

## FLEET FOCUS

## USS Fletcher celebrates 20th birthday, history

By Ens. Malia Spofford,  
USS Fletcher Public Affairs

The crew and families of USS Fletcher (DD 992), a mature, multi-mission destroyer, celebrated the 20th anniversary of their ship's commissioning at the USS Nevada Memorial July 12.

As Fletcher's officers formed ranks in their choker whites, swords gleaming in the hot Hawaiian sun, the entire group listened to Cmdr. Chris Noble's commemoration address. In it he praised the ship's "versatile and flexible" crew whose high spirits and military bearing has ensured that Fletcher has remained a force for freedom throughout the world - even 20 years after first setting sail.

Fletcher was designed and built by Ingalls shipyard of Litton industries in Pascagoula, Miss. from 1978-1980, when she was subsequently commissioned as the thirtieth Spruance class destroyer. Spruances were the first class of Navy ships to be powered by the LM2500 gas turbine engines, which provide great power and flexibility for propulsion and can drive the ship at speeds in excess of 30 knots. Fletcher's maneuverability - including its ability to stop in a ship's length and a half - is unique among warships of her size.

The ship is named after Adm. Jack Fletcher, a medal of honor recipient during the occupation of Vera Cruz and a commander in the North Pacific Area during WWII. Adm. Fletcher earned the Distinguished Service Medal and many other prestigious awards. He also was known for his tactical flexibility and power in trying situations.

Fletcher's focus is to stay tactical by being technical. Equipped with the AN/SQS-53D sonar, the Advanced Tomahawk Weapons Control System and Vertical Launch System, as well as the brand new IT-21 Enterprise class Secret and Unclassified computer networks, Fletcher is a real time strike and undersea Warfare platform whose mission readiness is depended upon throughout the fleet.

As of March, five of Fletcher's chiefs now go by "Senior", in rates as diverse as Hospitalman, Master-at-Arms, Fire Controlman, Storekeeper and Engineman. In addition, 40 Sailors were recently advanced in a frocking ceremony on the ship's fantail during RIMPAC.

During the recent RIMPAC 2000, Fletcher proved its ability to perform in all warfare areas, firing Sea Sparrow, Harpoon, Penguin and Hellfire missiles, performing Tomahawk planning exercises and supporting RIMPAC nations with Visit Board Search and Seizure operations.

Currently, Fletcher Sailors are preparing their ship for a Western Pacific (WESTPAC) deployment with the USS Abraham Lincoln (CVN 72) Battlegroup in August. As Fletcher's crest reads, "En Pace et Bello Paratus": In peace and war prepared.



file photo

The officers, crew and family of USS Fletcher (DD 992) celebrated the 20th anniversary of the ship's commissioning at the USS Nevada Memorial July 12. The ship is named after Adm. Jack Fletcher, a medal of honor recipient during the occupation of Vera Cruz and a commander in the North Pacific Area during WWII. Adm. Fletcher also earned the Distinguished Service Medal and many other prestigious awards. Fletcher Sailors are preparing their ship for a Western Pacific (WESTPAC) deployment with the USS Abraham Lincoln (CVN 72) Battlegroup in August.

## Reuben James Sailors paint school in Thailand

Lt. j.g. Jose Fikes,  
USS Reuben James

"Fightin' 57" Sailors from USS Reuben James (FFG 57) jumped ship and went ashore to help spruce up the Wat Samnaktorn School in the Chanthaburi region of Thailand recently.



USS Reuben James is part of the naval force participating in a series of operational exercises with the Royal Thai Navy.

Known as Cooperation Afloat Readiness and Training, or CARAT, this exercise enhances mutual tactical expertise, builds stronger military-to-military operations and strengthens the bond between the two nations. This bilateral exercise takes place annually between the United States and Southeast Asian navies.

As part of the Navy's overall program to help and foster better relations with other

countries, Reuben James Sailors took CARAT's activities well beyond the high seas and volunteered at the Wat Samnaktorn School in one of Thailand's rural communities.

The Fightin' 57 ambassadors painted the wall surrounding the school's perimeter and then prepared a large cookout for nearly 400 students from the local area.

Reuben James Sailor, Chief Electronics Technician (SW) Brian E. Stone also helped out with the Navy's Project Handclasp. With a small group of Sailors and Marines,

he went throughout southern Thailand giving out books to schools and visiting a hospital.

According to Stone, the group donated more than 3,000 books to the Thai educational system.

"For the Sailors who worked to improve the Wat Samnaktorn School, the founders of the Project Handclasp, and the Thai students, it was a rewarding and satisfying experience, displaying the commitment to humanity of the U.S. Navy and the Fightin' 57," said Stone.

