

# FLEET FOCUS

## USS Hopper celebrates Easter in Mackay

By ET3 Jason Cordova  
*USS HOPPER*

Crewmembers from USS Hopper (DDG 70) participated in several events marking the arrival of Easter while in Mackay, Australia April 23 during their six-month Western Pacific (WESTPAC) deployment.

Some crewmembers chose to celebrate the holiday by attending services aboard the ship, while others participated in Easter celebrations and ceremonies in and around the Australian port town.

The people of Mackay were enthusiastic in sharing their celebrations with Hopper. After attending a solemn, reflective

Eucharist ceremony aboard the ship, several Protestant crewmembers joined a group of Australian families for Easter dinner.

Regarding his experience with one Australian family, Fire Control Technician 3rd Class Brent Greening said, "I was glad to be a part of their family for the day, since I'm not able to be with my own. It made being deployed on the holidays a lot easier."

The Australians were equally glad to share their church services with the Hopper's crew. Several Hopper Sailors and officers attended services at St. Joseph's Cathedral in North Mackay.

At St. Patrick's Catholic Church in Mackay, a number of the crew attended an

early morning mass and celebration. The celebrant presiding over the service commended USS Hopper for being a great representative of the solidarity that has existed between Australia and the United States for many, many years.

After the celebration at St. Patrick's, Cmdr. Peterson and Lt. Cmdr. Schlise attended a ceremony at the Baker's Creek Memorial.

The memorial is the site of a 1943 B-17 aircraft crash, which claimed the lives of 40 U.S. servicemen and is still the biggest air disaster in Australian history.

At the ceremony, Cmdr. Peterson presented a flag, which had been flown from the

main mast of Hopper, to members of the Mackay Returned Servicemen's League. Later, Cmdr. Peterson and Lt. Cmdr. Schlise laid poppy flowers at the base of the monument in memory of our fallen comrades.

The Easter observances and memorial proved to be a good precursor to Anzac Day, a National Day of remembrance consecrated in Australia and New Zealand in memory of the men who lost their lives April 25, 1915 in World War I at Anzac Cove.

USS Hopper departed Pearl Harbor for its second deployment April 6; the ship will return to the Arabian Gulf just 14 months after returning from her first deployment.

## Letters From The Sea: Hopper 'Crosses the line'

By STG2 Bill Callaway  
*USS HOPPER*

USS Hopper (DDG 70) gracefully entered the realm of mythological sea characters recently. During Pacific Marine Expeditionary Force (PACMEF) Exercise 00-2, Cmdr. John W. Peterson navigated this guided-missile destroyer through the majestic waters of Neptunus Rex - Ruler of the sea, Davy Jones - a scurrilous pirate, and the Royal Court - practitioners of justice.

King Neptune, his highness welcomed Hopper and her crew into the center of his domain bearing 000 degrees latitude and 180 degrees longitude. This of course is where the International Date Line intersects the equator, offering the chance for a "polliwog" (first timer) to become a trusty "golden shellback". Golden shellbacks are special due to the date line and equator convergence. Many onboard were veteran shellbacks but 89 eager "slimy" wogs awaited their destiny on judgement day by the Royal Court.

The crossing the line tradition began centuries ago, and although it has evolved through modern and cultural changes, it nevertheless remains inextricably linked to the

proud heritage of the intercontinental seafarer and long sea voyages.

An interesting footnote to these events: One of Hopper's newest ensigns, Charla Schreiber, regrettably lost her birthday on April 12 due to the international date lapse from April 11 to 13. Ensign Schreiber said, "I'm too young to stop counting my age."

On the eve of the ceremony, shellbacks were indulged by a polliwog talent show. The festivities began with the most senior enlisted wog, Hospital Corpsman Chief Petty Officer (SW/AW) Daniel Hinz hosting. The first gig was guitarist Interior Communications Technician 3rd Class David Duran playing the Jimi Hendrix rendition of the Star Spangled Banner. Nobody was lip-syncing this one.

Follow-on acts included sitcoms such as the Junior Officer's skit of getting the ship underway, and the obligatory Y-M-C-A dance. However, the winners were Seaman Fernando Partividal, and Seaman Jason Mickel, both assigned to Deck Division. "PD" (as we call him) did a teeth-rattling impression of dropping anchor and Mickel sang the Mickey Mouse song while doing push-ups.

"Quick, someone throw him some gum." All performers survived the audience's taunts longer than necessary, as

bearing one's humility is always an appreciated part of the act.

The ceremony began early morning, O'dark-thirty, under an ominous sky of cloud-cover. The hungry and moisture deprived wogs were escorted to the forecabin for breakfast and of course water.

Nautical games such as calling flipper, orange rolling race, and seal quartet, were mildly amusing, only to be outdone by the exuberance of wogs sailing down the congo rapids, through the marianas' trench and across the great barrier reef.

Davy Jones, portrayed by Gas Turbine Senior Chief (SW) Brian Ponce shouted, "Ahoy, aargh... these wogs are having too much fun! They must be summoned to the Royal Court."

