil within 72 hours of mustering with their command for additional information and support," said Conway. "We have the ability to respond rapidly to a family that indicates in NFAAS they have an emergent need after a disaster."

If disaster-related needs are identified, a case manager from a FFSC will be assigned to their case. The case manager will contact the Navy family member to assist them with all of their needs, from the urgent to the informational.

All information provided during the assessment is confidential. Details of the assessment will not be provided to the service member's chain of command or anyone outside the case management team without the provider's approval. Commands will only receive general needs data (e.g., 325 command personnel need temporary housing) to ensure resources and policies are in place to support Navy families.

"Family readiness is critical to Sailor readiness," said Falk. "If you have Navy personnel whose family has suffered a loss, they are going to be preoccupied with getting their family back to a stable state. They will not be focused on the mission. Family readiness means that families know what to do in the aftermath of a disaster, whether the service member is there or not."

Following the 2005 hurricane season, over 7,400 cases were reported in the NFAAS. The biggest two issues were housing and finances, said Falk.

Case managers were able to work on behalf of those affected families by connecting them to internal Navy resources and external resources such as those provided by the Federal Emergency Management Agency and the Red Cross.

Falk said that the NFAAS has taken what the Navy has learned over the years about responding to other kinds of disasters and emergencies and raised its response to a new level. A case manager works with an individual or family from the beginning, tracking their history, updating their status, and stays with them until all of their issues are resolved.

"Never before has one-on-one, long term support been there in the same way we are able to do it now," said Falk. "NFAAS is the new gold standard for disaster response and recovery, and it is a profound statement of Navy organizational loyalty to its people."

Battle of Midway, June 1942

Official U.S. Navy photograph, now in the collections of the National Archives

Burning oil tanks on Sand Island, Midway, following the Japanese air attack delivered on the morning of June 4, 1942. These tanks were located near what was then the southern shore of Sand Island. This view looks inland from the vicinity of the beach. Three laysan albatross ("gooney bird") chicks are visible in the foreground.

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U.S. Navy photo by MC2 (AW/SW) Justin P. Nesbitt

Sailors stationed aboard USS Russell (DDG 59) pose for a group photo after having their sunrise-frocking ceremony on June 1 on board USS Missouri (BB 63).

Russell Sailors frocked on historic battleship

Ensign Theresa Donnelly

USS Russell (DDG 59) Public Affairs

USS Russell (DDG 59) Sailors and family members gathered on June 1 to celebrate the frocking (advancement) of 31 crew members onboard the USS Missouri (BB 63), the world's last commissioned battleship, located at Ford Island.

The ceremony was especially meaningful as the crew gathered on the ships foc'sle with the backdrop of the "Mighty Mo's" main battery, six gigantic 16-inch/.50 caliber gun turrets. As the Sailors faced the bow of the warship with the sun beginning to rise, Lt. Cmdr. Joseph Cahill, Russell executive officer, read each frockee an official appointment letter, which outlined the duties and responsibilities that each service member will assume by advancing to the next paygrade.

"It was really nice to be recognized for the work that I do. I owe a lot to my chain of command for acknowledging my performance," said Gas Turbine System Technician Mechanical 1st Class Donald Dickinson.

The 31 Sailors that advanced did so under challenging circumstances. Last February, prior to May advancement exams, crew members began an arduous two-month surge deployment with the Ronald Reagan Strike Group in the Western Pacific, participating in the Seventh Fleet maritime influence strategy.

During this time, Sailors had to balance their study time for the upcoming exams with a hectic deployment schedule and subsequently took the advancement exams while underway.

Russell has a tradition of making the frocking ceremony an out of the ordinary event, marking a significant turning point in the careers of the crew. Last year, a frocking ceremony preceded a USS Nevada service held during the 65th commemoration of the attacks on Pearl Harbor.

By incorporating naval historical events with Sailors' advancement, the crew can honor the memory of the Sailors who have gone before them. Gunners Mate 2nd Class Bryan Marsh spoke of the special significance that the frocking ceremony had for him. "I mean, how many people can say that they were frocked on a World War Two battleship? This is where the Japanese signed the surrender documents ending the war. This ceremony will always have a special meaning for me."

