

FLEET FOCUS

Sailor from original Reuben James visits the 'Fighting 57'

Lt. j.g. Scott Kozick
USS Reuben James

On Oct. 31, 1941, the U.S. Navy destroyer Reuben James (DD-245) was torpedoed off the coast of Ireland by a German U-boat while conducting convoy escort duties. One-hundred and fifteen of her 156 Sailors lost their lives on that cold October day. This was the first U.S. Navy ship to be sunk from hostile action during World War II.

On May 4, survivors of DD-245 and members of her successor USS Reuben James (DE-153), a destroyer escort from World War II, met in Albany, N.Y. USS Reuben James' (FFG-57) own SM2(SW) Andre Perez attended the reunion and shared the unique opportunity to reflect on the history of the Navy and WWII with these aging veterans.

It was a bittersweet reunion for the 40 plus retired Sailors who attended. The reacquaintance of friends, fond memories of camaraderie and stories of life at sea were darkened by thoughts of the men who lost their lives when the first Reuben James was sunk.

Just a month and a half after the reunion, Michael Sussman, who was one of the 40 WWII Reuben James Sailors who attended the reunion, made the trip from Arizona to San Diego, Calif. to visit the USS Reuben James (FFG-57) and meet her crew.

"Since I was only 400 miles away and I had never seen the new Reuben James, I decided that I could not miss this opportunity," said Radioman Second Class

(Retired) Michael Sussman.

Sussman, his wife, daughter and son-in-law paid a visit to the Reuben James on June 27. When they arrived, they were greeted by SM2(SW) Perez who along with Chief Warrant Officer Patrick Shannon gave them a tour of the ship and introduced them to the crew. They had the opportunity to talk with the crew both during the tour and when they had lunch on the mess decks.

"All of the Reuben James veterans and family that I met at the reunion were so nice to me. I am happy that I had the opportunity to return some of their hospitality and show Mr. Sussman the ship. I hope he enjoyed this as much as I did," said Perez.

It was on the mess decks that Sussman saw a little piece of the past that brought him back to his days as a Reuben James Sailor. There he saw an original dress blue enlisted cover that bears the name USS Reuben James on it. The cover is encased in glass for all to see.

"This is exactly the same as the one I used to have. I remember having to scrub it every day with a tooth brush to keep it clean and shining," said Sussman with a smile from ear to ear on his face. The memories that this brought back were undoubtedly good ones.

This unfortunately was not the case for everything Sussman saw during his tour. The sight of the torpedo magazine and the surface vessel torpedo tubes had an equally strong but saddening effect on him. Torpedoes were no one's friend during World War II and to a Reuben James



OS2 Chris O'Donnell photo

World War II era enlisted serviceman's cover. The cover is encased in glass and sits on the mess deck of the USS Reuben James (FFG-57).

Sailor, they carry a very strong hatred that is very personal.

"It was great to show off the ship to a prior Reuben James Sailor. They were very impressed by the cleanliness and modernization on the ship. I think things have changed a lot since the time Mr. Sussman was in the Navy," said Chief Warrant Officer Patrick Shannon.

Cmdr. Carl Cramb Commanding Officer, USS Reuben James, also had an opportunity to talk to Sussman and presented him with a watercolor painting of

the ship. "We owe a huge debt to our aging veterans. It was a distinct pleasure for everyone to have Mr. Sussman and his family aboard for a tour," said Cmdr. Cramb. "The opportunity to share his war stories, fully appreciate the horrors he and his peers endured and grasp the sacrifice of our predecessors can only truly be realized by talking with those who have done it. We look forward to a long friendship with our former Reuben James Sailors so that we never forget what they did for us," he added.

Port Royal flies surface warfare officer pennant



ET 3 Teddie Hayes photo

CWO2 Ron Ward and Lt. j.g. Sarah O'Hare, the most recently-qualified surface warfare officers on USS Port Royal, fly the surface warfare pennant.

Lt. j.g. Sarah O'Hare
USS Port Royal

The officers of USS Port Royal (CG 73) were recently presented the Gold Surface Warfare Excellence Pennant which represents the qualification of every

surface warfare officer on the ship. Rear Adm. Robert T. Conway Jr., Commander, Navy Region Hawaii and Commander, Naval Surface Group, Pacific, presented the pennant to the officers of Port Royal on June 19. The wardroom celebrated the achievement during a ceremonial raising of the pennant by CWO2 Ron Ward and Lt. j.g. Sarah O'Hare, the most recently qualified surface warfare officers.