The subpoenas were read and King Neptune adjudicated all. Neptunus Rex, (the most senior shellback) portrayed by Chief Warrant Officer Anthony Lavery declared, "all wogs have performed admirably and will be admitted into my kingdom."

Following a quick field day and wash down, the crew enjoyed a steel beach picnic on the flight deck with all you can eat barbecue, music, and the tropical sun and sea.

## Navy celebrates American Samoa centennial

By Lt. Flex Plexico  
*CINCPACFLT PUBLIC AFFAIRS*

PAGO PAGO HARBOR, American Samoa - As Navy Seabees began dismantling the communication tower in American Samoa in 1952 local villagers gathered and many began to cry.

Even though Executive Order 10264 closed Naval Station American Samoa, June 29, 1951, and transferred administration of the territory to the Department of Interior, American Samoans did not want to believe their Navy was really leaving.

Only 16,000 American Samoans lived on the island of Tutuila at the time. Two thousand active-duty Sailors and 3,000 Navy family members had already sailed from the island meaning that a large part of the American Samoan family was leaving, never to return.

But the Navy did return, at least for a short time, to celebrate the 100th anniversary of the first time the American flag was raised over Pago Pago harbor.

Support for the centennial celebrations, April 15-21, included visits from the guided-missile destroyer USS Decatur (DDG 73); the Coast Guard Cutter Kukui (WLB 203); and a joint Navy and Marine Corps band. Also taking part in the ceremonies were the Under Secretary of the Navy, Jerry M. Hultin; and Deputy Commander in Chief U.S. Pacific Fleet, Rear Adm. Alfred Harms.

Hultin delivered the keynote address during the official Flag-raising Ceremony, and Cmdr. Peter Gumataotao, commanding officer of the Decatur, delivered the keynote address at the Military Appreciation Ceremony.

A special part of the Navy's support was the homecoming of 21 Sailors originally from American Samoa. These Sailors entered Pago Pago Harbor, April 15 aboard Decatur, dressed in traditional Fita Fita guard uniforms.

American Samoan Sailors also presented the American flag to the Governor of American Samoa and the Under Secretary of the Navy, both of whom raised the colors during the official commemoration ceremony April 17.

At the military recognition ceremony in Veterans' Stadium, April 18, American Samoan Sailors presented a shadow box with the U.S., Department of the Navy and American Samoan flags to the people of American Samoa. The shadow box will be placed on display in the local museum for future generations to view and remember the Navy's support to the American Samoan Centennial Celebrations.

Perhaps the most popular part of the Navy's support included the distribution of trading cards commemorating the centennial celebration. Sailors handed out trading cards to American Samoan children who were trying to collect all 16 for a complete set. Trading cards included Fita Fita guard, Naval history in American Samoa, the Decatur and other

units participating in the centennial celebrations.

"The cards were intended to highlight the special relationship between the Navy and American Samoa," explains Andrew Iuvale, Director of the Joint Services Asian/Pacific Islander Council.

"The cards also promoted interaction between American Samoans and Sailors visiting the island as part of the centennial celebrations. If you wanted a card, you had to find a Sailor!"

Navy support of the centennial began in 1998 when Navy Seabees from Naval Mobile Construction Battalion Five renovated the Jean P. Haydon Museum of Samoan Culture, originally the Naval Station Commissary.

Other Seabee projects included replacing the roof of the Autuloma Girl's School, repairing the fence at Veteran's Memorial Stadium, refurbishing a baseball field and picnic area at Lion's Park and rebuilding several playgrounds established by the Rotary Club.

The grand finale for the Navy's support of this historic occasion was a Hawai'i Navy/Marine band concert at the Pago Pago malae (town square). The concert, attended by more than 500 local residents and delay-broadcast to a television audience of more than 6,000, included traditional music from Sousa, Gershwin and others.

Following the concert, the Lieutenant Governor of American Samoa led the Samoan attendees in a fa'afetai (thank you) chorus in appreciation for the band's support of the centennial.

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

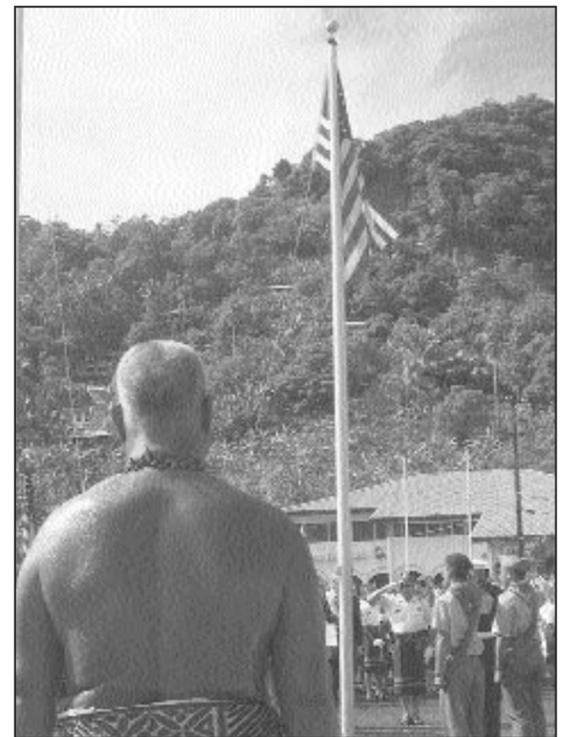
On March 2, 1872 a treaty was signed by Paramount Chief Mauga granting coaling station construction privileges in Pago Pago Harbor.

