

FLEET FOCUS

USS Paul Hamilton changes hands

By Ens. Lou Ebinger

USS PAUL HAMILTON

COMMANDER Dennis J. O'Meara relieved Cmdr. James K. Hiser as Commanding Officer, USS Paul Hamilton (DDG 60), in a change of command ceremony at Pier Bravo 17 April 7.

The keynote speaker for the ceremony was Capt. Peter H. Daly, Commander, Destroyer Squadron 31.

Cmdr. Hiser assumed command of the Pearl Harbor, Hawaii based USS Paul Hamilton, on July 7, 1998.

Upon completion of the 1998 multi-national Rim of the Pacific (RIMPAC) exercise, Paul Hamilton deployed to the Arabian Gulf as part of the Pacific Maritime Expeditionary Force (PACMEF), 98-3. This deployment included Operation Desert Fox and enforcement of the United Nations sanctions against Iraq.

During this time, the crew of Paul Hamilton earned the Pacific Fleet Spokane Trophy, Battle "E," Navy Unit Commendation, and Silver Anchor.

Paul Hamilton is a frequent participant in Theater Ballistic Missile Defense testing, most recently supporting Theater Critical Measurements Program 3A at Kwajalein. Paul Hamilton received a third consecutive Retention Excellence award for 1999.

Cmdr. Hiser graduated from the United States Naval Academy in 1980. His first sea tour was USS Kinkaid (DD 965), where he served as Electrical Officer, Main Propulsion Assistant, and Engineer Officer.

He served in the commissioning

crew of USS Vincennes (CG 49) as Main Propulsion Assistant and in the commissioning crew of USS Arleigh Burke (DDG 51) as Engineer Officer. He served as Executive Officer in USS Kidd (DDG 993).

Cmdr. Hiser's shore tours include the Naval Postgraduate School, where he completed a Master's of Science in Electrical Engineering.

He was assigned to the Ballistic Missile Defense Organization where he served as a Program Integrator for the Navy Area and Navy Theater-Wide Theater Ballistic Missile Defense programs and as liaison officer to the staff of the Under Secretary of Defense (Acquisition and Technology).

Cmdr. Hiser's awards include the Bronze Star, Defense Meritorious Service Medal, Meritorious Service Medal (two awards), Navy Commendation Medal, and Navy Achievement Medal (two awards).

Cmdr. Hiser is Paul Hamilton's third commanding officer, and his next assignment will be in the Program Executive Office, Theater Surface Combatants in Washington, D.C.

His relief, Cmdr. O'Meara, graduated from the United States Naval Academy in 1982 with a Bachelor of Science degree in Marine Engineering.

In his initial sea assignment he served sequentially as Auxiliaries Officer, Fire Control Officer and Command Information Center (CIC) Officer on USS Berkeley (DDG 15).

In 1986 Cmdr. O'Meara was ordered to instructor duty at Surface Warfare Officer School in Newport, Rhode Island, where he taught main propulsion and auxiliary systems at the Division



photo created by JO1 Gerard Sekerak

Cmdr. Dennis J. O'Meara relieved Cmdr. James K. Hiser as commanding officer of USS Paul Hamilton (DDG 60) in a change of command ceremony April 7.

Officer Course. Following Department Head School, he returned to sea duty as Engineer Officer in USS Goldsborough (DDG 20).

Goldsborough deployed in 1990 to the Western Pacific and Indian Oceans with the USS Independence (CV) Battle Group. As part of Operation Desert Shield, Goldsborough became the first U.S. warship to seize an Iraqi merchant vessel attempting to circumvent United Nations Security Council sanctions.

In June 1993 Cmdr. O'Meara re-

ported to the International Military Staff at Headquarters, North Atlantic Treaty Organization in Brussels, Belgium where he served as a watch officer in the Situation Center.

From 1995 to 1997 he served as executive officer in USS Laboon (DDG 58).

While deployed to the Arabian Gulf in 1996, Laboon fired 13 Tomahawk missiles over a two-day period in support of Operation Desert Strike.

Since returning to Hawaii in

1997, Cmdr. O'Meara has served as Fleet Distribution Officer, Commander in Chief, U.S. Pacific Fleet and as Chief Staff Officer for Commander, Destroyer Squadron Five and Commander, Destroyer Squadron 31.

Cmdr. O'Meara is a graduate of the Naval War College, earning a Master of Arts in National Security and Strategy Studies. His personal awards include the Defense Meritorious Service Medal, Meritorious Service Medal and the Navy Commendation Medal.

American Samoa Sailor returns home to celebrate Flag Day centennial

By Lt. Flex Plexico
CINCPACFLT PUBLIC AFFAIRS

Master Chief Boatswain Mate Felise Tupuola left home in 1968 to attend college in Hawaii.

Thirty two years later, Tupuola will return to American Samoa as a U.S. Navy master chief petty officer, the highest enlisted rank in the Navy.

"I look forward to supporting the centennial celebration in the events that will take place, for example the military appreciation ceremony, competitive sporting events and parades," Tupuola said.

Tupuola is one of more than 20 U.S. Sailors with American Samoa roots returning home for the 100th Flag Day celebration. Most of these sailors are stationed in Hawaii with commands at Pacific Fleet



BMCMSW (SW) Felise Tupuola

headquarters, Naval Station Pearl Harbor, Kaneohe Marine Corps Base and other naval commands.

