

FLEET FOCUS

VP-47 crew make most of LIMA '99 visit Kaneohe Sailors 'pitch in' on highway clean-up

By Jon Yoshishige
PACFLT PUBLIC AFFAIRS

There was a little bit of lightning, a lot of heat and an interesting twist to old relations for the crew of a U.S. Navy P-3 aircraft here for an international air and maritime exhibition.

The day's activities at Langkawi International Maritime and Aerospace exhibition, or LIMA 99, were cut short because of a sudden electrical storm Dec. 1, the last day the P-3C from Patrol Squadron 47 (VP-47) was on static display.

Still, it capped off what members of the Hawaii-based patrol plane called an educational and enjoyable trip to this tiny island on the Thai-Malaysian border.

"Some folks did SCUBA diving, and others went on historical tours (of the island)," said Petty Officer 2nd Class Paul Beaubier, 36, an avionics technician.

"I really like this place because of the vegetation and trees," the San Clemente, Calif., native said as he surveyed the rolling green hills surrounding the one-runway Langkawi International Airport from the shadow of his P-3. "The landscape's very beautiful, and there's so much history to this place."

Pulau Langkawi is a group of 104 small islands grouped tightly together at the northwest end of the Strait of

Malacca. Its white sand beaches are said to have originated from the blood of a Princess Mahsuri, who was executed after being wrongly accused of adultery. Her blood flowed white, proving her innocence.

According to legend, Mahsuri laid a curse on the island that it would not prosper for seven generations. That period ended recently, and locals say the island has seen unprecedented growth. Mahsuri's tomb lies less than 10 miles from the main town of Kuah, where many LIMA attendees stayed, including the P-3 flight crew's officers.

Fifty Sailors from the cruiser USS Vincennes (CG 49) — the other U.S. Navy presence at LIMA — were scheduled to march in a parade through Kuah Dec. 3 with sailors from other participating nations, including the navies of Bangladesh, Singapore, Indonesia, Pakistan and the Philippines.

Officials said each of the biennial exhibitions has grown in size and stature since the first in 1991.

Infrastructure improvements, including the Mahsuri International Exhibition Centre that housed dozens of exhibits from more than 30 countries, have contributed to "an international exhibition of world-class standards that all Malaysians could be proud of," said Malaysian Prime Minister Mahathir Mohamed.

In the exhibition hall adjacent to the island's only airport, scale models of

jetliners and combat aircraft, as well as full-sized aircraft and armored personnel carriers, jockeyed for space with displays of mortars, grenade launchers and flight gear. Smartly dressed women beckoned passers by to flight simulators, computer simulations and plasma display screens that hawked the latest in advanced weaponry.

"Walking through the exhibition hall was a real eye-opener," said another P-3 crewman, Lt. Jeffrey Lopes, 27, who was commissioned in 1994 upon graduating from the Naval Academy. "It's great being able to participate in an international airshow and meet different people from different countries."

"Just being in the Navy is great because we're always meeting different people and going to different places," said Lopes, who was born and raised in Hawaii.

Still, having grown up on a tropical island didn't keep him from feeling the intense heat and stifling humidity here. But he wasn't complaining.

"It's a lot milder than our last deployment," he said. "It was 110 degrees in the (Arabian) Gulf."

Actually, there were hardly any complaints from the nine enlisted men and six officers from the P-3.

"We do a lot of long hours on the plane ... so even if we get off for one hour, we make the most use of it," said Lt. John Kurz, 34, one of the plane's flight engineers.

Kurz, from Indianapolis, Ind., made the most of his free time during the plane's four-day stay by taking a three-island boat tour with his shipmates.

"They even offered fishing, but I opted to eat instead of fish," Kurz laughed.

The crew visited the island's two clubs, shopped or socialized with others who packed the island for the week-long exhibition.

"Air shows are great because it's always great to see other planes," said Beaubier, who recently got a private pilots license. "We even talked to the Russian pilots - they're neat guys, very cordial."

