

First MCPON re-visits Pearl Harbor

By JOCS(SW/AW) Darrell D. Ames

SUBPAC PUBLIC AFFAIRS

As retired Master Chief Delbert Black enjoyed the small boat ride in Pearl Harbor that would take him out to greet the USS Los Angeles (SSN 688), he took time to reflect on his 30-year Navy career in the very spot where it had started, nearly 60 years before.

"I was just a screaming seaman on the USS Maryland (BB 46) stationed in Pearl Harbor that Sunday morning in December, 1941," said retired Master Chief Delbert Black, who would later become the first Master Chief Petty Officer of the Navy (MCPON). The former senior enlisted advisor for the Chief of Naval Operations was in Hawaii with his wife celebrating their 50th wedding anniversary.

The Los Angeles, a fast-attack submarine based in Pearl Harbor, was returning from a six-month deployment to the Western Pacific.

"I had just enlisted in March of that year (1941) and was assigned to one of the ship's gun turrets," he added. "It was beautiful weather that morning, the sun was shining, everyone was waking up to go to church or whatever and before you knew it, the harbor was full of smoke and fire. You couldn't hardly see through all the smoke," he remembered.

The Japanese attack on U.S. Naval forces at Pearl Harbor, Hawaii on December 7, 1941 will be forever etched in Delbert Black's mind as not only the United States entry into World War II, but also served as a catalyst that persuaded the young gunner's mate to make the Navy a career...one that lasted more than 30 years.

"When I enlisted, we were paid \$21 a month, and they took twenty cents out for medical, whether you wanted it or not," he lamented even to this day. "I was already awake when the attack started that morning," he recalled. "We were inboard of the Oklahoma and were hit twice, losing three shipmates."

Amid the fury of zero dive bombers and a harbor full of smoke and fire Master Chief Black was impressed with the courage, teamwork and resolve displayed by the American service members that fateful day. "Nobody panicked," he said. "Once everyone realized what was happening we all knew we had a job to do. We had to fight back and maintain our composure. That's tough to do when

you're being fired upon," he added.

Black's tour on Maryland encompassed the war (1941-1945), leading him witness further action in the Pacific. "We were torpedoed at Saipan and were hit by kamikaze planes in the Philippines and Okinawa," he said. "Through it all, we stayed together as a crew, fighting and working side by side. I'm really proud of that and that's what the Navy's all about," he added while grinning ear to ear.

The Marietta, Oklahoma native went on to spend 21 of the next 30 years at sea. "I was haze grey and underway," he stated. "I enjoyed sea duty. That was one of the most enjoyable aspects of being in the Navy."

Black enjoyed duty on a total of nine ships and crossed the equator in 1942, but is best remembered for the job he held during one of his infrequent stops on shore duty.

"In 1966 the Chief of Naval Operations was looking for a better method of communicating with the enlisted community," said Black. "Retention was down to about 10% and they really wanted someone to act as the enlisted liaison. That's why the MCPON billet was created," he added.

Admiral David L. McDonald, Chief of Naval Operations in 1966, began the search for the first senior enlisted liaison by sending out an ALLNAV (All Navy) message. Applications were whittled down to 10 candidates, then to four, and finally only one. Master Chief Delbert D. Black assumed the duties as Senior Enlisted Advisor of the Navy on Friday, January 13, 1967. On April 28th of that year the job title was changed to Master Chief Petty Officer of the Navy.

"I wasn't sure about the job in the beginning," said Black. "Nobody knew what I was supposed to do. I just asked Admiral McDonald to let me do my job and leave me alone. He left me alone, I traveled around talking to the fleet Sailors, retention went up and the job was a success," he added.

Master Chief Black held the Navy's highest enlisted position until his retirement in April of 1971, working for two more CNO's, Adm. Thomas H. Moorer and Adm. Elmo R. Zumwalt, who recently passed away. "All three of them gave me free reign to do my work," Black said. "The Navy was undergoing some changes and we tried a lot of different things back then, some worked and some ideas weren't so good."

The Adm. Zumwalt days are best remembered for his delivering wide-ranging reforms through his famous "Z-grams," making Naval careers more attractive, and bus driver uniforms fleet wide. "I wasn't too sure about that idea," said Black. "Combination covers should be worn by Chiefs and Officers only," he added.

"Some of the good things that emerged from my days on the job as MCPON was the development of the CMC (Command Master Chief) program and the establishment of the CPO advisory board," he said.

Black and his wife Ima now make their home in Winter Park, Fla. and have been retired from the Navy for more than 28 years. They were in Hawaii to celebrate their 50th wedding anniversary. "Ima's from Alabama and when we met I knew it was the real deal," added Black with a grin.

Despite being retired for almost three decades Master Chief Black still calls the Navy his job and his home. "I still feel like I'm on active duty," he said. "I'm just a little less active now. I still enjoy getting out and meeting the Sailors," he added.

