

USS George H.W. Bush (CVN 77)

THE AVENGER

Volume 2, Issue 3

March 2011

WATCHFUL EYES
AND
YELLOW SHIRTS

BURIAL
AT SEA


LUCAS
THE
SWEET SCIENCE

WELCOME ABOARD:
MEET THE CO AND CMC

AIRLANT'S
ENGINEER OF THE YEAR

From the Commanding Officer



Hello friends
and families!

I am very proud to be the leader of such a remarkable war ship. We recently completed our last as-sea period prior to deployment. It was quite a work-up period and here are some of the accomplishments of our training cycle. Over the last 15 months the GHWB averaged one underway period per month for a total of 221 days at sea. There were nine carrier qualification detachments during which hundreds of student naval aviators were qualified. Over the last underway we added over 1,600 traps and Air Department crossed the 15,000th trap milestone. The “firsts” and records will continue as we take the ship on our first combat deployment.

We are now in the preparation for overseas movement or POM period during which most of the crew will take leave. The ship is working every day to prepare the deployment...on loading stores, repairing equipment, completing training and finalizing our schedules. As we finalize our preparations for deployment, it is equal-

ly important that you prepare yourself and your families for the next step in our adventure. Use all of the resources at your disposal including, the checklist in the Pre-deployment Avenger, which was distributed in January at the pre-deployment brief to ensure you haven't forgotten anything. Attend Family Readiness Group meetings and become familiar with the Ombudsmen. They are a tremendous resource available to assist you with when the unexpected arises, and your loved ones are away on deployment. Also be aware of other resources available such as our Ombudsmen, the Navy and Marine Corps Relief Society and the American Red Cross. This is not the first deployment for the Navy and the Navy prides itself on how we take of our own. Just as we deploy as a team, we support our families as a team. Communicate your concerns to your shipmates and your leadership. Remember always that help is but a phone call or email away.

Safety should be amongst your highest concerns, as well. Plan your trips for the stand down and during deployment with safety as the highest priority. Do not drive long distances while tired and plan to take breaks. It is just as important for our families to arrive from their travels safely, as it is for us to transit home to Norfolk.

Our team, families included, is making history. Sticking to our fundamental core values is the bedrock of our success. Thank you for being the driving force keeping GEORGE H.W. BUSH moving into the future.

Sincerely,

Capt. Brian Luther
Commanding Officer



The President of Lego, Soren Laursen (third from right), along with other executives from the Lego Systems, Inc. presented the Commanding Officer Capt. Brian Luther with a Lego mural of the ship's seal during a distinguished visitor embark, March 26. The experts at Lego spent 30 hours assembling the mural using eight colors and thousands of Lego bricks totaling 21,316 studs. (Photo by MCSN Brian Read Castillo)



On the cover:

Hull Maintenance Technician Fireman Derreck A. Lucas, of Engineering Department's Repair Division, welds a door frame in the ship's pipe shop, March 28. Photo by Mass Communication Specialist 3rd Class Leonard Adams.

table of [CONTENTS]

| | |
|--|-----------|
| Command Corner | 2 |
| Welcome Aboard Captain | 3 |
| Yellow Shirts: One color, one rank, one family | 5 |
| The Sweet Science | 9 |
| Burial at Sea | 13 |
| CVN 77 cleans up | 15 |
| Above and beyond, below decks | 16 |
| Austin city limits: CVN 77 Sailors represent in Texas | 17 |
| All together now | 19 |
| Shabbat Shalom | 20 |
| Messin' with Chiefs | 21 |
| Meet the CMC | 22 |

COMMANDING OFFICER
Capt. Brian E. Luther

★ **PUBLIC AFFAIRS OFFICER**
Lt. Cmdr. John Schofield

★ **EDITOR**
MC3 Sandi Grimnes

★ **AVENGER STAFF**
MC3 Joshua Horton MC3 Timothy Walter
MCSN Dustin Good MCSN Derrik Noack

"The Avenger" is produced by the Media Department of USS GEORGE H.W. BUSH (CVN 77). The editorial content of this newspaper is edited and approved by the Media Department of USS GEORGE H.W. BUSH.

"The Avenger" is an authorized publication for the members of USS GEORGE H.W. BUSH (CVN 77) and their families. Its contents do not necessarily reflect the official views of the U.S. Government, the Department of Defense or the U.S. Navy and do not imply the endorsement thereof.

Welcome Aboard, Captain

Story by MC3 Sandi Grimnes



Photo by MC3 Tony Curtis
Capt. Brian E. Luther, USS GEORGE H.W. BUSH commanding officer, is pinned with the Command-at-Sea pin by his father after a change of command ceremony, March 17.

The new Commanding Officer of USS GEORGE H.W. BUSH (CVN 77), Capt. Brian E. Luther, once dreamed about becoming an astronaut.

He thought the path to lead him there was with the Air Force, but a Navy recruiter told him different, Luther said. The Navy recruiter told him the first step to becoming an astronaut was to become a Navy jet pilot, and so he did.

“I started flying and the bug bit me and I fell in love with carrier aviation, the ballet of the flight deck in flight; it is the ultimate team sport,” Luther said. “You really have to be a member of ship’s company to appreciate the magnitude of the effort. There is nothing like it.”

Many moments have shaped Luther’s naval career, leaving lasting memories and impacting his life.