Three Sailors also received automatic advancements by means of the Command Advancement Program (CAP). Due to their extraordinary performance onboard, Cmdr. Brad Cooper, commanding officer of Russell, selected the Sailors for an on-the-spot promotion announced while at captain's call the day prior. The CAP is often an unexpected and a very pleasant surprise.

"When the CO announced my name, my knees went limp. I thought I was dreaming. I was undecided about if I wanted to re-enlist and now I am definitely leaning towards staying in the Navy," said Personnel Specialist 2nd Class Joseph Brown.

Russell's advancement ceremony comes at a time when the Navy has promoted over 23,000 Sailors, the largest number of active duty personnel advanced since the spring advancement cycle of 2003.

FEB awards recognize excellence

Story and photo by MC1 James E. Foehl

Commander, Navy Region Hawai'i Public Affairs

Chief Culinary Specialist Adeline Lopes, assigned to Naval Station Pearl Harbor, enjoys lunch at the Sheraton Waikiki Hotel Hawaiíi Ballroom during the 51st Annual Excellence in Federal Government Awards luncheon. Lopes was presented the Exceptional Community Service Award for her direct involvement of planning coordination and execution of community volunteer efforts for 193 personnel and 15 community projects.

Sailors and federal civilian employees from Navy Region Hawai'i and Naval Station (NAVSTA) Pearl Harbor gathered at the Sheraton Waikiki Hotel Hawai'i Ballroom on May 31 to be formally recognized by the Honolulu-Pacific Federal Executive Board for excellence in their achievements as leaders for the federal government.

Chief Culinary Specialist Adeline Lopes, assigned to Naval Station Pearl Harbor, was presented the Exceptional Community Service Award for her direct involvement of planning coordination and execution of community volunteer efforts for 193 personnel and 15 community projects throughout the region.

"It was a combination of teamwork [between the] upper echelon and all Naval Station personnel," said Lopes.

The command volunteer coordinator can provide Sailors with valuable information concerning local community involvement projects and how to get engaged at your command.

"Be connected with the command volunteer coordinator. Every Sailor [should] take the opportunity to get involved because it's a great opportunity to give back, not just to their country but their community," said Lopes.

Special guest speaker, City and County of Honolulu mayor, Mufi Hannemann, was also on hand at the event to express his gratitude to the awardees.

"Without your outstanding contributions, the government cannot function," said Hannemann. "I also wanted to come here to express my appreciation to those of you that work side-by-side to ensure that Hawai'i, our city [of] Honolulu and our nation are always going to be well served by those who sacrifice and be part of our armed services."

Also receiving awards at the ceremony were:

Capt. Taylor Skardon, commanding officer, NAVSTA Pearl Harbor, for Navy Region Hawai'i - Employer of Choice.

Anthony K. Kalili Sr., Navy Region Hawai'i, for Federal Supervisor / Manager of the Year.

Cynthia Y. Pang, Navy Region Hawai'i, for Employee of the Year – Professional, Administrative, Technical.

Filomeno Rivera Jr., Navy Region Hawai'i, for Employee of the Year – Clerical and Assistant.

Damage Controlman 2nd Class Thomas Parker, Navy Region Hawai'i, for Employee of the Year – Trades and Crafts.

Ingrid Johnson, Navy Region Hawai'i, for Leader, Mentor Coach of the Year.

The theme for the 51st Annual Excellence in Federal Government Awards luncheon was "Recognizing those who have the vision, passion, and inspiration."

"This is about recognizing the very best in the Hawai'i-Pacific area," said Gloria Uyehara, executive director for the Honolulu-Pacific Federal Executive Board.

The Federal Executive Board was established in 1961 by President John F. Kennedy to improve communication among federal activities and programs outside of Washington, D.C. and bring national issues to the local spotlight.