The Navy, in deep appreciation of Black's stellar service to his country, dedicated an enlisted living quarters in his name (Delbert D. Black Manor) at the Fleet Combat Training Center in Dam Neck, Va. "They named a barracks after me and they call it a manor," he

said with a chuckle. "It's not just a BEQ (Bachelor Enlisted Quarters), it's a manor. And this place has every modern convenience you can imagine. It's not like when I was living on a ship during World War II. Back then I slept in a hammock and just rolled it up when I got up in the morning," he added.

Quality of life improvements for today's Sailors is what pleases Black the most. "I guess habitability improvements are the biggest changes for the better," he said. "Educational opportunities are really important as well. And now the Sailors on ships can use the phone to call home while at sea, they can use e-mail, they have ATM's (automated teller machines). It's amazing what they've got today and it's all good," he added.

The retired Master Chief had an even better idea that would probably appeal to the masses even more. "I think they should put a TV monitor in every bed on a ship. They can do it in airplanes, why can't they do it on ships? You'd see an increase in the sales of video games if they did that," he added.

Other areas of improvement in today's ranks, according to Black, include having more senior leaders stand up for what they believe in as opposed to bowing to peer pressure and public opinion, making young Sailors work harder to enjoy the privileges of rank and to rebuild the Navy back up to the numbers they enjoyed in the 1980's.

Another concern was the growing lack of military experience in Congress. "We have too many lawmakers with less and less military experience these days," Black said. "That's not a good thing," he added.

Above all Master Chief Black is still a Sailor's Sailor. "My kinship to the Sailor has always been strong," said Black. "My first chief taught me the most important lessons of my career. He said don't give up. There are always opportunities for you if you put forth a little more effort. And most important, don't give up on your shipmates."

It's been close to 60 years since Delbert D. Black set foot in his recruiter's office in Oklahoma and it's quite obvious he isn't giving up anytime soon.

"I remember being assigned here (Pearl Harbor) like it was yesterday," said Black. "The submarine force was pretty impressive back then and today, nearly 60 years later, they're even more imposing. It's a shame they're cutting back on the number of submariners," he added.

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Electric drive selected for new Navy destroyers

Navy Wire Service

The Department of the Navy (DoN) announced Jan. 6 that the Land Attack Destroyer (DD 21) will be its first class of ships designed and built during the 21st century to be powered by electric drive featuring an integrated power architecture. The first of the DD 21 class of destroyers is expected to be in commission by the end of this decade.

Underscoring the importance of using integrated power technologies, Secretary of the Navy Richard Danzig said that changes in propulsion systems fundamentally change the character and power of naval forces. "This has been shown by the movement from sail to steam or from propeller to jet engines or to nuclear power. Electric drive will reduce the cost, noise and maintenance demands of how our ships are driven."

Rear Admiral Mike Mullen, director of the Navy's Surface Warfare division, explained during the conference how damage control has profound war-fighting implications and how electric drive technology will give that vessel a significant advantage. "If I take a hit, I will be able to instantly reroute power, reconfigure my ship, in a way that allows me to survive better and handle the damage in a way that allows me to continue to fight."

"More importantly, electric drive, like other propulsion changes, will open immense opportunities for redesigning ship architecture, reducing manpower, improving shipboard life, reducing vulnerability and allocating a great deal more

power to warfighting applications," added Rear Adm. Mullen.

Electric drive technology also represents great potential to improve the quality of life for embarked Sailors. It will free up large amounts of internal space, leaving room for significant habitability improvements. "We now have the capability to give staterooms to enlisted Sailors," added Secretary Danzig. "When we have staterooms for Sailors, and reduced numbers also. We have changed the character of life in the Navy; we have changed the character of the experience, what it means to be on board a ship."

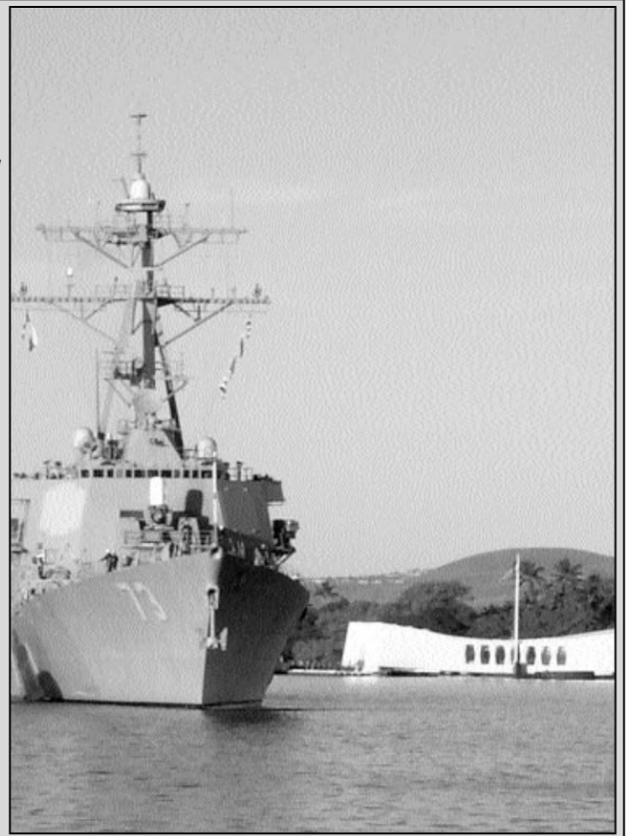
The key design element of integrated power and electric drive is a single source generator for the requirements of all ship's power needs, including propulsion.