“I have devoted my life to the Navy, and could have retired years ago,” he said. “I have gotten so much from the Navy that I wanted to give back.”

When the United States was attacked on Sept. 11, 2001, Luther was returning from a deployment in the Arabian Gulf after finishing combat operations.

“I have never felt so powerless and almost like a failure,” Luther said. “If we were so good, how did that happen back home?”

He named his first son after USS COLE (DDG 67), the

guided missile destroyer attacked by suicide bombers off the coast of Yemen on Oct. 12, 2000, not only to remind himself of the sacrifice those Sailors made, but as a reminder to him that what he does now is a commitment to make the world better for his sons, Luther said.

“That’s why I stay in the Navy, because I feel like I am a good trainer and a good motivator and I will not let another Cole happen to any ship that I am on,” Luther said. “We will fight like we train, and that means we will train hard. We will beat them, so there will not be a memorial for Bush Sailors. We will let the guys who had the misfortune of tangling with us have it.”

Luther is a big fan of training and was happy to see GEORGE H.W. BUSH flying both warfare pennants, he said.

“That’s key to the development of a Sailor, to learn more of the organization,” he said. “The better trained the Sailor is, the more efficient the Sailor is and the better fighting vessel the ship will be. The more knowledgeable the Sailor is, the more likely they are to advance. The more likely they are to advance, the more money in their pocket and the more pleasure they get from their job because they have greater responsibility and authority. In the Navy we don’t hire outside people to be our leadership, we grow our own.”

Watching Sailors mature from the first time they step onto the ship to becoming subject matter experts in their field is one of the most rewarding parts of his time in the Navy, he said.

“It’s the cycle of life,” Luther said. “Someone comes onto a ship and you watch them go from ‘I can’t find my way around the ship,’ to ‘now I know my way around my workshop,’ to ‘hey, I just got my pin, I just got promoted, now I am mentoring people, now I’m the subject matter expert.’ You are watching these people grow, and you had a hand in that.”

Luther joined GEORGE H.W. BUSH ready to take her into the next phase of firsts, her first combat deployment.

“In the end it all comes down to training,” he said. “Capt. Miller already did a great job training everybody. Excellence has been your trademark. We are not the first carrier to go on deployment, we will just be the best carrier to go on deployment.” †



Photo by MC3 Tony Curtis
Capt. Brian E. Luther returns a salute to side boys during a change of command ceremony of GEORGE H.W. BUSH, March 17.

Yellow Shirts

Story and layout by MC3 Timothy Walter

Photos by MC2 Tony Curtis

ONE COLOR
ONE RANK
ONE FAMILY



Aviation Boatswain's Mate (Handling) 2nd Class (AW/SW) Junior Joseph strokes, or directs with his hands, an F/A-18 on the flight deck of USS GEORGE H.W. BUSH.

EVERY SAILOR MUST BE A WATCHMAN ON THE FLIGHT DECK. BUT WHO WATCHES THE WATCHMEN? IN THE U.S. NAVY, THEY ARE CALLED YELLOW SHIRTS... AND THEY LOVE THEIR JOB.

A hive of yellow-shirted Sailors, some with stenciled black wings on their back, swarm for a free spot in the tightly-packed flight deck control of USS GEORGE H.W. BUSH (CVN 77). A dash for white cups filled with a thick, shocking nectar, affectionately known by its takers as kick-you-in-the-face coffee, creates a feeling of anticipation for the day ahead. Then all the Sailors, relaxed in body but focused intently, turn toward the window with the sun-tinged flight deck in view.

So begins the morning brief for the yellows shirts, or flight deck directors, of GEORGE H.W. BUSH. This is the calm before the daily storm; a few minutes where their leaders can inform them of any lessons learned, the day's flight plan, and various updates.

Most importantly, it is a moment to impress upon all their minds their ever-present responsibility – safe operation of one of the world's most dangerous workplaces.

"We run the flight deck," yells Lt. Guy Jordan, the ship's flight deck officer, with the tone of a locker room coach at game time. Even though the eyes of many yellow shirts stay forward to the runway, all attention is clearly held by the officer, who demands respect and could easily be fearsome to a newly qualified yellow shirt. He roars a speech but his words tell of concern and cooperation.

"We are one team, each and every one of us, and I care about all of you," he says. "It's one team, us against everything that happens out there."

Suddenly, a voice rings out, "How do you feel?" And in game-time chorus, all hands respond, "Good."

It is an answer only a select few can give when faced with the challenge of being a yellow shirt. But those who take on the responsibility enjoy it in a way only they understand.

"You're not going to find too many people that tell you they love being up for 15-20 hours, working in 120 degree or 30 degree weather, while it's raining all day and all night, hardly getting anything to eat and then getting up the next morning with a smile on their face and doing it again," said Flight Deck Leading Petty Officer Aviation Boatswain's Mate (Handling) 1st Class (AW/SW) Shawn Riley.

Looking for that smile may be the easiest way to identify Riley on the flight deck because it certainly cannot be done by looking for the eagle and chevrons on his yellow shirt.

"It's one team, us against everything that happens out there." -Lt. Guy Jordan

"We don't wear ranks on our sleeve," he said. "If you didn't know me, didn't know my name, you wouldn't know that I was a first class."