Beaubier's been in the Navy only a little more than four years, but 12-year Navy veteran Lt. Cmdr. Bill Mack, 35, remembers a very different relationship with the Russians.

"It's ironic seeing the Russians so up close," said Mack, originally from Defiance, Ohio. "I flew my first deployment in December 1990 ... and the Russians were our adversaries. Now they're on the same hotel floor I'm on."

Mack's plane flew from Langkawi directly back to Japan, where VP-47 has been deployed since June, split between Okinawa and Misawa. The 10-plane squadron, which left Naval Air Station Barbers Point just before it closed last summer, is scheduled to return to Marine Corps Base Hawaii, Kaneohe Bay, this month.

By Cpl. Bsbary Meiton
MCBH PUBLIC AFFAIRS

SAILORS from Marine Aviation Logistics Support Element, Kaneohe, are "pitching in" to make a difference on a two-mile stretch of the H-3 highway outside the Marine Corps Base Hawaii, Kaneohe Bay, front gate.

The First Class Petty Officers Association at the unit has adopted this segment of H-3 as part of the "Adopt-a-Highway" program, offered by the State of Hawaii Department of Transportation, Highways Division.

The petty officers will clean the highway quarterly. They held the first of these clean-ups Nov. 19.

"We wanted to do something to get involved," said Petty Officer 1st Class Randel Jacobsen, the association treasurer and the logs and records supervisor with MALSEK Maintenance.

"We decided to take the H-3 because we thought it would be a neat thing to do."

The Sailors from the unit weren't alone in the effort. Marines from the unit were also represented and joined in Friday's cleaning to show their support.

"They invited me to get involved," said Staff Sgt. Melanie Burkitt, the staff noncommissioned officer in-charge of paraloft flight equipment and a member of the association. "This is good public relations with the community."

This is just one of the several volunteer activities the association holds, said Jacobsen. The association does other work in the community, mainly consisting of charity work to benefit children.

"(The association) has a longstanding tradition in Navy units," said Jacobsen. "We like to help the local community and make our units look good." And when they came to MCB Hawaii and integrated with MALSEK Marines in July, all staff sergeants in the unit were invited to join the association, said Burkitt.

"I heard they do good things for the community and junior Marines and Sailors," she said.

Jacobsen also encourages other units to do as much volunteer work as possible.

"We have to keep a (good) rapport with the community," she said.

Sailor named Kaneohe chef of the year

By David Salazar
MCBH PUBLIC AFFAIRS

A Navy Patrol Squadron 9 mess specialist ousted her Marine counterparts in the Marine Corps Base Hawaii Chef of the Year competition, making her the first Sailor ever to garner the title.

After countless hours of hard work and dedication, Petty Officer 3rd Class Jaime Foster's culinary skills and creativity paid off when she "out-cooked" some of Kaneohe Bay's finest food service specialists in the competition at the Anderson Hall Dining Facility aboard K-Bay Nov. 23.

Aboard other Marine Corps installations, the thought of a Sailor winning the annual event is usually unheard of. However, because of the unique configuration of MCB Hawaii after the Base Realignment and Closure movement of Naval Air Station Barbers Point, seeing Marines and Sailors march side-by-side is not uncommon and also leaves potential for more competitions.

The "mixed service" personnel in the dining facility also adds to the air of competition in these contests, said Master Gunnery Sgt. David Steward, the dining facility food service chief.

"These competitions have become more and more competitive (over time)," Steward said. "The chefs are giving a lot more attention to detail in their displays, which makes them a lot better."

"Overall, the competitors are realizing they have to get fancier and more elaborate with their menus if they want to win," said Gunnery Sgt. Nicholas Hentges, the contracting officer's representative and event coordinator.

Competitors selected themes and tried to match their menus to the themes they chose. In this particular competition, themes ranged from elaborate tropical menus to simple "down home" style selections.

Foster's theme and dishes tickled the fancy of the judge panel for the event, chaired by Brig. Gen. R.E. Parker, Jr., the MCB Hawaii commanding general.

