

## FLEET FOCUS

## Russell Sailors help battle cancer

By GSCS Andrew Smith  
USS RUSSELL

A young North Carolina boy's cancer is spreading. Half a world away, Sailors from USS Russell (DDG 59) join the fight...with clippers.

Miguel Rice, a four-year-old from Asheville, N.C., has been battling leukemia for the past two and a half years. Until now, he has been able to keep his hair, something that has been a security blanket for him. He felt that as long as he wasn't bald, he wasn't as sick as some of the other people in the Cancer Ward.

But a few weeks ago, the cancer spread, necessitating more radical chemotherapy. The prospect of going bald frightened and disheartened the boy.

Fortunately, the Rice family has a friend in Senior Chief Gas Turbine System Technician (SW) Andy Smith, leading chief petty officer of Russell's engineering department. In order to improve the boy's morale, the North Carolina native offered to shear his own scalp in a show of solidarity. He asked anyone else on Russell who wanted to help to join him.

On Sept. 1, Smith and twenty-three volunteers mustered in Russell's barbershop, with a video camera at the ready. After the shearing, the newly bald crewmen posed for a picture on the flight deck. Then the tape and the photo were sent off to North Carolina.

After viewing the video, which was loaded with jokes, comments and prayers for Miguel, his mother



USS Russell photo

USS Russell (DDG 59) Sailors volunteer their time to help Miguel Rice, a four-year-old from Asheville, N.C., who has been battling leukemia for the more than two years.

Lydia remarked that "It was the first time in a long time that I have seen Miguel smile and laugh."

"I just wanted him to know that there isn't anything wrong with not having any hair. Hopefully this will help his attitude towards his new

treatment," said Smith.

"I am not sure if my wife will like this, but it's definitely for a good cause," said Augusta, Georgia native, GSM2 Joel Sammons.

Currently Miguel is being treated at Duke University Medical Center

in Raleigh, North Carolina, and is proud to have a Russell ballcap as a part of his new collection. He is coping well with his newest look and has said that he would like to visit Hawaii. Russell looks forward to his visit.

## USS Russell crewman joins officer ranks

By Lt. j.g. Orrin Johnson  
USS RUSSELL PUBLIC AFFAIRS OFFICER

In a ceremony aboard the Battleship Missouri USS Russell (DDG 59), Hull Technician 1st Class (SW) Ronald Viggiani was commissioned Ens. Ronald Viggiani.

Viggiani distinguished himself aboard Russell as a leader both in and out of his department, filling the role of repair division chief while that position was gapped. Officers and crew alike relied on him for the answer to any question about the engineering plant. He was active in the destroyer's First Class Association and MWR committee and heavily involved in his community.

Ens. Viggiani earned his commission through the Limited Duty Officer, or LDO, program. Through this program senior enlisted personnel compete for a limited number of officer spots. They are usually assigned to jobs where their years of technical experience will serve their command more than the average new officer could. Many LDOs then transfer to become unrestricted line officers and some end up commanding ships of their own.

Former Russell Chief Engineer, Lt. Don Wickens flew in from his new duty station at Afloat Training Group, WESTPAC in Japan in order to participate in the ceremony and give Ens. Viggiani his oath of office. Wickens himself was a former hull technician who was commissioned through the LDO program.

"It means a lot to me that he came all the way out here just for this," said Lt. Viggiani. "Lt. Wickens was an important influence on me while he was on Russell. I hope in six years one of my Sailors will be saying those same things about me."

Ens. Viggiani will now serve as boilers officer in USS John F. Kennedy (CV 67), homeported in Jacksonville, Fla. His wife, Jennifer, and three children, Danielle, Luke, and Victoria, are looking forward to their new duty station.

## 'Safe Sailing': Navy Meteorology onboard Reuben James



USS Reuben James photo

AG2(SW) Michael Garza launches a weather balloon for his atmospheric survey.

By Lt. j.g. Jose Fikes  
USS REUBEN JAMES

**D**YNAMIC changes in weather are a concern for every unit commander and seagoing vessel in the world.

From the rise and fall of tides to typhoons with winds in excess of two hundred miles per hour, meteorology and climatology are the sciences of change that aid safe navigation.

Civilian agencies provide routine weather updates on the local news to ensure the public is aware of what types of weather to expect in upcoming days.

Unfortunately, ships at sea do not have immediate access to this information. However, the Navy's Mobile Environment Team (MET) provides the fleet with timely weather information allowing commanding officers to make informed decisions on their ship's navigation.

USS Reuben James (FFG 57) embarked Aerographers Mate 2nd Class (SW) Michael Garza on Apr. 27 to provide the ship with constant meteorological data throughout

the Cooperation Afloat Readiness and Training 2000 (CARAT-00) deployment.

He reported on board equipped with his SAT MOD lap top computer, weather balloons and sophisticated software designed to create weather charts for forecasting.

