FLEET FOCUS

Pasadena takes MWR top recreation award

By JO2 McClain Shewman
COMSUBPAC Public Affairs

USS Pasadena (SSN 715) recently earned the Morale and Welfare Recreation (MWR) Fleet Recreation award for the entire Navy. It's the first time the honor has gone to a small command, and no wonder - the small crew had an unprecedented number of events and gatherings.

Despite an unforgiving workload and long hours while the ship was in drydock at Pearl Harbor Naval Shipyard, the crew remained focused on arranging countless activities and family gatherings.

"I think being stationed in Hawaii contributes to a successful MWR program because of year-round opportunities to participate in outdoor events," said Sonar Technician (Submarines) Senior Chief (SS) Tim Domrose, chief of the boat. "This program helps build morale and cohesiveness. It allows us to give something back to the Sailors."

USS Pasadena has maintained a retention rate at approximately 60 percentage, which is unusually high for a submarine that resides in the maintenance-intense work environment of a shipyard. The crew also benefited from 29 reenlistments in 2000, 16 of which were from first-term Sailors.

Some of the events USS Pasadena organized included: ship's picnics, a luau, bowling nights, ice-skating nights, a day at the water park, an 8-ball pool tournament, paintball outings, ship's sports teams, and contributions to scuba diving certifications and others. Plans are in progress for a deep-sea fishing charter, private pilot's certifications and more.

"[MWR] gives families a break from the maintenance intensive life of the shipyard. It also gets families together to enjoy each others' company and have fun," said Cmdr. Mark Ginda, USS Pasadena commanding officer. "It's all done by the Sailors. This year's committee inherited a strong MWR program."

While the boat was undergoing an extensive maintenance period, the committee members were determined to raise money for the fund.

Pasadena's biggest fundraisers were the ship's store and food sales, which garnered in nearly $70,000 over the year alone for a crew of 130 men.

With such a successful fundraising program on USS Pasadena, the committee then voted on ways to spend the money collected. Ultimately, they decided on 12 MWR sponsored events hosted over a six-month period and the purchase of sports equipment, new recreational gear and personal certificates for crewmembers.

To ensure that the recreation committee was doing all that it could, a survey was issued to the crew and some very useful feedback was received. The survey indicated that the majority of the crew was pleased with the committee and many commented simply "Keep up the good work." The committee resolved any concerns voiced by the crew.

JO2 McClain Shewman photo

First row, from L to R, STSCS(SS) Tim Domrose, Chief of the Boat, MM2(SS/DV) Russ Wagner, Rec. Committee Pres., MS2(SS) David Holmes, MM2(SS) Joseph Tomasello, MM1(SS) James Ambrosia, Cmdr. Mark Ginda, commanding officer of USS Pasadena. Back row, L to R, ET2(SS) Grady Lott, HM1(SS) Michael Miller, ET3(SS) Thomas Steele, MM1(SS) Nicholes Naquin, MS2(SS) Chris McClurkin, Lt. Brian Huntley.

"We have a great level of participation from the crew," said MM2(SS) Russ Wagner, USS Pasadena Recreation Committee President.

Ginda said that the entire crew realized that shipyard life is difficult and that the boat would need a strong recreation program to help keep Sailors and their families' in good spirits. "It's our goal to find as many different possible things to attract the crew," said Ginda.

The committee members of the winning program took in to account the wants and interests of the crewmembers in hopes of finding appealing activities.

"We had so many new Sailors with hobbies, the leaders listened to their ideas and made it a successful, diverse program," said Ginda.

What was most important to Ginda and the crew was for people to see that a submarine in such a maintenance-rigorous area could go over the top with a recreation program.

USS Lake Erie completes Final Evaluation Problem

Ens. Edward Yandoc
USS Lake Erie Public Affairs

USS Lake Erie (CG 70) successfully finished its Final Evaluation Problem (FEP) on March 5 in the Central Pacific.

No Sailor looks forward to going to battle or dealing with damage, but the reality is that the U.S. Navy's aggressive combat training process is unsurpassed in its ability to protect crews from the challenges they meet on deployment.