Foster's autumn-inspired cuisine, which consisted of cranberry chicken, rice dressing, fall vegetables in cheese sauce and pumpkin cheesecake with autumn cookies, took the win for her.

"I wanted to go with a Thanksgiving-style meal without cooking the actual meal," Foster said.

To give her menu a "Thanksgiving-ish" feel, without actually cooking a conventional Thanksgiving meal, Foster employed several references to avoid making her selections seem bland and uncreative, she said.

"I found the cranberry chicken recipe on the internet, the rice dressing in a book in the library and the recipe for the pumpkin cheesecake in a book called Mr. Food," Foster said.

To "spice up" her food display, Foster spent near-

ly 15 hours designing centerpieces for her table, which included the "Mayflower" ship, fashioned from a watermelon and a two-and-half foot-long cornucopia made of bread.

"I have a passion for being creative," Foster said. "This was a great opportunity to let my mind go free and show people what I can think of."

This was something altogether new to Foster, since these competitions were not held at her old duty station in NAS Barbers Point, she said.

"The most positive aspect of this competition is that it gives the individual Marine or Sailor a sense of accomplishment," said Hentges. "It gives them the opportunity to show people what they can do when they prepare a meal for 40 instead of 400."

"All the competitors put their hearts into what they prepared and that's what made them 'shine' out there," Hentges added.

In addition to her trophy, Foster will be recommended for a Navy and Marine Corps Achievement Medal, will be granted a 96-hour pass and will not be required to work on weekends this quarter.

Aside from the prizes, however, Foster said she believes she has won something arguably bigger.

"It's really nice," said a teary-eyed Foster, minutes after being awarded the trophy. "It feels like an accomplishment, like a little brother-little sister relationship between me and the Marines here; but then again, it feels like a breakthrough."

USS Port Royal spends Thanksgiving in San Diego

By Lt. j.g. Jill Robinson
USS PORT ROYAL

USS Port Royal (CG 73) Sailors enjoyed an unusual opportunity for Thanksgiving 1999. As Air Defense Commander for the USS John C. Stennis (CVN 74) Battle Group, the "Ultimate Aegis cruiser" completed the final pre-deployment exercise, Joint Task Force Exercise 99, two days prior to the big turkey feast and pulled into Broadway Pier, in downtown San Diego, Calif., for four days of liberty.

This gave some Sailors opportunities to visit friends, family, and to travel to some interesting mainland places.

Many Port Royal crewmembers took the time to relax and regroup after the grueling exercises. Electronics Warfare Technician 2nd Class Aaron Papakie stated, "I hung out with my best friend and watched a lot of football!"

Personnelman 1st Class (SW) Michael Blaauw took in a sports game first hand.

"It was awesome being able to go see a professional hockey game while we were in San Diego," said Blaauw. Being homeported in Pearl Harbor the opportunity doesn't ar-

rive that often."

Operations Specialist 3rd Class James Grier and a friend spent the holiday watching "Phantom of the Opera", followed by an evening of dancing.

Many crewmembers visited family in San Diego, as OS2 Temi Jones remarked, "I spent Thanksgiving with my aunt. I got to experience an old fashioned Thanksgiving with family in Chula Vista." Electrician's Mate 1st Class (SW) Arthur Billedo spent some time onboard our Battle Group aircraft carrier. I went to Stennis to visit a friend and got a tour. I also did some shopping. It was very relaxing," he said.

Relaxing to Senior Chief Gas Turbine System Technician (Electrical) (SW) Joeseph Langer took on entirely new heights. "I flew over the top of Port Royal in a Cessna 152."

Leaving families alone in Hawaii during the holidays is always hard. Some members of the Port Royal Family Support Group flew out to San Diego in order to be together. Michelle Nielsen, wife of Lt. Ken Nielsen, made the trip east. "Although traditional Thanksgivings are great, going to the San Diego Zoo and Hard Rock Cafe were especially nice with family in town," says Nielsen.