Pearl Harbor *Highlights*

(Left) The Pacific Fleet Ceremonial Band bids farewell to USS Peleliu (LHA 5), as the amphibious assault ship pulls away from the pier at Naval Station Pearl Harbor. The 24-piece ensemble performed conventional march music and patriotic favorites during a brief, pier side ceremony held in celebration of the launching of Pacific Partnership 2007, a four-month, humanitarian assistance mission to Southeast Asia and Oceania.

U.S. Navy photo by MCSC Melissa Weatherspoon

(Below) Aviation Ordnanceman 2nd Class (AW) Edwin Gonzalez is one of many who mans the rails of the amphibious assault ship USS Peleliu (LHA 5) as she pulls out from Naval Station Pearl Harbor with the USS Arizona Memorial in the distance. The ship recently departed its San Diego homeport in support of Pacific Partnership, a four-month humanitarian assistance deployment to Southeast Asia and Oceania.

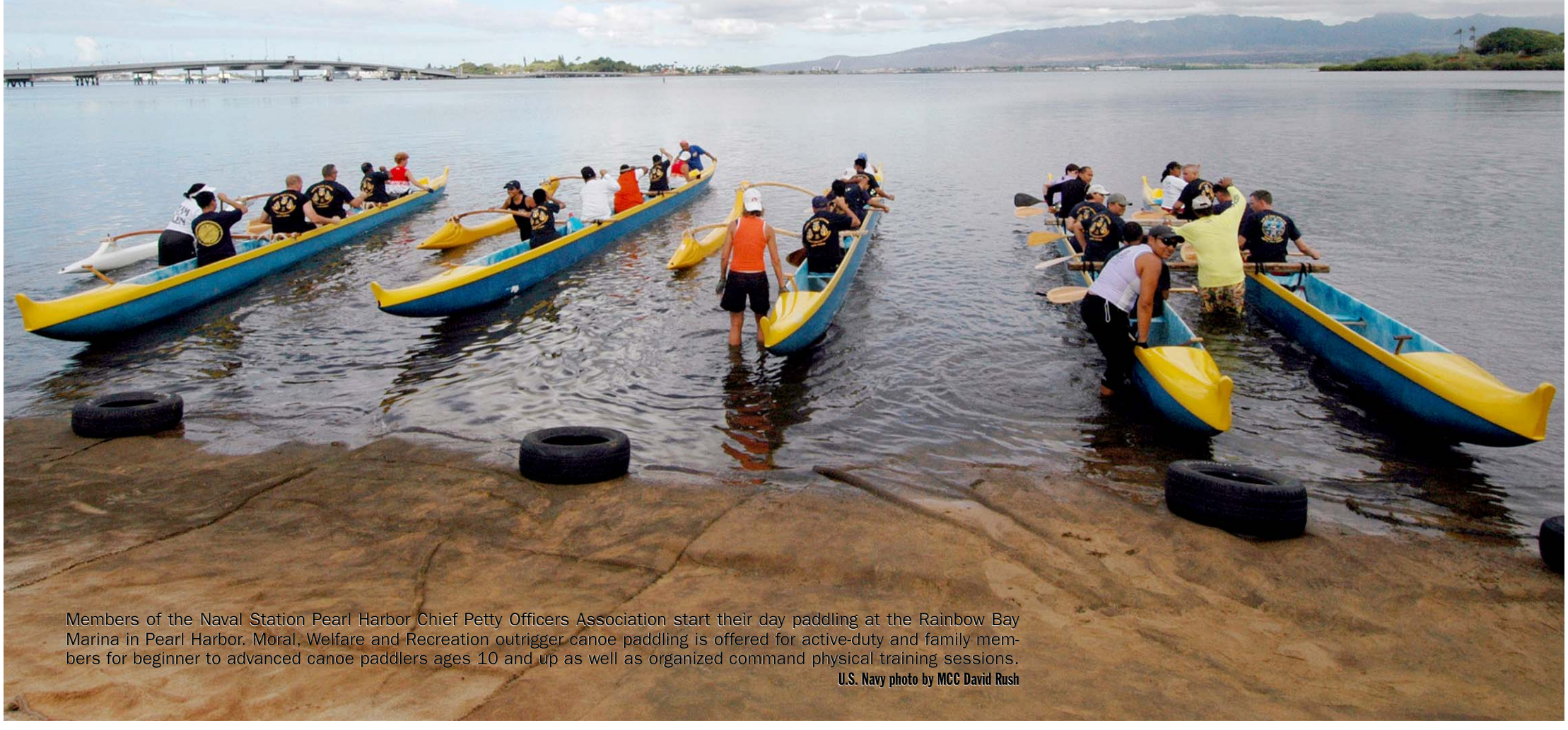
U.S. Navy photo by MCC (AW/SW) Anthony Briggs