Unlike other rates on the flight deck or in the hangar bay, yellow shirts do not stencil their rank on the left sleeve of their cotton turtleneck shirts. The reason is simple: The rank of the individual yellow shirt does not matter when an aircraft movement or operation needs to stop. In the same way a car must stop for flashing lights in the rearview mirror regardless of the rank of the officer, an aircraft must stop when a whistle is blown by a yellow shirt, be it a seaman or senior chief.

"The yellow shirt in itself carries the authority of the air boss, the handler, and the flight deck officer," said Lt. Cmdr. Ron Rancourt, the aircraft handling officer, or handler. "They are the police officers of the flight deck."

Technically, a yellow shirt is not a rate within the Navy but rather a position within the aviation boatswain's mate field of handling, which encompasses three specialties, each with a different color shirt. Blue shirts are elevator operators and tractor drivers, who work on moving the aircraft from the hangar bay to the flight deck and vice versa. Red shirts specialize in crash and salvage, and yellow shirts are the watchmen and workers who ensure that every operation dealing with aircraft movement goes smoothly and safely.

The path to becoming a yellow shirt has little to do with the contract an airman signs. The color has to be earned. For all, it takes perseverance. And for some, a bit of luck, since most yellow shirts start out as undesignated airman with no real guarantee of working in the handling field.

Lt. Cmdr. Rancourt, now the ship's handler, was one of those airmen. Nearly 27 years and seven ships ago, he was standing in line with a few friends when his senior chief walked into the air office and selected him.

"I remember it like it was yesterday," Ran

court said. “He pointed at me and another one of my guys and said, ‘You’re going to work my flight deck.’ And that’s how I became a flight deck guy.”

That appointment put Rancourt in the same starting position as all others in the handling field – as a blue shirt. From there, an airman can become a red shirt or a yellow shirt, and is usually steered toward either specialty by their chain of command, and in some way, their personal desire. But the road to yellow is not easy, and in the end it takes a particular person to succeed, said Rancourt.

“Ultimately, being a yellow shirt is about making decisions, the right decisions, and being a leader,” Rancourt said. “There is also a talent. Some people don’t get it. Some people do. For me, I struggled originally as a yellow shirt and then one day I woke up and it just clicked.”

In the eyes of Aviation Boatswain’s Mate (Handling) Airman Edward Witherspoon, or “Spoon” as he is called, one can see the struggle as well as the pride. On Feb. 18, 2011, Witherspoon put on his yellow shirt for the first time. It was a moment that brought tears, he said.

“I thought about how hard work really pays off,” Witherspoon said. “It made me feel good.”

However, putting on a yellow shirt is only half of the fight. The newly-clothed must still become qualified. Until then, he or she is under instruction, or simply, a pad eye – a reference to the anchor points lining the flight deck and hangar bay.

“You can’t remove a pad eye off the deck,” said Riley.

The airman under instruction is “supposed to be up there 24/7” until he or she is qualified, Riley explained with a smile. After those long hours of training, learning on the job, and passing a written exam, the pad eye must still endure an oral board from the senior yellow shirts.

“They will drill this kid for hours on the regulations and situ-

ations,” Rancourt said. “Throw out scenarios to see what kind of decision-making he has.”

For those who pass, the reward comes in many forms. The most immediate is an ACME Thunder Whistle, in either gold or silver. Rancourt claims it is the greatest whistle in the world and extremely loud. Only a qualified yellow shirt can wear such a whistle, and many will carry the same one for their entire career. It is never bought by its wearer but given, usually by the pad eye’s mentor

“When you get that qualified whistle, it’s like winning the Super Bowl.”

-ABH1 (AW) Jason Baty

Traditionally, every ACME whistle holder of GEORGE H.W. BUSH gathers for a new yellow shirt’s welcome and

all sound their whistles in unison – the family has grown.

“When you get that qualified whistle, it’s like winning the Super Bowl,” said Aviation Boatswain’s Mate (Handling) 1st Class (AW) Jason Baty. “Because you have been through the trials and tribulations. You’ve been through the off season and the workups. You go through a lot of pain and suffering to get where you’re at. It makes you realize how much of a privilege it is to get that qualified whistle because all of that stops and your job is to teach the next man and make sure he is better.”

“It is something higher than a gift,” said Aviation Boatswain’s Mate (Handling) 2nd Class (AW/SW) Jorenged “Georgy” Font. “It is a belief that you can do something better for the troops.”

With that whistle, a yellow shirt can take a seat among peers and relax in the yellow shirt locker, a lounge behind flight deck control reserved for the qualified yellow shirts. Its yellow walls shout of their pride and serve as inspiration to those still lacking the whistle. Baty said the locker is a simple privilege that means a great deal after a long day on the flight deck.

But a yellow shirt does not endure the qualifying process to sit down. Baty said they do it so that they can watch out for others as they work on the unforgiving non-skid of the flight deck. That task,

or hobby as he calls it, is a thrill that challenges him every day.

“As soon as you hit that skid, your intensity is up like you’re in a football game,” he said. “Your nerves are working up because of the risk that is there. It’s game time, ready to go, our responsibility is everywhere from the planes to the pilots, anything that touches the flight deck.”

When Aviation Boatswain’s Mate (Handling) 2nd Class (AW/SW) Wilmarie Torres arrived at the recruiting station in Puerto Rico to take her exam, she had no idea what a yellow shirt was. In fact, she did not speak a word of English. The recruiters still asked her what job she wanted after showing her a few pamphlets.