## Dependents' cruise:

## Paul Hamilton family, friends enjoy Maui

By Lt. Lane Ogawa  
USS Paul Hamilton

WARM breezes, deep blue water, and crystal clear skies greeted the officers and crew of USS Paul Hamilton (DDG 60) as the ship arrived for a four day port visit to the ancient Hawaiian capital of Lahaina, Maui July 13-17.

USS Paul Hamilton hosted a dependents' cruise which departed Pearl Harbor, Hawaii on the morning of July 13 and anchored in Lahaina, Maui later that afternoon.

More than 200 family and friends of Paul Hamilton crewmembers took advantage of the "once in a lifetime" opportunity to ride the "Phantom Warrior" to Lahaina and back.

"I've been looking forward to this for over five months," said John O'Neal, father of Ens. Kevin O'Neal, who along with his family traveled from Naperville, Ill. "I told my boss that I was taking a vacation to go to Maui to see my son's warship and nothing would stand in my way!" added O'Neal.

Guests of Paul Hamilton were treated to an extensive display of the power of an Arleigh Burke class destroyer.

Guests were able to witness a full power run of the ship, a "five-inch 54" firing, and a Close in Weapons System (CWIS) firing.

Guests also toured engineering spaces, Combat Information Center and some even drove the ship from the bridge. "I can't be-



Photo illustration by PH2 Chad McNealey

More than 200 family and friends of USS Paul Hamilton (DDG 60) rode the "Phantom Warrior" to Lahaina, Maui and back. The ship sailed to the former capital of Hawaii during its dependents' cruise, July 13-17.

lieve I got to drive the ship!" exclaimed 9 year old Shanyna Diggs, daughter of Senior Chief Storekeeper Norman Diggs.

Family and friends of Paul Hamilton were also treated to a delicious lunch of grilled hamburgers and hotdogs.

"The hamburgers were great! I wish I had good food like this all the time at home" commented Tara Atkins, wife of Mess

Specialist 3rd Class Teddy Atkins.

Upon arriving in Lahaina, guests and crewmembers were free to explore the old whaling village.

Many families enjoyed the fabulous shopping, beautiful beaches and great dining.

"Oh my gosh, it was the best vacation I have ever had" exclaimed 8 year old Natasha Unger, daughter of Lt. j.g. Wes Unger.

Carol Chilton, mother of Yeoman 2nd Class Joseph Chilton summed up many family and friends feelings by commenting, "What a great warship this is! I'm so glad to see what my son does all day; it was such a mystery before."

It makes me proud to see all the young sailors, they are so professional and polite! I'm so happy to be a Navy Mom!"

## U.S., Royal Thai navies conduct war at sea exercises during CARAT

Lt. j.g. J. Fikes  
USS Reuben James

The Gulf of Thailand was the scene for a number of different exercises and training evolutions between units of the U.S. and Royal Thai Navies July 10-14.

USS Reuben James had a major piece of the action, serving as the Commander Task Group 712.0 flagship for the majority of the underway period.

These included such activities as Submarine identification and familiarization, gunnery exercises, and underway replenishments. Yet the highlight of the program were two War at Sea Exercises (WASEX), in which the two navies combined their ships into two teams and faced off against each other.

In the first WASEX, the Blue Task Force, including the Thai Carrier HTMS Chakri Nahareut, USS Reuben James, HTMS Taksin, HTMS Phutthaloetia Naphalai, HTMS Sukhothai, and a P-3C aircraft attempted to transit without the carrier being engaged.

The opposing forces, the Orange, composed of the

USS Sides, USS Salt Lake City, HTMS Udorn, HTMS Prabparapak and a P-3T aircraft attempted to stop the carrier. Then the next day, for the second WASEX, the Blue Forces tried to force a passage through a simulated chokepoint against the Orange defenders.

Many Reuben James sailors found the training experience worthwhile.

"We don't get many chances to do these kind of

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Chief Sonar Technician  
Scott R. Moore,  
USS Reuben James

exercises," said Operation Specialist Seaman William McKeever. "It showed, what our training can produce. It also displayed how different countries can come together in a flexible environment," added McKeever.

Chief Sonar Technician Scott

R. Moore agreed, "It was a rewarding time, we further strengthened our relationship with our Thai allies, and enhanced our own warfighting capabilities."

The exercises were large-scale training activities that required extensive planning and preparation.

The smoothness of the operations was a testament to the professionalism of both navies and the common methods they shared.