

FLEET FOCUS

Port Royal takes Battle 'E' award for fifth straight year

by Fire Controlman (SW) 1st Class Shawn Hilton

USS Port Royal

During the ship's recent port visit to Bahrain, the crew of USS Port Royal (CG 73) added a little color to its haze-gray ship. In honor of earning its fifth coveted Battle Efficiency (Battle "E") award, the ship's quartermasters painted a golden 'E' on the bridge wings.

The ship earned its fifth 'E' after participating in six major 3rd Fleet and four Theater Ballistic Missile Defense (TBMD) exercises, steamed 31,644 miles, logged just over 3,500 engine hours and logged 302 incident-free helicopter flight hours in 1999.

Fire Controlman 2nd Class (SW) Jason Anderson remarked, "I picked up Petty Officer 2nd Class here, earned my Enlisted Surface Warfare Specialist (ESWS) qualification here, and have now earned four Battle 'E's' while serving aboard this ship. It's a great ship with a very professional crew, and that's why we keep winning."

Gas Systems (Mechanical) 3rd Class Andrew Scheer works in the ship's forward main engine room. He reported aboard in February of 1997, so he will now have three 'E's' attached to his ribbon. "We only had seven GSM's working down here for most of last year. That's a big job when you consider how big these main spaces are. Still, hard work pays great dividends in life. This is certainly one of them," he noted.

Of course, five Battle "E" awards do not happen without an incredible amount of support from our families. A Battle "E" is an entire team award and in Port Royal our team includes the families we leave behind and miss very much while on deployment.

Quartermaster 2nd Class James Eichner, one of the crewmembers assigned to paint the gold "E" with the silver star on the bridge wing proudly exclaimed, "I'll still be here in 2001, and I'm looking forward to painting a gold stripe under this "E" after we win another one."

From the officers and crew of Port Royal, thank you to all of our families for your tremendous support in 1999.

Port Royal is now in the Arabian Gulf on deployment, working hard for number six!



USS Port Royal photo

Crewmembers of the USS Port Royal (CG 73) line up on one of the ship's bridge wings to celebrate earning their fifth Battle Efficiency (Battle "E") award. The ship earned its fifth 'E' after participating in six major 3rd Fleet and four Theater Ballistic Missile Defense (TBMD) exercises, steamed 31,644 miles, logged just over 3,500 engine hours and logged 302 incident-free helicopter flight hours in 1999.

American Samoa celebrates centennial, commemorates treaty signing with U.S.



PHI Chris Desmond photo

USS Decatur (DDG 73) Commanding Officer, Cmdr. Peter Gumataotao speaks briefly with Senior Chief Tuuava from the Defense Finance Center Pacific, who is an actual Matai "Talking Chief" in his village in American Samoa. The Decatur arrived in the port city of Pago Pago in American Samoa on April 14. The ship and crew have embarked native U.S. Navy Samoan Sailors in the traditional "Fita Fita" guard uniforms to commemorate the 100 year anniversary of the treaty signing making American Samoa a United States territory. The Samoan Sailors, all from the CINCPACFLT region, are volunteers invited by the Governor of American Samoa. They were part of the re-enactment ceremony of the raising of the Stars and Stripes over Samoan soil on April 17.

Submarine Centennial Howard W. Gilmore - A WW II American Hero

by JOCS(SW/AW) Darrell D. Ames

COMSUBPAC Public Affairs

One of the most inspiring legends of the submarine force to emerge from World War II was a selfless act of heroism by submarine commander Howard W. Gilmore. The Selma, Alabama native immortalized the phrase "take her down" as he courageously gave his life to save his ship.

Gilmore took command of the USS Growler (SS 215) in March, 1942 and sailed her into the Pacific theater. The ship, the fourth boat of the 81-ship Gato (SS 212) class, left Brisbane, Australia January 1, 1943 on her sixth war patrol. On January 16, Growler sank a 6,000-ton Japanese passenger-cargo ship and, on the final day of the month, attacked a 2,500-ton converted gunboat without success.

On the night of February 7, while charging batteries, Cmdr. Gilmore saw what he believed to be the converted gunboat he had failed to sink just a week before.

It was, however, a 900-ton provision ship, but Growler had already gone to battle stations and was in pursuit. The enemy ship spotted Growler from a mile away and turned towards the sub to ram it head on. Growler's crew was slow to detect the target's change in course.

Gilmore's family believed he had been born under an "unlucky star." It was now shining brightly. The small ship suddenly emerged out of the darkness dead ahead while Gilmore, on the bridge, sounded the collision alarm and shouted, "left full rudder!" Gilmore intended to avoid both ramming and being rammed.