“I saw the yellow shirt with a plane and said, ‘I want that job,’” Torres said.

She did not get a yellow shirt immediately, but put on the blue just like all those before her. Soon thereafter, she realized that yellow truly was her color.

“I wanted to do it and I wanted to do it right,” she said. “I don’t regret what I’ve done. I feel proud of myself.”

As a yellow shirt, Torres has become just one more member of their close-knit clan, with Sailors from all across the United States, Puerto Rico and even Haiti.

“We’re like brothers and sisters,” Riley said. “We are a family.”

But even families quarrel and with a myriad of backgrounds and beliefs, it is little surprise that conflict can arise, if only for a moment.



Lt. Cmdr. Ron Rancourt, the aircraft handling officer, checks the status of aircraft positions via the Ouija Board, as it is called, in flight deck control. Whenever flight operations are underway, Rancourt is in the handler’s chair to help direct his yellow shirts on the flight deck.

“We fight and then laugh it off,” said Riley.

If there was division among the family, Rancourt would be the first to fix it. He is fond of quoting the Bible verse from Matthew 12:25, be it in passing or during the morning brief: “A house divided shall fall.”

“We breathe together,” said Rancourt. “The difference between our success and our demise is that we trust each other as a family.” †



The Sweet Science

A man with a mustache, wearing a white t-shirt, black boxing gloves, and yellow hand wraps, is sitting on concrete steps. He is looking down at his hands, adjusting the wraps. Behind him is a glass display case filled with several gold trophies. The scene is set outdoors at night, with a brick wall and a window in the background. The lighting is dramatic, highlighting the man's physique and the trophies.

As a 16-year-old kid from New Jersey, Troy Browning never thought he'd one day be the best in the Navy at the sport of boxing. Now at the age of 24, he's become just that.



Aviation Boatswain's Mate (Handling) Airman Troy Browning, of USS GEORGE H.W. BUSH (CVN 77) Air Department's V-3 Division, became the first GEORGE H.W. BUSH Sailor to be selected for the All Navy Boxing Team.

Browning began boxing in the urban community of Willingboro, N.J., at the age of 16. His father, already a professional in the sport, taught Browning virtually everything he knew about what is sometimes referred to as the "Sweet Science of Bruising."

Browning recalls the early morning training sessions his father would prepare for him every morning before school.

"He would wake me up at 5 a.m. and we'd run three miles. We'd sprint up hills and I'd have a wheel tied to my feet so I would have to crawl with my hands to build arm strength," said Browning.

Afterwards, Browning would attend school and then make the drive to Philadelphia to continue his training in the ring, where he would spar with his father and anyone else who was available.

Browning continued his training off and on for several years and even participated in several Golden Glove events,

however it wasn't until he enlisted in the Navy that his boxing career began to take shape.

In 2009, Browning was selected for the All Navy Boxing team for the first time. That year, the team competed in a tournament known as the Armed Forces Championships and earned a second place finish, its highest in more than 20 years. The event has since become one of his fondest memories.

"I was the baby on the team as far as experience," said Browning. "I'd only had about five fights and everyone else had 30 to 40. Just trying to keep up with them really elevated my game. It was a really good experience."

Since then, Browning has dedicated himself to the art of boxing. He trains regularly and has become a fixture at a local boxing club in Newport News, Va. The training has paid off too.

In 2011, Browning finished first in his weight class for the Navy and third overall in the Armed Forces Championships tournament, which saw him walk away with not only notoriety, but also with a bronze medal.

That level of success has not come easy. In Browning's case, it was obtained from countless hours of training on and off the ship.

For example, while at the All Navy training camp, Browning's daily routine consists of workout sessions known as three-a-days. In this type of routine the day starts off early with a three-mile run and other cardio exercises, such as mountain-hiking or sprints up and over sand dunes, before transitioning to calisthenics by mid-afternoon.

The evening, which is reserved for in-ring training, consists of pounding speed bags and one-on-one sparring with other members of the team.

"We're doing three-a-days for five days a week," said Browning. "It's really tough on the body and a lot of people break down physically."

However, it is just as important that Browning keep himself in proper physical condition while underway. Although he utilizes the gyms on board on a regular basis, Browning also shadowboxes with a few of his shipmates in order to maintain a proper in-ring mentality.

Still, Browning insists that the most important aspect of his training while out to sea is his motivation.

"I have to stay driven," he said. "Stay determined."

Browning credits much of his success to the tutelage of his father and the experienced boxers he was lucky enough to learn from throughout his life.

"I've been around a lot of great people," he said. "They say champions breed champions and I've seen the way they work and what they do. It helps your eyes see things in another way."

Browning's goal is simple. He plans to turn pro and continue the family legacy that his father began some time



ago, but he is well aware of the work that still lies ahead of him. There remain countless miles to be run, hours in the gym to be accumulated, and tournaments to be won, but Browning maintains his smile. He knows his time will come soon enough.

Browning also knows that without help from his chain of command, none of his success in the Navy would have been possible.

