



A group of more than 200 chiefs and selectees run along Naval Station Pearl Harbor's South Road on their way to a seven mile hike through a Red Hill tunnel Aug. 14.

Navy Chiefs, Navy Pride

Pinning ceremony highlights six weeks of selectee training

Story and photos by JOC Gerard Sekerak
Editor

Despite being disrupted by the recent terrorist attacks on the mainland, the Navy completed one of its most highly revered and time-honored traditions last Friday.

At a formal ceremony at the Banyans, the Navy officially accepted 18 chief petty officers into its ranks. In Navy Region Hawaii alone, nearly 300 new chiefs had their fouled anchors "pinned on," and combination covers placed on their heads.

With 5,455 Sailors selected for advancement to chief petty officer Navy-wide, the Navy experienced its largest advancement opportunity in recent years.

However, the pinning ceremony - the highlight of six weeks of training provided to chief selectees since the first week of August - was nearly postponed.

As Navy leadership reacted to the terrorist attacks on the World Trade Center towers and the Pentagon, normal Navy operations and events had to be reviewed and revised to fit into the framework of new heightened security measures.

According to Master Chief Engineman (SW) Robert J. Scheeler Jr., Naval Station Pearl Harbor Command Master Chief, the decision whether to modify, postpone or cancel the chiefs pinning ceremony was based on what each command should do to best fit its current posture and ability to carry out its mission.

"We [the senior enlisted leadership] felt that there comes a point in time when leaders need to step up to the plate," said Scheeler. "And this was more of an issue in my opinion of bringing our junior leaders to that plate. Up until that point, we put them [selectees] through some high quality training, enough training that we felt each and every one of them were ready to assume the position right then and there... and we weren't about to hold that up," he added.

It was a great honor to be frocked, especially in light of what happened," said newly frocked Mess Specialist Chief Paul Stamaltelaky. "I feel that we need to continue to accomplish the Navy's mission, even through the most challenging and difficult situations; it will help set the example for our junior Sailors."

Another newly frocked chief, Yeoman Chief Stephanie Rivera, flag writer for Commander, Navy Region Hawaii, shared similar sentiments. "In spite of the recent terrorist attacks, I felt completely ecstatic to don my khakis and pin on my anchors," said Rivera. "Our ceremony did not hide

our mourning for those Americans who have suffered a great and disastrous loss. However, now is the best opportunity to let the CPOs take their place in this Navy and protect our freedoms and our nation."

As in previous years, the current commander of Navy Region Hawaii was invited to the pinning ceremony to offer remarks. This year the tradition remained the same as Rear Adm. Robert T. Conway Jr., Commander Navy Region Hawaii and Commander Naval Surface Group Middle Pacific, offered both powerful and motivating remarks to the ceremony's more than 100 attendees.

"We're at war and our lives have changed forever," said Conway as he motioned the ceremonial guard's American flag bearer to stand holding the Ensign just to the side of the admiral's left shoulder. "You all are about to embark on a journey - and I brought the flag back in here for a purpose - the events of these past few days have changed us forever... and you're about to take the watch.

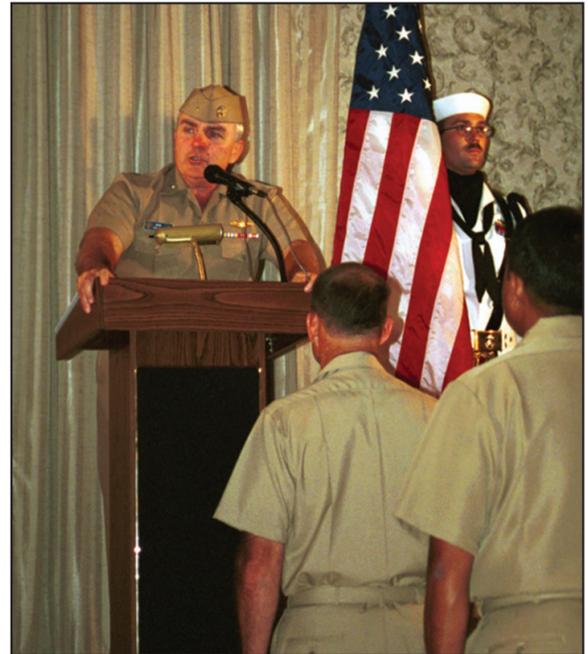
"You are about to assume the mantle of leadership that's going to lead us into the future. You are the ones who are going to have these young men and young women - our Sailors - as your charges. [If] you sit in the Chief's Mess, you're not doing me and the leadership any good. You get out on those deckplates and you talk to these kids and you motivate them... then you're doing what you're paid to do."

