

# Liberty Call

A spin of the wheel

## Wheel of Fortune visits Hawaii



JO3 Erin Carlson photo

Contestants tape the Wheel of Fortune at the beachfront of the Hilton Hawaiian Village in Hawaii. The show for individual contestants airs the week of Feb. 12 and family week shows will be seen the week of Feb. 19.



Gameshow host Pat Sajak, letter-turner Vanna White and the rest of the "Wheel of Fortune" crew energized the Hilton Hawaiian Village beachfront last weekend during a week's worth of taping of the world's number-one-rated syndicated game show.

The Hawaii community got its chance to appear on the show in two ways. People wanting to be contestants filled out applications at the Royal Hawaiian Shopping Center last month while people desiring to be in the audience received free tickets through an online web site and from local TV Channel 2.

"The response was tremendous. We had more than 10,000 people just trying to get a simple audition," said "Wheel" contestant coordinator Gary O'Brien.

To fill the 15 open slots on the show, KHON Fox Channel 2 held a random drawing and selected about 800 people to an audition held by the station.

The field was then narrowed down to about 500 people, then 180 by Wheel of Fortune officials.

Six Navy personnel were chosen as representatives as they headed to the final auditions on Jan. 10.

There were two sets of auditions: one for individual contestants to appear in the 'Hawaii Week'

segments that will air the week of Feb. 12, the other for pairs of family members to compete in 'Family Week' shows that will air the week of Feb. 19.

The auditions consisted of a team of five "Wheel" officials who posed mock puzzles and timed written exams to the potential contestants.

Lt. Cmdr. Randall Johnson, who attended the audition with his wife Capt. Ann Birchard, USAF, was the first to solve a puzzle.

"We hope to make the family show," he said. "But it would be great if at least one of us could get up there and represent the military well."

The next cut narrowed the field to 30. Unfortunately, none of the Navy representatives were included in that stage.

"We are looking for people who we think may be able to play well here in Hawaii on the beach," said O'Brien.

"There is a lot going on, a lot of pressure to being a good Wheel of Fortune player. So we are trying to find people who can hold up under pressure, who will keep the game moving along and have fun in the process - interesting people, enthusiastic people and people who are good problem solvers," added O'Brien.

The 15 people who were chosen as contestants were notified by phone the next morning and attended the taping Jan. 12 - 14.

This round of taping marked the third time "Wheel" visited Hawaii.

The last time the gameshow was in Oahu was two years ago and prior to that it taped a round of shows at the Hilton Waikola Village on the Big Island.

Recent special tapings of the show, which are slated to air in the next few months, were also held in San Francisco, Miami, Paris and Australia.



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Far right: Wheel of Fortune game hopefuls get some tips on game strategies. More than 10,000 people auditioned for the 15 open slots on the show.

Right: MS2 Brett S. Draper (left) and CM1 (SW) Joseph L. Noonan (right) were among some of the Navy Sailors who auditioned to appear on the Wheel of Fortune. The auditions consisted of a testing team of five "Wheel" officials from Los Angeles going through the crowd one by one, giving them a chance to solve mock puzzles.



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