However, the swing of the ship left put Growler on collision course and she struck the enemy boat amidships while traveling at 17 knots.

The massive impact sent Growler heeling 50 degrees and threw everyone below decks off their feet.

The crew of the gunboat immediately manned their machine guns and let out with a deadly spray of bullets across Growler's bridge.

The assistant officer of the deck, Ensign William Williams, and lookout, Fireman Kelley, were killed instantly. Gilmore, wounded, was clinging to the bridge frame while the enemy machine guns roared.

Amid the chaos several other crewmembers on the bridge could hear Gilmore give the order, "Clear the bridge!"

The officer of the deck, the quartermaster, and two wounded lookouts hurried down the hatch into the conning tower.

The executive officer (XO), Lt. Cmdr. Arnold Schade, stood at the foot of the ladder waiting for Gilmore to come down.

Realizing that he could not get below in time if the ship were to be saved, Gilmore chose to make the supreme sacrifice for his shipmates. Then came the final command from the skipper - one that would become submarine legend.

"Take her down!"

"Do I save the ship or save the captain," his mind raced. The XO decided to follow his captain's final order and save the ship.

He gave orders to dive and Growler disappeared below the waves, leaving Howard Gilmore, along with the bodies of Williams and Kelley, topside.

No one knows how long Gilmore lived in the water and the Japanese apparently made no effort to capture him. It is believed he drifted off into the darkness, carried off by the winds and current into immortality.

Beneath the waves, Lt. Cmdr. Schade, dazed and bruised from a fall from the conning tower to the control room, turned his focus to the battle at hand.

The impact of the collision had bent 18 feet of Growler's bow, rendering her forward torpedo tubes useless. Saltwater poured

Local news crew gets taste of nuclear sub duty on USS Cheyenne

By JO3 McClain Shewman
COMSUBPAC PUBLIC AFFAIRS

KHON-TV (Fox) Channel 2 recently made a trip to Pearl Harbor to visit the USS Cheyenne (SSN 773), the newest submarine in the Pacific Fleet.

The film crew from "Hawaii's Kitchen" descended into the galley of the submarine as the Cheyenne's cooks revealed certain recipes and demonstrated cooking methods.

The TV crew was onboard to film segments for an upcoming show, highlighting the way submariners prepare and eat their food.

"We were very excited to have them onboard," said Cmdr. William Stacia, USS Cheyenne commanding officer.

"Our cooks are among the best in the fleet and I know they're proud to show everyone what they can do and the surroundings in which they prepare food," he added.

The KHON crew arrived just in time as the crew was preparing for lunch. "The food looked really good,"

said Brickwood Galuteria, the show's host. "We were so busy setting up and shooting in the kitchen that we forgot to eat," he added.

Several days later the two primary cooks onboard Cheyenne, MS1(SS) Timothy Pickard and MS2(SS) Larry Freeman, and Cmdr. Stacia reciprocated by making a visit to the KHON studios to complete the finals scenes.

"I was the lucky one," said Stacia. "I was fortunate enough to eat the food in the final scene."

KHON-TV plans to air the Cheyenne segment on Mother's Day, May 14 at 5:30 p.m. local time, Hawaii.

KHON is the Fox affiliate and can be viewed on Oceanic cable channel 3 and local non-cable channel 2.

USS Cheyenne is the namesake of Cheyenne, Wyoming and is the fourth U.S. navy vessel to bear the name.

Cheyenne is the 62nd Los Angeles Class Attack submarine and the 23rd improved Los Angeles submarine to be constructed.

through bullet holes in the conning tower. Schade gave orders to surface and sink the enemy boat, but realized the seas were empty when she came up.

It was initially believed the enemy had gone down following the collision and subsequent machine gun attack, but the ship had simply departed the area, living to fight on, as did Growler.

The XO was able to get the leaks repaired and limped slowly back to Brisbane. Upon returning Growler received an endorsement from Rear Adm. James J. Fife, task force commander.

"The performance of the officers and crew in effecting repairs and bringing the ship safely back to base is one of the outstanding submarine feats of the war to date," said Fife.

"Growler will be repaired and will fight again," he added.

Growler did fight again, sinking four more enemy vessels before sadly going down herself with all hands in November, 1944 under the command of Cmdr. Thomas B. Oakley.

For sacrificing his own life to save his ship, Cmdr. Howard W. Gilmore was posthumously awarded the Medal of Honor, the first man of the submarine force to be so decorated.

Subsequently, the submarine tender USS Howard W. Gilmore (AS 16) was named for him and sponsored by his widow.

Even today - more than 50 years later - "take her down" remains one of the legendary phrases of the U.S. Submarine Force.