U.S. Navy photo by ETC (SW/AW) Josh Hildreth

A USS Lake Erie (CG 70) hose team fights its way through smoke during a main space fire drill.

U.S. Navy photo by ETC (SW/AW) Josh Hildreth

Dr. Jerry A. Barnett plays the bones with the U.S. Pacific Fleet Band during a reception at Captain Brooks Tavern on North Beach following the 65th anniversary of the Battle of Midway commemoration ceremony on Midway Atoll. More than 1,500 distinguished guests and visitors of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, International Midway Memorial Foundation and U.S. Pacific Fleet assembled on the atoll June 4, to commemorate the 65th anniversary of the Battle of Midway. Midway Atoll is located approximately 150 miles east of the International Dateline and is a National Wildlife Refuge whose mission is to preserve, protect and restore the biological diversity and historic resources of the atoll, while providing opportunity for wildlife-dependent recreation, education and scientific research.



Members of the Naval Station Pearl Harbor Chief Petty Officers Association start their day paddling at the Rainbow Bay Marina in Pearl Harbor. Moral, Welfare and Recreation outrigger canoe paddling is offered for active-duty and family members for beginner to advanced canoe paddlers ages 10 and up as well as organized command physical training sessions.

U.S. Navy photo by MCC David Rush

"EasyRiders" set standard at HARP

Lt. Brian Binder

Helicopter Anti-Submarine Squadron 37

U.S. Navy photo by HSL 37

An SH-60B helicopter from HSL 37 launches a live Hellfire missile during a training exercise at Pacific Missile Range Facility, Kauai.

Detachments Two and Three from the "Easy Riders" of Helicopter Anti-Submarine Squadron Light 37 (HSL-37) stationed at Marine Corps Base Hawai'i (MCBH) - Kaneohe recently returned home after successfully completing helicopter advanced readiness training (HARP) from May 5-25 at the Pacific Missile Range Facility (PMRF) on the scenic island of Kauai. Additionally, a detachment from the San Diego-based "Battlecats" of HSL-43 and an HSL-51 "Warlords" detachment from NAS Atsugi, Japan also completed their HARP requirements during this period. HSL-37 Det Three maintenance augmented by Home Guard personnel formed the 'super 24' who supported every HARP Det flight evolution, including providing three full mission capable aircraft for numerous anti-submarine and anti-surface warfare training missions.

Although HSL-37 has completed HARP at PMRF in recent years, HARP 0704 represented a historic milestone for the "Easy Riders" as the first weapons detachment in which HSL-37 supported additional detachments from West Coast HSL squadrons. The challenge for the "Easy Riders" was to ensure that all 10 flight crews, encompassing four detachments from three separate squadrons, accomplished their HARP flight requirements within 15 regimented range days.

Post HARP completion analysis also included over 170 flight hours dedicated toward the safe completion of over 70 tactical and pre-deployment qualifications. All four detachments demonstrated outstanding tactical prowess throughout the weapons detachment and all four detachments earned their HARP completion letters.

The flight requirements for HARP 0704 included dedicated anti-submarine warfare training including 2 MK-46 and 3 MK-50 torpedo attacks while working in coordination with an additional SH-60B and a P-3C Orion from MCBH Kaneohe. Anti-surface warfare training included day M60 GUNNEXs (gunnery exercise) against towed range targets and night GAU-16 GUNNEXs against land based targets on the remote Kaula Island range.