Developing the capability to deal with emergency situations takes weeks of training and preparation, and encompasses a large portion of a ship's Interdeployment Training Cycle (IDTC). For Navy ships, FEP is the culmination of the basic phase of that cycle.

"[This was] unmistakable confirmation that we can remain ready to carry out our primary mission of conducting prompt and sustained combat operations at sea at the same time Lake Erie is leading the U.S. Navy in the new mission area of theater missile defense," said Capt. John J. Hammerer, Jr., commanding officer of Lake Erie.

"Lake Erie's success is yet another testament to the professionalism and dedication of the best crew in the Pacific Fleet," said Hammerer.

Observers from the Afloat Training Group (ATG) boarded Lake Erie at Kwajalein Atoll on Feb. 28 for a transit to Pearl Harbor, to observe FEP enroute.

"ATG is here to provide support required to insure the ship achieves the capability of self-training, which Lake Erie has demonstrated," said an ATG representative.

Lake Erie took an unusual road to FEP. About one year ago the ship was designated by the Chief of Naval Operations to serve as the Navy's Theater Ballistic Missile Defense test ship.

In support of that mission, Lake Erie was assigned to participate in the continuous testing process for the Navy's newest technologies in Theater Ballistic Missile Defense (TBMD).

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Capt. John J. Hammerer
Commanding Officer, USS Lake Erie

The direction that placed a priority on Lake Erie's role in TBMD development also stipulated that the ship would still be required to complete all training and certifications associated with the Interdeployment Training Cycle (IDTC).

Lake Erie commenced the basic phase of the IDTC last June with a Command Assessment of Readiness and Training (CART).

Over the next several months the ship completed Total Ship Training Availabilities (TSTA) scheduled between TBMD test events.

The vast majority of the preparation and work was done in the two months leading up to FEP. Lake Erie also faced the challenge of crew turnover.

Approximately 35 precentage of the crew were new since the ship's return from deployment in December 1999.

Lt. Cmdr. Matt Dixon, an observer from the staff of Commander, Naval Surface Group, Middle Pacific, said, "I think it's substantial that Lake Erie passed FEP on top of all the TBMD requirements she has to fulfill."

The crew worked long and hard in the weeks heading up FEP. Going through a variety of challenging training scenarios, which included many nighttime general quarters drills, the crew honed skills needed to carry out damage control and fight the ship.

"We need to have more GQ's, it makes an emergency situation routine . . . through practice, we know what we need to do and are more prepared," said Electronics Technician 3rd Class Darnell Yazzie.

Constant practice and repetition proved to be a significant challenge. "I think that the guys who haven't done it before thought they were getting pushed pretty hard..." said Fire Controlman 2nd Class J.J. Wilson, "but once the guys understood what we were doing and what it took to succeed, then we got it done." Wilson was specifically commended by ATG for a job well done. "You just have to know what's going on around you and train hard," he said.

"The biggest challenge is getting new personnel qualified and experienced enough to be comfortable in challenging positions," said Ens. Domenic Carlucci.

The preparation and practice led to increased proficiency and confidence. "There were guys that were learning, and at first I would never think of leaving them alone, but now I think they're ready. I can see the progress," said Sonar Technician (Surface) 1st Class Gregory Roberts, a member of the Combat Systems Training Team (CSTT.)

As the ship got closer to FEP morale and enthusiasm grew, from the top of the command on down. The intensity increased with each day and the crew performed when it counted most.

Operaions Specialist Seaman Noah Harbour seemed to have summed it up best when he said; "The crew's dedication throughout the entire time led to our success."

Fuel Consolidation project underway

By Maura Yee
PWC Pearl Harbor

Most car owners take for granted that fuel will be available when their vehicles need it. All they have to do is pull into a gas station and "fill 'er up."

Similarly, Navy shipdrivers and Air Force pilots in Hawaii would like to have the same confidence that fuel will be readily accessible for them. To help achieve this goal, an $18 million fuel consolidation project is currently underway.

The project will consolidate and modernize existing facilities, as well as improve the distribution of fuel throughout Naval Base Pearl Harbor and to Hickam Air Force Base.