In addition to the centennial events planned for April 15-21, Sailors will use this as an opportunity to educate American Samoa students about the Navy's role in their Pacific territory.

"We plan to visit high schools to share the importance of the Navy in our history and offer the Navy as an opportunity for a rewarding and exciting career," Tupuola said.

"The Navy offers great benefits for education by paying for college through OCS (officer candidate school) or by paying for college after serving in the Navy," Tupuola said.

"I joined the Navy for the educational opportunities through the G.I. Bill. I want to let the young people in American Samoa know that the military offers scholarships for college, and also is a great way to learn about life outside American Samoa."

Reflecting on the importance of this historic celebration, Tupuola said: "I hope this centennial helps strengthen the bonds be-

tween the U.S. Navy, the U.S. government and the people of American Samoa. The Navy had a major presence in American Samoa from its early days. I hope the Navy can return as a major presence in American Samoa through ship visits, museum displays and through the memories of people in American Samoa, especially about the important part the U.S. Navy played in American Samoa's history."

"I didn't learn about the Navy's history when I was in school in American Samoa," Tupuola said. "I learned what little I knew about Navy history from former members of the Fita Fita guard. Unfortunately, these Fita Fita guard members are getting older, so I would hope that American Samoa could help get more Navy history into the schools of American Samoa."

Tupuola currently serves as the division officer of the U.S. Pacific Fleet Headquarters Boathouse in Pearl Harbor. Twelve Sailors help Tupuola run and maintain the boats used for tours of Pearl Harbor.

Tupuola has five children with his wife, the former Luisa III, also a native of American Samoa. Three sisters currently

live in American Samoa: JoAnne Kimoto, Elizabeth Te'O and Pogai Tuimavave. A fourth sister, Lole Tupuola, lives in Western Samoa.

Naval support of this centennial celebration also includes a visit by the San Diego-based guided-missile destroyer USS Decatur (DDG 73), Hawaii-based U.S. Coast Guard Cutter Kukui (WLB 203), a joint Navy and Marine Corps band, and dignitaries from the U.S. Navy and other military services.

The U.S. Navy's history in American Samoa dates back to Oct. 10, 1839 when Lt. Charles Wilkes first sailed into Pago Pago Harbor on the island of Tutuila aboard USS Vincennes as part of the U.S. exploring expedition.

American Samoans have been a part of the U.S. Navy since 1900.

Today many proudly serve in various military assignments around the world, and many return to American Samoa after retiring.

To arrange interviews with other Sailors or for more information about the Navy's participation in this historic event, contact Lt. Flex Plexico, flex@navy.org, 471-3769.

PHNSY, IMF hold family open house



Marshall Fukuki photo

Ens. Drew Kelly of USS Crommelin (FFG 37) shows shipyard employees and family members around the ship. Over 1,600 employees and their guests toured Pearl Harbor Naval Shipyard, Intermediate Maintenance Facility, Crommelin, USS Kamehameha (SSN 642) and USS Louisville (SSN 724) during the PHNSY & IMF Family Open House March 25.

USS Port Royal continues supporting United Nations operations in Arabian Gulf

By USS Port Royal Public Affairs

USS Port Royal (CG 73) continues to conduct operations in the Arabian Gulf in support of United Nations Maritime Interception operations and Operation Southern Watch.

For Port Royal's 380 Sailors, each day is filled with watch-standing, physical readiness training, equipment maintenance and personal qualifications.

Since arriving in the Arabian Gulf, Port Royal's Visit Board Search and Seizure (VBSS) team conducted its first merchant ship boarding.

"Due to all the training during work-ups, we were ready and the boarding went off without a hitch," said VBSS team leader Ens. Kenneth Athans.

Port Royal's team is also busy supporting carrier flight operations and conducting frequent fuel and supply replenishments.

Many Port Royal sailors are operating in the Arabian Gulf for the first time in their careers. Such is the case for Information Technician Seaman Fidel Lemus, "I like it so far, it has been a good experience," said Lemus.

When the busy operational schedule per-

mits, Port Royal's crew takes a short break to enjoy a steel beach picnic on the flight deck. Last Sunday, a friendly arm wrestling match, darts and bingo contests finished off the afternoon.

"It was good for the morale of the crew; and the food was good. The competitors were all good, but my division dominated all the contests!" boasted Sonar Technician 3rd Class Alfred Quinlan.

Port Royal's Enlisted Surface Warfare Specialist (ESWS) training team is conducting a five-day "ESWS surge".

Many ESWS topics were covered, giving everyone the opportunity to advance quickly towards their ESWS qualification.

Many Port Royal sailors continue to advance in personal goals.

Electronics Technician (SW) 2nd Class Virginia Gadson-Yarbrough earned her ESWS qualification this week. Operations Specialist (SW) 1st Class Jay Magers achieved his anti-air warfare coordinator qualification and OS(SW) 1st Class Darrell Schrage became Port Royal's newest Combat Information Center (CIC) watch officer.

Congratulations are also in order for Ens. Kendra Deppe, USS John C. Stennis (CVN 74) battle group's newest officer of the deck.