During the past 18 months, Port Royal has qualified 13 surface warfare officers. The officer training program developed by Lt. Chris Sweeney, operations officer, and implemented by Lt. j.g. Jeff Worthley, training officer, is a cumulative and comprehensive program that is designed to actively engage every surface warfare officer candidate.

"Earning the Gold Surface Warfare Excellence Pennant is no small feat," said Lt. Sweeney. "Not

only does this achievement serve as a credit credit to our training program and the teamwork necessary for its effectiveness, but it demonstrates the individual determination and will of each surface warfare officer candidate," he explained.

Port Royal's challenging surface warfare officer training program includes interactive classroom training as well as hands-on training.

Each week three training seminars are given by subject matter experts, covering basic, administrative and tactical lesson topics. In addition to classroom training, every officer is assigned personal qualification standards and completion dates. Each qualification requires that specific tasks be accomplished. These qualifications include basic damage control, basic engineering, small boat officer, officer of the deck in-port and underway, combat information cen-

ter watch officer and several others.

"The classroom training is designed to instill surface warfare fundamentals," explained Lt. j.g. Worthley. "These fundamentals provide a basic understanding necessary to complete personal qualifications," he added.

Once every qualification is completed, a three-part surface warfare officer board is held. The first portion is scenario-based. Candidates are given an operating area and time of year as well as other key elements.

They are told to prepare and deliver a detailed presentation assessing the transit, weather considerations, replenishment intentions, battlegroup assets, methods of communication and employment of weapons.

After completing the presentation, a question and answer portion is administered in which a thorough understanding of the

ship's administration, propulsion, operations, weapons systems and their tactical applications must be conveyed. The final phase consists of a "walk-around" when the officers tour the ship with the captain, explaining equipment and systems, their operating procedures and their location.

"It is a great feeling being surface warfare officer-qualified," said Lt. j.g. William Nesbit, a recently qualified surface warfare officer. "It is an acknowledgement of your professional development and a recognition for all your hard work."

CWO2 Ward captured the pride and accomplishment felt by the entire wardroom. "The final qualification process is very demanding," stated CWO2 Ward. "Once you're presented with your surface warfare pin, however, you know you've earned it. At that point, you are truly able to make a contribution," he said.

Afloat Training Group Western Pacific looking for top performers

Team ATG WESTPAC

ATG WESTPAC is looking for top performers to become part of a team that trains the Pacific's only forward deployed naval forces. Consider orders to ATG WESTPAC for these reasons:

(1) The experience will positively impact your upward mobility and professional development;

(2) Single Sailors and families enjoy and benefit from some of the best facilities the Navy has to offer, worldwide, offering both diversion and opportunities for personal growth; and

(3) We travel throughout the Western Pacific to train FDNF ships and Sailors.

ATG WESTPAC is headquartered in Yokosuka, Japan, at the entrance to Tokyo Bay and has a detachment in Sasebo on the island of Kyushu. Instructors at both locations are responsible for conducting unit-level training underway and classroom training for command training teams and watch standers. ATG WESTPAC also operates the only Navy fire-fighting school in the Western Pacific, in Yokosuka, with trainees that include Navy, Coast Guard and USNS shipboard fire-fighting teams, the federal fire department that supports bases in Japan, and Navy and Marine Corps aviation squadrons.

As the Western Pacific agent for the Chief of Naval Training and Education (CNET), ATG WESTPAC operates a schoolhouse and manages classroom instruction for over 50 CNET and NAVLEAD courses, courses that would otherwise only be found at Fleet Training Centers in the United States. Our list of course offerings is growing to meet increased fleet demand for training that doesn't require lengthy and expensive TADs to CONUS. Recently added was the Information Systems Administration (ISA) NEC 2735-granting course and the command is exploring the possibility of adding more courses.

The experience and knowledge gained at ATGWP prepares Sailors for success. Benefit from working alongside some of the most experienced, qualified and senior personnel in the fleet. Underway training takes our instructors aboard nearly every class of ship in the Navy inventory. The ex-

perience of some of our classroom instructors rivals that of the subject matter experts in CONUS fleet concentration areas.