Satellite connectivity with the weather center in Monterey, Calif. facilitated the production of necessary climate reports for the Philippines, Japan, Singapore, Malaysia, Thailand, Brunei and Hawaii as Reuben James sailed from port to port.

His weather predictions were used to determine the feasibility of conducting multiple training exercises and live firing evolutions.

"Predicting the weather is not a perfect science. But we take a very scientific approach to what we do and provide the most accurate information possible to the ships," said Garza. "It has been a lot of fun making sure the ship and the air detachment get all the weather information on time. A lot of exercises and air operations can fail if weather conditions are not considered. CARAT-00

was a good experience and helped me improve my skills as an aerographer," he added.

Typhoon avoidance, missile shoots and flight operations are all mission areas directly affected by weather and climatology. Garza, along with many other aerographers mates, provide the fleet an invaluable service.

Commanding officers are given another tool to help them make the correct decisions each time weather forecasts are given.

"Far too often we underestimate mounting weather problems and react too late," said Cmdr. Carl Cramb, commanding officer, USS Reuben James.

"Having petty officer Garza aboard has given us the ability to focus on the weather impacting our daily operations and allow us the time to make intelligent decisions with respect to the weather," said Cramb. "The Navy has invested a great deal of training on Petty Officer Garza, as well as provided him with a plethora of resources to aid him in his weather predictions. Such an asset at sea is invaluable and contributes significantly to the warfighting team."

## USS Reuben James reached ESWS qualification goals while deployed

By Lt. j.g. Jose Fikes  
USS REUBEN JAMES

Enlisted Surface Warfare (ESWS) qualifications are time honored milestones in every Sailor's career. In previous decades, becoming a qualified Surface Warrior was not a benchmark for success in the Navy. However, with an increased need for grass roots knowledge in a Navy filled with numerous technological a need came for more junior sailors to learn the basics of surface warfare early in their careers.

USS Reuben James (FFG 57) accomplished the ship's goal and the Navy's goal of 100 percent of eligible enlisted personnel earning ESWS pins.

During the ship's recent deployment to Cooperative Afloat Readiness and Training Exercises (CARAT) 2000.

The CARAT exercises were established in 1994 to improve military-to-military and nation-to-nation relationships throughout Southeast Asia. Participating countries in CARAT-00 included Philippines, Malaysia, Thailand,

Singapore and Brunei. During each phase of CARAT, every Sailor had the opportunity to test their seamanship, navigation, tactical and engineering skills.

Younger Sailors like Gunner's Mate 3rd Class (SW) Michael Brown improved his knowledge of the MK75/76mm gun, while earning his ESWS pin.

"This was my first time in Asia. It was a real cool deployment," said Brown. "The guys in my division pushed me to get my pin (ESWS) and learn how all the guns and stuff work at the same time. This should help me make petty officer 2nd class next year," added Brown.

"This year's deployment (CARAT) is what I needed to help me earn my ESWS pin," said Fire Controlman 2nd Class (SW) Enrique Padua. "It's nice to spend time in Hawaii, but deployment is when you learn the most. Now that I'm qualified I'm prepared to teach the younger Sailors. It's all about passing on the knowledge," said Padua.

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any command," said Cmdr. Carl Cramb, commanding officer, USS Reuben James. "Not many ships do it. Our intense and effective training program facilitated the accomplishment of this goal. Weekly ESWS stand downs coupled with a constant push to qualify are the essence of our success,"

said Cramb.

Prior to deploying in May, Reuben James had less than 50 percent ESWS qualifications. However, they began with the end in mind and designed a training matrix that covered all the objectives necessary to complete the ESWS Professional Qualification Standards (PQS) book prior to returning to Pearl Harbor in October.

Each Sunday was designated an ESWS stand-down. During these standowns the subject matter experts conducted briefs and hands-on instruction for all attendees. Not only did the participants gain the requisite knowledge for earning their ESWS pin, the instructors also improved their teaching skills and promoted learning.

"Our goal as a chiefs mess was to return home with all our Sailors qualified," said Fire Controlman Chief (SW) Jay Muller. "And that's just what we did! Nowadays Sailors will never make chief and will have a real hard time getting promoted to the more senior ranks without an ESWS pin. We (chiefs) all have ours. This is our chance to

give that same knowledge to the younger kids so they can ultimately improve their quality of life by way of pay raises from promotions. Besides, you're not a real surface warrior until you wear the pin," added Muller.

With a thriving economy and thoughts of higher pay and incentives in the civilian sector, now more than ever, quality of life incentives are what keep Sailors in the Navy. Although the ESWS program is not usually viewed as a quality of life issue, it can directly effect a Sailor's opportunity for advancement.

"Continuously stressing the importance of training to our Sailors enriches their professional lives," said Lt. j.g. Manny Hernandez, auxiliaries officer USS Reuben James. "As a former enlisted surface warrior, attaining this distinct qualification allowed me to learn more about the Navy and my role in it. The ESWS program aided me in earning my commission through the seaman to admiral program. I am proud and welcome the new "enlisted surface warfare warriors," said Hernandez.