"I'd like to say a special thanks to my Division Officer, Lt. Daniel Oakey, and to my Leading Petty Officer, Aviation Boatswain's Mate (Handling) First Class (AW/SW) Gregory Piazza," he said. "They were responsible for getting my paperwork through and without their help, I could have never done this." †



A Son's Service to a Father's Love

Photos and Story by MC3 Timothy Walter

On the same ocean his father sailed 60 years before him, Mass Communication Specialist 3rd Class Leonard Adams Jr. committed his father's ashes to the waters of the Atlantic, in a burial at sea ceremony performed aboard USS GEORGE H.W. BUSH (CVN 77), March 23.

It was an honor that his father, a Navy veteran, had never asked for but an honor he deserved, Adams Jr. said.

"He would appreciate it in the same way I cherish being raised by him," he said. "It is something special you can do for someone you love very much."

As a photographer for the burial at sea held aboard GEORGE H.W. BUSH in June, Adams Jr. witnessed first-hand how powerful the ceremony was and knew it would be the perfect way to honor his father's naval career, which always served as a source of pride in his life.

"That is the least a son could do for his father, especially after following his footsteps by serving in the Navy," he said.

Leonard Howard Adams Sr. enlisted in the Navy in 1950 at age 18. He reported to the Norfolk-based attack transport USS MONROVIA (APA 31), where he earned his sea legs as an undesignated seaman during the ship's sea trials and deployment to the Mediterranean Sea. After completing a four-year tour, he took two years off and then re-enlisted for another tour with the escort destroyer USS RICH (DDE 820).

He received an honorable discharge from the Navy on Aug. 19, 1960. That date proved to have a special

significance when his son and future Sailor, Leonard Howard Adams Jr., was born exactly 14 years later.

Adams Jr. said his father never pushed him to join the Navy but always spoke highly of his days in the fleet. Two years after his father passed away, Adams Jr. found himself wanting to grasp how his father's beloved Navy had influenced his life, particularly his work ethic and attention to detail. This persuaded a 34-year-old Adams Jr. to join the Navy, just prior to the cutoff age for enlistment.



Sailors in the firing detail stand at parade rest behind a Navy photo of Commissaryman Seaman Leonard Howard Adams Sr.

"He joined at the first opportunity and I joined at the last," he said. "It was a crossroads of sorts. I'm on a similar path as him, being stationed in Naval Station Norfolk and going on sea trials with my first ship after it's commissioned. The whole path so far is very similar."

After two years of service, Adams Jr. said it has become very clear that his father never departed from the values he learned at sea.

"I've gained a full understanding of how he integrated what he learned from his service into my upbringing," he said.

Having shared that common naval bond, Adams Jr. began to look into the prospects of re-uniting his father with the deep, through a burial at sea. He recommended the ceremony to his mother, who quickly embraced the idea.

"She has probably heard more sea stories than I have, so she can understand the special place the Navy had in his heart, more than I could," he said. "It's indescribable to have this opportunity for my family."

A burial at sea is a long standing naval tradition, both solemn and sacred, that has continued on in order to pay homage to Sailors that have served their country honorably, said Command Chaplain Cmdr. Cameron Fish.

"It is one of our ways of thanking a Sailor for their service and honoring them by committing them to the deep," Fish said. "I think of it as a celebration of someone's life and their connection to the sea."

Military personnel who served honorably can ask for a burial at sea. Requests are approved based upon the availability and operational demands of the ships in the area.

Regardless of the ship on which the ceremony takes place, each burial at sea follows a traditional format. Once the ship is slowed to its minimum sea-going speed, a message rings out on the ship's intercom, "All hands bury the dead." It is a call to attention for all of the crew aboard to remember the fallen shipmate.

The ensign is lowered to half mast and the church pennant is raised. The ship's chaplain or the highest ranking officer casts the ashes or casket to the sea. Honors are rendered to the deceased via three volleys of seven rounds, of which three shells are placed in a folded ensign. Taps is then played as a symbol of closure to a life of service.



Mass Communication Specialist 3rd Class Leonard H. Adams Jr. holds close the ashes of his father and Navy veteran, Leonard H Adams Sr. prior to the burial at sea.

The ensign along with a certificate of the coordinates where the ceremony took place is later given to the family, who are not normally allowed to attend.

However, as a Sailor of GEORGE H.W. BUSH, Adams Jr. had the unique honor of not only attending but helping to cast the ashes to the sea. He was also able to personally receive the ensign from the ship's Commanding Officer, Capt. Brian E. Luther.

Adams Jr. said he was grateful for the support that his ship showed him throughout the process of saying farewell to his father, one Sailor to another.

"I would say it's the greatest tribute I can pay to him, being that I serve myself and I am starting to understand what service is about through my experience in the Navy," he said. †

CVN 77 cleans up

Story and photos by MC3 (SW/AW) Nicholas Hall

On March 9, more than 200 people gathered to celebrate the Chesapeake Environmental Improvement Council's (CEIC) 29th Annual Awards Luncheon, including three Sailors from USS GEORGE H.W. BUSH (CVN 77).

The Navy's newest aircraft carrier was recognized at the awards ceremony for its volunteer efforts during its second annual "1,000 Points of Light" community outreach on Aug. 17, 2010. During the community service event, nearly 2,000 Sailors volunteered in various locations throughout the Hampton Roads area.

The awards ceremony was hosted by Craig Moeller, a meteorologist at a local TV channel. As a resident of Chesapeake, Moeller had nothing but good things to say about what the Sailors did for a park that was cleaned.