Underway and classroom training leads many instructors to attain significant qualifications, such as distinguished instructor, afloat training specialist and master training specialist. The best are recognized as ATG WESTPAC afloat and classroom instructors of the year with the Classroom Instructor of the Year further competing for CNET Classroom Instructor of the Year. Engineering personnel have an additional opportunity to qualify as an N821 (PEB) assessor.

Personnel growth is a high priority at ATGWP. Afloat instructors will have the opportunity to qualify as team leaders and experience briefing and debriefing COs, ISICs, department heads and training teams. Such substantial qualifications and recognition increase competitiveness at selection boards and broaden opportunities for post-Navy employment. In addition, instructors receive sea pay for underway training and their sea duty counter advances day for day.

Command personnel benefit from opportunities to attend classes offered in-house or through the Navy College Program. Schools associated with Navy College teach some courses in ATGWP's own building, a likely reason why many staff attend school during their tour. Distance learning is another popular tool complimenting traditional classroom instruction in aiding members to achieve their educational goals.

Consider your family also for your next move. Safe, supportive communities en-

hance your overall experience. Fleet Activities Yokosuka was recently awarded its third CINC's Installation Excellence Award over the past four-year period. Our detachment in Sasebo also lives in a top-notch community and both locations are considered by many families to be the "best kept secret in the Western Pacific." Children attend DOD schools that are staffed by highly-qualified and motivated personnel. Certified, affordable daycare is available at both locations and recreational facilities are fully equipped. True, in

Japan you are not in Kansas a n y m o r e . However, a friendly culture exists in both locations where people you know, and even those you don't know, will go out of their way to help you deal with the challenges of living overseas and the thrill of exploring Japan's traditions and sites.

You'll find a bounty of activities to occupy your off-duty time. If you love to travel, this is definitely the place to be. Sailors and families often take advantage of Air Mobility Command (AMC) travel and low commercial fares to visit exciting places like Australia, Thailand, Korea and the Philippines. The Fleet and Family Support Center assists MWR in offering local tours all over Japan. Some of the popular adventures include Tokyo Disneyland, the Dutch influenced amusement park Huis Ten Bosch in Sasebo, or perhaps climbing Mount Fuji for the real outdoor enthusiasts. Recently one of our Sailors participated in the 2001 Great Wall of China Marathon and enjoyed a 10-day stay in Beijing and Xian, China.

Local tours are offered to hundreds of

ancient religious relics and castles. You might visit well-known sites in Osaka, Nagasaki and Hiroshima. History buffs will find a trip to Kyoto, Japan's first capital, just three hours away and rich in history and culture. Each year in Hokkaido, Sailors enjoy the Ice Festival. If shopping is your thing, you'll probably find the Akihabara electronic district of Tokyo or downtown Yokohama a place you'll enjoy returning to again and again.

Sasebo is well known for fine quality porcelain and boasts local factories that produce some of Japan's finest wares. Both Yokosuka and Sasebo base communities organize seasonal sales with incredible buys in imported furniture, carpets and assorted "knick-knacks".

ATG WESTPAC is the training cornerstone for a formidable forward presence in the Western Pacific. Consequently, instructors routinely travel the Western Pacific to meet ships for training events. Okinawa, Singapore, Guam and Australia are among the many ports visited in order to support 7th Fleet training.

If you are thinking about an overseas tour, think about Japan. Many Sailors in Japan, including ATG WESTPAC Sailors, pursue two or three consecutive tours in Yokosuka and/or Sasebo. Often, those who transfer to CONUS can't wait to come back. There are reasons for this: Japan is a great place to live and work and the jobs at ATG WESTPAC are rewarding and fun. Ask someone who has been there or send an e-mail if you have any questions.

Our web page (www.atgwp.navy.mil) has links to find much information about Japan, Fleet Activities Yokosuka and it's supporting organizations. Interested personnel must be screened through his or her commanding officer for instructor duty as specified in the MILPERSMAN. In addition, overseas screening is required for members and their families. Do yourself and family a service by checking us out and looking into what a tour in Japan has to offer.

We are currently searching out hard charging DC, FC, GS, MM, OS and YN personnel, but any interested Sailor who is looking to excel should inquire about jobs at ATGWESTPAC. At ATGWESTPAC, our motto is, "We Forge the Sword."