Flight crews were able to put their aircraft survival equipment (ASE) to the test during surface-to-air-counter tactics (SACT) training in which chaff and flares were deployed against land-based electronic and infrared emitters. This highly realistic training included a stinger team that worked in conjunction with 'Smokey-Sam' launch crews to provide air-crews with invaluable visual cues of what an actual missile launch would look like. Additional multi-aircraft surface warfare training events included low slow flyer intercept and captive air training missile (CATM) section attack flights. The culmination of the surface warfare training came in the form of multiple 'live fire' AGM-114 Hellfire shots against a maneuverable water target. All five Hellfire shots scored direct hits against their targets which represented another 'first' for any HARP weapons detachment.

HARP weapons detachment was not all work and no play. PMRF provided flight crews and maintainers with a break during the weekends which allowed everyone to relax and enjoy the island of Kauai and all of its outdoor adventure. Day trips by boat and kayak to the Napali Coast were a hit as well as the scenic drive to Princeville at the northern tip of Kauai. The weapons detachment's favorite off duty activity proved to be a short hike to Kipu Falls, a waterfall with a deep, crystal clear swimming hole below.

USS Lake Erie Sailors 'Haze gray and underway'

Lt. j.g. Thomas Buck

USS Lake Erie (CG 70) Public Affairs

U.S. Navy photo by ETC (SW/AW) Josh Hildreth

Seaman Steve Leon, on his first deployment, stands lookout aboard USS Lake Erie (CG 70) near Japan.

Following last month's successful simultaneous shooting down of a ballistic missile target and a surrogate hostile air target with a Standard Missile-3 (SM-3) and a Standard Missile-2 (SM-2), respectively, Capt. R. M. Hendrickson, commanding officer of Lake Erie, knew his crew would have no trouble looking forward to the next major task at hand.

The next task for the crew of Lake Erie came in the form of a four-month deployment to the western Pacific.

"We have every reason to be proud of what we accomplished during Flight Mission-11," said Hendrickson, referring to the title of April's test. "We have an outstanding and well-trained crew and I have absolutely no doubt that they are up for any challenge that comes their way."

With only three weeks into the deployment, the Lake Erie crew has already begun meeting these challenges head-on. Far from the scope of the regular week-long underway period with which most of the crew is familiar, Lake Erie Sailors have had to adjust quickly to the new priorities and tasking inherent in a deployment. However, many of the crew, far from being intimidated, are thankful for the new experiences.

Operating with USS Kitty Hawk (CV 63), Lake Erie Sailors were quick to adapt to the new requirements that their roles demanded. Smart seamanship, clear satellite and radio communications, and vigilant engineering watches became the standards as Lake Erie took on the roles of Kitty Hawk Strike Group air commander and plane guard. They sorted through the melee of air traffic coming in and out of Japan while maneuvering behind the carrier to assist pilots as they safely landed their aircraft upon the carrier

"I've had some great and unique learning opportunities onboard Lake Erie, especially involving BMD (ballistic missile defense)," said Lt. j.g. Kevin Schaeffer, a first tour division officer. "To finally go on a WESTPAC and participate in new things such as carrier operations gives me a chance to broaden my perspective even more."

"We've had an outstanding deployment so far and it's only been one month," said Boatswain's Mate 1st Class (SW) David Smith, first division leading petty officer. "With all of the deck evolutions we've been doing, including unreps (underway replenishments) and flight ops, it's been great training for the junior guys. It's great to see my division make so much progress so quickly."

Of course, a deployment would not be complete without some port visits. On May 21, Lake Erie made the first stop of its deployment in Yokosuka, Japan. While the stay in Yokosuka was primarily for maintenance purposes, it also afforded many young crew members their first visit to a foreign port. "I enjoyed being around something new, something I've never seen before," said Seaman Christopher Wallace. "I'm a Texas boy. I don't belong in Japan," Wallace said, laughing. "But I've been there now and I can say that for the rest of my life."

Lake Erie will continue to play integral roles in various national and international operations being held in the western Pacific this summer.