"Northwest Park is one of the hidden gems of Chesapeake. The Sailors helped out the area tremendously," he said.

The sentiment was echoed by Jerry L. Ivory, the Chairperson of the CEIC.



More than 200 people including three Sailors from USS GEORGE H.W. BUSH (CVN 77) gathered to celebrate the Chesapeake Environmental Improvement Council's (CEIC) 29th Annual Awards Luncheon, March 9.

"We like to acknowledge people that go over the top. The Bush made the park look awesome," Ivory said.

Lt. Sunny Mitchell, one of the ship's chaplains, as well as the organizer for the outreach, was on hand to accept a plaque and a pair of work gloves in appreciation.

"It was an honor to accept this award on behalf of the ship. The Sailors' hard work not only made the park look good, but it exemplified the spirit of service to others that our namesake has personified throughout his life," Mitchell said.

The Mayor of Chesapeake, Alan Krasnoff, was also present to show his appreciation.

"I want to thank all the volunteers for all you do. You make a difference in our community," he said.

GEORGE H.W. BUSH has been recently certified to conduct overseas operations in preparation for its first combat deployment scheduled for spring 2011. †

"We like to acknowledge people that go over the top. The Bush made the park look awesome."

-Jerry L. Ivory
CEIC Chairperson



Lt. Sunny Mitchell, left, from Command Religious Ministries Department, accepts an award from Michael J. Kalvort during an awards luncheon, March 9.

ABOVE AND BEYOND BELOW DECKS AIRLANT ENGINEER OF THE YEAR



Story and photo by MC3 Sandi Grimnes

Commander, Naval Air Force Atlantic (COMNAVAIRLANT) announced its recipient of the 2010 COMNAVAIRLANT Engineer of the Year award, Machinist's Mate 1st Class (SW/AW) David Regal, of USS GEORGE H.W. BUSH (CVN 77) Reactor Department's RT Division.

"It's a little humbling," said Regal. "I'm not one for recognition; I've never worked for that. More importantly, it's about getting the job done and making sure the guys are doing their part."

Regal is the Reactor Training Division leading petty officer (LPO) and propulsion plant drill team leader.

"After the successful completion of CVN 77's first ORSE (Operational Reactor Safeguards Examination), he was hand-selected to lead Reactor Training Division and to become the Propulsion Plant Drill Team (PPDT) leader," said Senior Chief Electrician's Mate (SW/AW) Ernie Cruz, Regal's former leading chief petty officer.

Regal was nominated and selected for COMNAVAIRLANT Engineer of the Quarter for the third quarter of 2010 for his outstanding work ethic and superb deckplate leadership, said Cruz. His leadership ensured the Reactor Training Division and the PPDT maintained its superior performance, despite the turnover of multiple key personnel and a complete PPDT team member change.

"Since then, he continued to excel and to take care of his Sailors,

which led to several notable events: 100 percent advancement in RT Division from the Sept. 2010 exam; one Sailor being selected as Reactor Department's Junior Sailor of the Quarter and Junior Sailor of the Year; 100 percent retention in RT Division; 100 percent PFA (physical fitness assessment) pass rate; MMI Regal being ranked as the top first class in Reactor Department, and his selection as Reactor Department's Sailor of the Quarter and Senior Sailor of the Year for 2010," Cruz said. "MMI Regal is a model Sailor and best exemplifies the qualities of a deckplate leader and an engineer."

As an ORSE propulsion plant watch supervisor (PPWS), Regal conducted more than 500 man-hours of training for 109 Sailors on plant evolutions and casualty response, ensuring a successful ORSE. Since assuming the position of RT LCPO and PPDT leader in July 2010, he has trained and mentored eight ORSE PPWSs through an aggressive drill program consisting of 16 drill sets and 400 drills, helping more than 120 Sailors in Reactor Department receive their qualifications. Regal has also served as a senior board member for chief reactor watch qualifications, allowing for the senior-in-rate qualification of 18 personnel in Reactor Department.

"Regal has the uncanny ability to take difficult concepts and break it down to a manageable level, allowing others to understand and learn those concepts," Cruz said. "He is also an expert trainer, molding the PPDT and three watch teams into a cohesive unit, ensuring CVN 77 is fully ready and mission capable. He takes care of not just his Sailors, but those around him that need more guidance and mentoring, and remains humble despite the accomplishments of his Sailors and himself."

Regal, who is eligible for the chief board this year, said this is probably the most challenging job he has had in the Navy. "It's hard because we cycle through people so often," he said. "There are always people changing out. The team we had six months ago, compared to today, is totally different. You get different personalities, and different opinions on everything, but it's helped. It's a good feeling to get some recognition for it, but in all actuality, it's not just me who gets it, it's the people who work for me." †

Austin City Limits:

CVN 77 Sailors represent in Texas

Story by MCCS (SW) Misty Trent

Two USS GEORGE H.W. BUSH (CVN 77) Sailors represented the Navy's newest aircraft carrier in the great state of Texas during Austin Navy Week, March 20-27.

Lt. Krystal Roberts from Dental Department and Logistics Specialist 3rd Class Jessalynn Guerrero from Supply Department, both Texas natives, travelled to Austin to participate in a week's worth of events showcasing the Navy.