On April 17, 1900, the U.S. flag was raised for the first time over Fagatogo and the document officially creating the American Samoa territory was read. The Navy recognized from the beginning the importance of protecting the unique culture of Samoa.

The Navy Civil Engineering Corps established the layout of the naval station based on the needs of the commandant, who served as the governor of American Samoa, with special attention to Samoan customs and traditions.

The first commandant, Cmdr. Benjamin Franklin Tilley, declared on May 1, 1900, "...the laws of the United States are in force and any Samoan law or custom not in conflict therewith would be preserved."

This created the "Native Land Ordinance" which established how land is owned in American Samoa. American Samoans have been a part of the Navy since the creation of the Fita Fita guard on June 13, 1900. These American



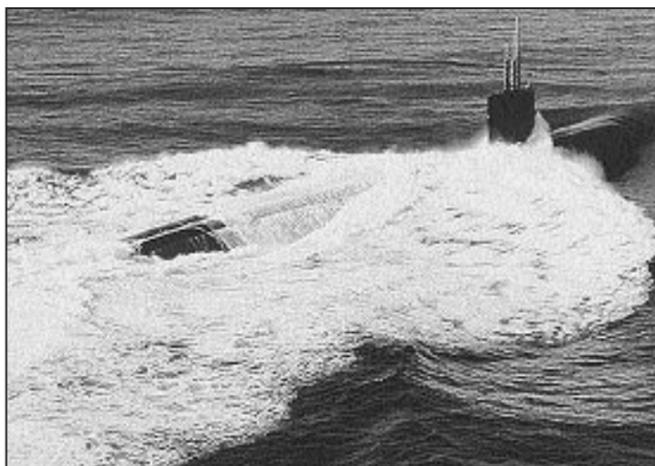
CINCPACFLT photo

A Samoan in traditional ceremonial dress watches as the reenactment of the raising of the American flag takes place during the official Flag Day ceremony in Pago Pago, American Samoa April 17. The ceremony marked the Centennial event in which the islands signed the treaty and became a U.S. territory.

Samoans were enlisted in the Naval Reserves and were responsible for maintaining law and order.

The guard quickly became an elite organization in which membership was sought. Today many American Samoans proudly serve in the Navy and Marine Corps around the world and many return to American Samoa after retiring.

## USS Asheville (SSN 758) calls at Subic Bay, Philippines



file photo

By J03 McClain Shewman  
*COMSUBPAC PUBLIC AFFAIRS*

USS Asheville Sailors were greeted by bright sunshine and even brighter smiles as they arrived in Subic Bay, Republic of the Philippines, April 28. Local officials, ship support personnel, and some family members greeted the Pearl Harbor-based Los Angeles class fast-attack submarine.

USS Asheville deployed January as a member of the USS John C. Stennis (CVN 74) Carrier Battle Group.

Asheville returned to Seventh Fleet after operations in the Arabian Gulf which included several multinational exercises, operations in support of Operation Southern Watch, and maritime interdiction operations.

Several Sailors only recently learned of family plans to join them

in the Philippines.

The reunions were joyful and tear-filled. Plans were quickly made for several sight seeing and shopping tours of the local area.

"This is a wonderful place to bring my wife, Jodi," said Lt.j.g. Shane Strohl, Asheville's supply officer.

"We are both thrilled to have this opportunity to explore the Philippines together."

Enthusiasm ran high as opportunities for cultural exchange, sight-seeing, and shopping were briefed to the crew, and no time was wasted getting into the action.

On her first night in port, Asheville hosted a reception and tour for Mr. Felicitio Payumo, chairman of the Subic Bay Metropolitan Authority (SBMA) and for members of the SBMA Board.

The crew participated in several liberty adventures, including an ecological safari, scuba diving, golf,

and hiking to areas recently exposed to volcanic activity. Other crewmembers opted for less aggressive pursuits, enjoying the warm weather and the inviting beaches.

"I spent a day on the beach with a good book," remarked Fire Control Technician Second Class Jeremy Gross.

"Our schedule has been fairly hectic and we've been working hard. This was a great time to unwind."

Many members of the crew have also volunteered to participate in a community relations project renovating local school classrooms.

"We were truly fortunate to have a Philippines port call in our schedule," said Chief Electronics Technician Christopher Anderson.

"The Philippine people are tremendously hospitable, with a long tradition of friendship and good will toward the United States Navy."