The DoN decision to team DD 21 with electric drive for its propulsion comes after careful consideration among several possibilities studied by the two contractor teams involved.

"This is a long sought and much desired goal," said Secretary Danzig. "DD 21 will truly be the first 'Smart Ship' built from the keel up. Electric drive technology is integral to that. The warfighting and quality of life benefits that can be derived from this will mean that our Sailors can walk aboard a ship that is unlike any other they have known ... this shift in propulsion reflects our wider efforts to change the very culture of the Navy. With DD 21, Sailors will live, work, and fight aboard a ship that values them like never before."

USS Decatur visits Pearl

USS Decatur (DDG 73), a guided missile destroyer, passes the Arizona Memorial beginning a two-day port visit in Pearl Harbor. Decatur, commanded by Cmdr. Peter Gumataotao of Agana, Guam, will represent the U.S. Navy during the American Samoa Centennial in Pago-Pago Harbor April 17.



Lt. Flex Plexico photo

Navy food service initiatives being tested

Navy Wire Service

Feeding the crew of a U.S. Navy ship is hard and demanding work for both the Mess Management Specialists (MS's) and Food Service Attendants (FSAs).

The job ranges from planning, preparing and serving nutritious meals, through detailed galley recording keeping, to clean-up and maintenance of galley spaces, equipment and related areas. The typical workday runs from 5 a.m. until about 7:30 p.m.

In a concerted effort with the Fleet and the Naval Sea Systems Command (NAVSEA), the Naval Supply Systems Command (NAV-SUP) is reengineering Navy's Food Service Afloat program to improve the quality of life (QOL) for Sailors and create a more efficient food service operation afloat.

As a key part of this effort, NAVSUP is currently prototyping 13 food service afloat

initiatives onboard the USS Tarawa (LHA 1), homeported in San Diego, Calif. The goal of the prototyping is to demonstrate the initiatives that may significantly reduce workload afloat while improving QOL and nutrition.

The thirteen initiatives being prototyped are -

- Using Smart Card technology to track consumption of meals in private messes.
- Converting traditional full-service serving lines to self-service serving lines.
- Using state-of-the-art cleaning equipment to improve sanitation and decrease cleaning time for galley spaces and equipment.
- Adopting selected advanced food products (frozen, chilled, shelf-stable) that are highly acceptable to the crew, demonstrate labor savings and require less storage, rather than cooking the same item from scratch.
- Using contractor support instead of ship's working par-

ties to load pierside subsistence deliveries into store-rooms.

• Contracting out Food Service Attendant functions (i.e., cleaning and trash removal) while in port.

• Providing the latest in food service equipment technologies as identified by the NAVSEA Affordability Through Commonality (ATC) program.

• Replacing manual inventory management process with bar-coding technology for recording receipts, breakouts/breakbacks and inventories.

• Eliminating stateroom cleaning for all officers, O-4 and below ... junior officers assume responsibilities.

• Minimizing food preparation in multiple galleys ... using standard menus and centralized preparation.

• Installing NAVSEA approved no-wax and no-buff decking.

• Serving pre-prepared en-

trees for the dinner meal while in port, which allows MSs and FSAs to secure at 1400 daily while providing a quality meal to the crew for the evening meal.

• Implementing commercial sector inventory practices by inventorying food items based on the item's cost vice conducting routine wall-to-wall inventories.

The prototyping onboard Tarawa began in October 1999, and will continue for one year. Those prototyped initiatives that prove successful will be adopted as the food service paradigm of the future. NAVSUP's primary mission is to provide U.S. Naval forces with quality supplies and services.

NAVSUP is responsible for quality of life issues for our naval forces, including food service, postal services, Navy Exchanges, and movement of household goods.

SPOT CHECK

The Pacific Fleet today

Personnel: 247,421
• 133,897 USN
• 70,006 USMC
• 12,848 USNR
• 30,670 civilians

Ships: 187 (*)

Underway: 76 (41%) (**)

Aircraft: 1,420 (**)

Exercises: 3

Port Visits: 8 countries

Aircraft Carriers Underway/Deployed:
• USS Kitty Hawk
• USS Constellation
• USS Abraham Lincoln

LHA/LHD Underway/Deployed:
• USS Peleliu
• USS Belleau Wood
• USS Essex
• USS Bonhomme Richard

* - includes Military Sealift Command ships
** - includes USMC aircraft