The mission of Navy Week is to "bring America's Navy home." Each year, the Navy's Office of Community Outreach in Millington, Tenn., organizes approximately 20 Navy Weeks throughout the country, all designed to give the public a personal look at the men and women serving in the U.S.

Navy. This year's Navy Weeks will take place in cities like Denver, New Orleans, Philadelphia, Detroit, Indianapolis, and more.

"I believe that the value of Navy Week is to show the people just what we have done, are doing and what we will plan to do for them," said Guerrero, who hails from San Antonio. "Navy Weeks are a positive way for Sailors to have the opportunity to give back to communities and I am thankful I had the chance to participate."

Navy Week includes demonstrations from Navy Bands and the Leap Frogs, with a strong emphasis on interacting with local residents. Roberts and Guerrero participated in a wide range of events, including formal ceremonies honoring the U.S. Navy with local and state officials, as well as multiple volunteer projects. The GEORGE H.W. BUSH Sailors joined other Texas natives from USS CONSTITUTION, local recruiting stations, and the Navy Operational Support Center in Austin.

Austin Navy Week began with a Greater



Photo by MC3 Kathryn Macdonald
Lt. Krystal Roberts, from Dental Department, reads to a child at the Boys and Girls Club in Austin, Texas during Navy Fleet Week, March 24.

Austin Hispanic Chamber of Commerce lunch with Assistant Secretary of the Navy (Manpower and Reserve Affairs) Juan Garcia. Garcia told the audience of more than 50 business leaders about the range of operations the Navy is actively involved in, including rescue and relief operations in Japan and establishing the no-fly zone in Libya, and the Sailors had the opportunity to talk with the guests about their Navy experiences.

"Navy Week helps to inform citizens about what 'their Navy' is doing in the world today," Roberts said. "For many of the inland areas, this is especially valuable because it's not everyday that the citizens get to interact with Sailors."

Roberts and Guerrero attended multiple events with Garcia, including meetings with Austin-based Rotary Clubs and the local Navy League. They were also center-stage at an event at the Texas State Capitol on March 22 with Garcia and State Rep. Rob Eissler. Roberts and Guerrero joined other native Texas Sailors on the floor of the House of Representatives for an official Navy Week Proclamation. Later

that day, they also joined Austin Mayor Lee Leffingwell at City Hall Plaza for a Mayoral Proclamation.

Much of the week involved community outreach and volunteer projects throughout the Austin area. Roberts and Guerrero volunteered at Caritas, an Austin soup kitchen, helping prepare lunch. They also visited a local Boys & Girls Club, and spent a day with a local Boy Scout troop.

"Navy Week was also a great opportunity to serve the community with various COMREL (community relations) events and it was especially rewarding to me because of that," Roberts said.

Roberts and Guerrero also visited the Dell Children's Medical Center, a family-centered pediatric hospital located in Austin that provides general and specialized medical care for children, including cancer treatment, neonatal intensive care, neurosurgery, and reconstructive plastic surgery. The Sailors spent several hours visiting with children, and presented the kids with command ball caps and photos of the ship.

"My favorite event was going to the Boys and Girls Club because I love kids. It was so much fun just getting to know them and helping them with their homework," said Guerrero.

The U.S. Navy has a large presence on both East and



Photo by MC3 Kathryn Macdonald
Logistic Specialist 3rd Class Jessalynn Guerrero, from Supply Department, prepares lunch at Caritas, a soup kitchen in Austin, Texas during Navy Fleet Week, March 23.



Photo by MCCS (SW) Misty Trent
A young girl paints a picture of USS GEORGE H.W. BUSH (CVN 77) at the Dell Children's Medical Center in Austin, Texas, March 26. CVN 77's Sailors were participating in Caps for Kids at the medical center during Navy Fleet Week.

West Coasts, but many Americans within the heart of the country get little to no exposure to Sailors. Considering 70% of the earth is covered in water, 80% of the world's population lives within 100 miles of a coastline, and 90% of the world's trade occurs on the seas, telling the Navy story to the nation's heartland is a key mission of Navy Week.

"It felt great to represent USS GEORGE H.W. BUSH in my home state because Texans show great appreciation to the military, and it's nice to know that many people are proud of the Navy and all we do," said Guerrero. †

"All together now." 1,000 Points of Light continues



Photo by Paul Morse

Former President George H.W. Bush addresses the crowd, including former Presidents Jimmy Carter, Bill Clinton, and George W. Bush, at "All Together Now: A Celebration of Service," a Points of Light Institute tribute to President Bush in support of the American service movement at the John F. Kennedy Center for Performing Arts in Washington, March 21.

Story by Ensign Matthew Stroup

Eleven sailors and spouses from USS GEORGE H.W. BUSH (CVN 77) attended "All Together Now – A Celebration of Service," a tribute to President George H.W. Bush sponsored by the Points of Light Institute, March 21 at the John F. Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts in Washington, D.C.

The ship's representation at the event included former commanding officer Capt. Chip Miller, Sailor of the Year Machinist's Mate 1st Class (SW/AW) Miguel Hutchinson, Junior Sailor of the Year Aviation Boatswain's Mate (AW/SW) Mike Diaz, Petty Officer of the Year Electronics Technician 2nd Class (SW/AW) Melinda Lumpkin, and Petty Officer of the Quarter Air Traffic Controller 3rd Class (AW/SW) Stephanie Breault.