Fleet and Industrial Supply Center, Pearl Harbor (FISC), operator of the fuel distribution system, is responsible for the conceptualization, planning and design of the fuel modernization effort.

The work, which began in December 1999, was awarded to Hawaiian Dredging Construction Company. Regional Officer in Charge of Contracts, Pearl Harbor (ROICC) is administering the contract with Ens. Michael Yee as project manager.

"This project is really a combination of many smaller projects," said Yee. "The work includes repairing/modifying fuel tanks, constructing a pump house, modifying a truck-loading rack (gas station), building a new oil lube facility, and installing new pipeline."

Most of these projects are occurring simultaneously, with different subcontractors working at sites located at Submarine Base's upper tank farm, and along North Road and South Avenue. The completed project, expected to be completed in August 2002, will include a new tie-in to Hickam Air Force Base's JP-8 fuel line.

Currently, JP-8, one of three fuels provided by FISC, is purchased from the Tesoro Refinery at Campbell Industrial Park. The fuel is piped to FISC's Pearl City Peninsula Fuel Annex.

"We're Hickam's only source for JP-8," said Lt. j.g. Jennifer Tetatzin, FISC staff civil engineer. "At the present, we send them fuel three times a week from Pearl City Peninsula across the harbor via underwater pipelines that are old and deteriorated."

Instead of repairing or replacing these pipes, the new equipment being installed will allow JP-8 fuel to be sent to FISC's main fuel terminal at Kuahua Peninsula and stored at the Upper Tank Farm. From there, it will be fed to the Hickam tie-in along South Avenue via the new pump house and pipeline. Eventually, the Pearl City Fuel Annex will be closed.

"Consolidating the JP-8 fuel operation with our other fuel facilities allows us to reduce Navy infrastructure, saving hundreds of thousands of maintenance and repair dollars," said Tetatzin. "We're freeing up valuable land at the Pearl City Peninsula and trading 1.2 miles of new pipe for 17 miles of old."

Tetatzin said the new, consolidated fuel operations, with upgraded, modern equipment, will provide improved service to the Fleet and other customers who rely on FISC for fuel.

Maura Yee photo

A total of 6,150 linear feet of 10-inch pipeline is being installed as part of the JP-8 fuel consolidation project. Lt.j.g.Jennifer Tetatzin, FISC staff engineer and Ens. Michael Yee, ROICC project manager check out a portion of the new pipeline that runs above ground along North Road.

From chief to ensign

By USS Columbus Public Affairs

On Feb. 1, Machinist Mate Chief (Submarines) Steven W. Stewart took the oath of office and was sworn in as a United States naval officer onboard the USS Missouri (BB 63). Stewart is currently assigned to USS Columbus (SSN-762) serving in Auxiliary Division.

Attending the ceremony were Stewart's family including his daughter, Meisha and son, Joshua who removed his anchors. His father, Ray Larsen and father-in-law, Joe McElyea, donned officer insignia upon his shoulders. Performing the cover exchange was Cmdr. Summerall. Pastor Bill Gallahair of the First Southern Baptist Church of Pearl Harbor offered the invocation.

Stewart was born in Chickasha, Okla., on May 5, 1963. He is a graduate of Windsor High School and earned a bachelor degree in Education from Southern Illinois University.

Stewart joined the Navy on Oct. 28, 1986. He completed Basic Military Training and Machinist Mate "A" school at Recruit Training Center Great Lakes, Ill. His assignments include USS Pintado (SSN-671), USS Grayling (SSN-646), USS Springfield (SSN-761), Naval Submarine School Groton, Conn., and USS Tucson (SSN-770). Stewart will next report aboard USS Frank Cable (AS-40) in Guam.

Stewart joins the elite corps of officers known as "mustangs". The term mustang refers to an officer in military service who has risen through the ranks from enlisted to officer status. Outstanding military performance, technical expertise and inspiring leadership are trademarks of a mustang.

The Mustangs have been and continue to be an invaluable asset, critical to the framework that holds our force together and drives our ships to sea.