The ceremony was the culmination of six weeks of training, which is geared to help prepare the selectees to be tomorrow's enlisted leaders. During that training, the selectees endured almost daily early-morning physical training sessions that included formation runs at various locations around Oahu. In an effort to educate the selectees about the importance of remembering the past to prepare for the future, each command's senior leadership focused on including a dose of local history and fun into the training sessions.

In addition to the training received from their individual commands, selectees also participated in events that brought them together from the many different commands around the island. Some examples include: the run/hike to and through one of the tunnels which lead to the Red Hill fuel storage facility - the journey took chiefs and selectees on a seven-mile trip through the underground facility, recognized as a national engineering landmark; and the annual island-wide Chief Selectee Chariot Race Competition - selectees from Oahu commands competed against each other by pulling hand-made chariots through a mud pit the length of a football field.

Throughout the six weeks of training, selectees were encouraged to look past any blood, sweat or tears, to look past the abundance of information they are asked to absorb and to focus on the one overall theme, that is, leadership through teamwork.

"It's supposed to be a happy and joyous occasion, but what it's really about is people being called to the task," said Scheeler. "It's also about young men and women stepping up to the plate and answering the call. And that's clearly what our new chiefs have done."



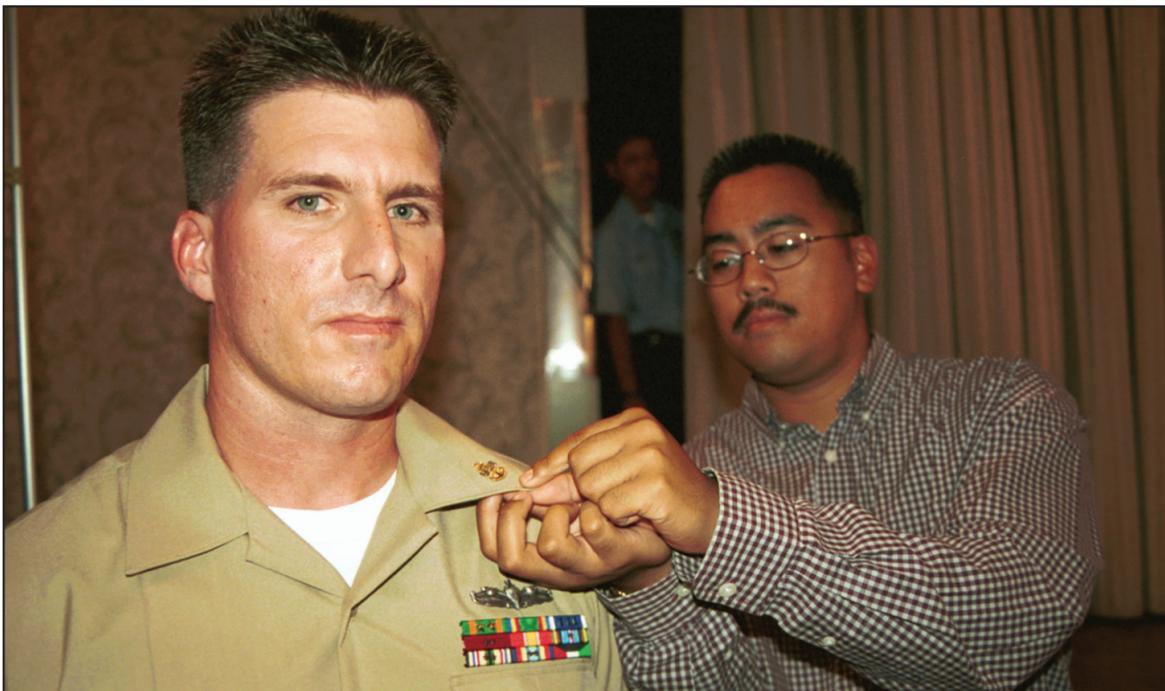
Rear Adm. Robert T. Conway Jr. delivers his remarks at the Navy Region Hawaii/Naval Station Pearl Harbor chiefs pinning ceremony Sept. 14 at the Banyans.



Navy Region Hawaii CNOMC Phil Russell motivates a group of chief selectees during an early morning physical training session Aug. 8.



Chief selectee Team Navy Region Hawaii/Naval Station Pearl Harbor crosses the finish line during one of the many heats at the annual chariot races at NCTAMS Aug. 31.



A new chief gets his anchors pinned on by a relative. Eighteen selectees were "pinned" as chiefs during the Sept. 14 ceremony at the Banyans.



A group of chief selectees tour the inside one of Red Hill's 250-foot fuel storage tanks Aug. 24.