Not everyone on board could travel around, of course. Watches still needed to be manned, food had to be prepared, and the duty section must always be ready for any emergency. Every day, almost one hundred crewmembers remained on board as part of the duty section. Port Royal took advantage of the prime location in downtown San Diego and offered ship tours to the general public. Visitors saw the pilothouse, Combat Information Center and the helicopter hangar bay.

Crewmembers explained the importance of the various radars and guns. The Food Service Division, led by Ens. John Armstrong and Chief Mess Management Specialist (SW) Artistides Delosreyes, prepared an outstanding meal for those folks onboard Thanksgiving day.

"The cornucopia was beautiful," declares Sonar Technician (Surface) 3rd Class Sheila Dall. "The decorations on the mess decks were nice. And they had great desserts, especially the lemon meringue pie," commented STG1(SW) Manuel Ybarra.

Many took the opportunity to take trips. Ens. Kendra Deppe and Ens. Sam Stahl made a trip to Las Vegas, enjoying the gaming tables as well as the roller coaster and the water and light show on the strip. Damage Controlman Fireman Juan Castillo

"went home to L.A. and saw my family. It was great to be with my family for Thanksgiving." GSM3 Nhon Nyugen also went to Los Angeles to see his family. "This will be the last time I see them by the ship, no more free rides!" he commented.

Geo-bachelor Chief Warrent Officer Jerome Colden met his wife and son in Tucson, Arizona, where they enjoyed a traditional southern fried turkey dinner.

San Francisco is home for OS2 Timothy Lape. Lape was happy to be able to participate in a great American tradition.

"This was the first time in three years that I had been home for Thanksgiving."

Port Royal crewmembers wrapped up the four-day San Diego port visit the end of November and sailed for Pearl Harbor with 31 family members onboard for the five-day trip home. Port Royal has been away from Pearl Harbor, Hawaii for almost six weeks, and her crew was eager to begin the holiday standdown.

In January Port Royal will join the Stennis on a six-month deployment to the Arabian Gulf.

Around the Fleet

Under Secretary in touch with Sailors, Marines

Under Secretary of the Navy Jerry Hultin visited Sailors and Marines of the Bataan Amphibious Ready Group (BATAANARG) and 22nd Marine Expeditionary Unit (Special Operations Capable) [22nd MEU (SOC)] during a visit to Israel Nov. 27. He took one day out of his trip to stop in Haifa during his tour through the European and Mediterranean theaters.

After thanking the Sailors and Marines for their contributions,

Hultin launched into an explanation of what he called "the three Es" of the future.

"First, you're engaged," Hultin said. "You're forward deployed, exercising with other nations, ready to do the job when the chips are down."

Hultin's second "E" referred to the "electronic age". "Sailors and Marines should be able to access more information they need through the Internet," Hultin said.

"For example, pay and allotment information should be available

online, complete with security measures, just as it is now available from financial institutions. Sailors and Marines will have a 'Smart Card,' that, in combination with their thumb print, will ensure beyond a doubt that the user logging on to a site to access information is indeed the person they are logging on as."

Hultin's third "E" was to eliminate things that are not worth doing. For example, both he and the SECNAV want to eliminate the excessive labor put in by Sailors painting ships, citing the need to

buy better paint that lasts longer and paying for contract painters when appropriate, enabling Sailors to focus on the jobs they are trained to do as professionals and enjoy time spent in home port.

He also envisioned quality of life improvements on future ships, such as the DD 21-class destroyer, currently on the drawing board. Instead of close quarters in berthing areas to accommodate 350 Sailors, the ship will have billeting similar to that of officer staterooms for its reduced crew of 95 Sailors, creating a more home-

like living environment.

Additionally, Hultin answered questions and addressed issues of concern to Sailors and Marines, including pay and healthcare red tape, recruiting and retention incentives, and sea/shore rotation.

Hultin began his term as Under Secretary of the Navy in 1997.

The BATAAN ARG: USS Shreveport (LPD 12); USS Whidbey Island (LSD 41); and USS Bataan (LHD 5), along with the 22nd MEU (SOC), deployed in mid September. They serve as the surge force for the Balkans.