Every living former president of the United States, Jimmy Carter, Bill Clinton, George W. Bush, and the evening's honoree, George H.W. Bush, were in attendance at the historic event. The evening's focus was to honor President Bush's lifetime of service and to promote the American service movement, which he spearheaded throughout his career.

Capt. Chip Miller, the ship's most recent former commanding officer, said he

was particularly grateful to the current commanding officer, Capt. Brian Luther, for the opportunity to represent the ship at the event with such outstanding Sailors and their wives. The ship was at sea conducting carrier qualification exercises at the time of the event -- precluding Capt. Luther's attendance at the Kennedy Center.

"It was an honor for all of us to represent the ship at such a high-profile event celebrating our namesake's involvement with volunteerism," said Miller. "As we all know, over 20 years ago he challenged us all to be points of light in our communities and encouraged us to make a difference through community service. This is a challenge that those who serve on the ship, which bears his name, take seriously."

GEORGE H.W. BUSH Sailors have consistently followed their namesake's call to be of service in their communities. Along with thousands of public service hours completed by individuals and small groups at the command, the ship has sponsored two Thousand Points of Light Across Tidewater

events. For the past two years during the president's birth month, thousands of Sailors have given back to the Tidewater area through the use of their time and talents. During these two events more than 4,000 Sailors completed nearly 30,000 hours of service.

Lumpkin was similarly grateful for the opportunity to represent the ship at the tribute.

"Being given the opportunity to represent our namesake at this event gave me a sense of belonging and inspired me to take advantage of the little things I can do to help others or give back. It was an honor to represent our command at such an event, especially now when our mindset is to stay focused on a mission and answering the call, if necessary. It is easy to acknowledge the sacrifice that we make, but hearing the appreciation in the Japanese ambassador's voice as he gave thanks for our support made me realize the importance of our selfless service," said Lumpkin.

Continuing their commitment to give back to the local community, the command will begin sponsoring the USS George H.W. Bush Points of Light Service Volunteer Service program, which will encourage Sailors to participate in the local community, provide greater opportunities to

serve, and allow Sailors to track their community service hours to earn the President's Volunteer Service Award and the Military Outstanding Volunteer Service Medal.

The President's Volunteer Service Award is sponsored in part by the Points of Light Institute, which also sponsored the evening's event, and recognizes the efforts of civilian and military volunteers from around the nation.

The Points of Light Volunteer Service program will be co-sponsored by the Command's Religious Ministries Department (CRMD), who currently oversees the command's community relations efforts. Sailors interested in participating in the program should contact Chief Religious Programs Specialist (SW/AW/FMF) David Aguirre, CRMD Leading Chief Petty Officer, who is co-leading the program's efforts.

"All Together Now – A Celebration of Service" highlighted performances by Kid Rock, Carrie Underwood, Cee Lo Green, Darius Rucker, Brad Paisley, Reba McEntire, Sam Moore and Heather Headley. †



Photo by MC3 (SW/AW) Nicholas Hall

Sailors and spouses, of the crew of USS GEORGE H.W. BUSH (CVN 77), and former Commanding Officer Capt. Chip Miller represent the ship as guests at "All Together Now: A Celebration of Service" at the John F. Kennedy Center for Performing Arts in Washington, March 21.

SHABBAT SHALOM

Photos and story by MC3 Leonard H. Adams Jr.

Shabbat shalom is the greeting Legalman 2nd Class Justin M. Wiser, from USS GEORGE H.W. BUSH (CVN 77) Legal Department, welcomed several crew members with, while leading the first Jewish prayer service held in the ship's chapel, while underway, March 25.

After the welcoming and opening Psalm, Wiser lit the customary Shabbat candles. Other customary Jewish rituals observed during the service were the wearing of the yarmulke, (a cap), and the talit, also known as a prayer shawl.

Wiser recited a prayer for healing named "Mi shebeirach," which allowed the participants to say aloud the names of loved ones, family and friends who are sick, and a prayer over the wine, called the "Kiddush," which is used to celebrate Shabbat and its holiness," said Wiser.

Wiser volunteered and was appointed the collateral position of Jewish lay leader for the Friday night Shabbat prayer services by the ship's commanding officer and Command Religious Ministries Department.

"The services provide an opportunity for those of the Jewish faith and those interested in it to come together and celebrate Shabbat," said Wiser.

The word Shabbat, translated in English, means the day of rest. It is traditionally observed by the Jewish religion beginning at sunset Friday and lasts until sunset Saturday.

"I attended the service to learn more about other cultures and



Legalman 2nd Class Justin M. Wiser lights the Shabbat candles while leading the first Jewish prayer service in the ship's chapel.

to support my good friend LN2 Wiser," said Legalman 2nd Class Michael Monteith, from the ship's Legal Department. "I enjoyed my time there and plan on attending in the future."

Friday night Jewish Shabbat prayer service will be held underway weekly at 7 p.m. in the ship's chapel. †

Messin' with Chiefs

Story, layout, and photo by MCSN Derrick Noack

Past the glass doors and inside the USS George H.W. Bush (CVN 77) Chiefs' Mess are skilled culinary specialists who take pride in knowing that they are satisfying several of the elite.

Working inside a kitchen on an aircraft carrier isn't easy, but the Chiefs' Mess team works hard to sustain a high level of professionalism.

"I think all galleys on board do an outstanding job," said Chief Hull Maintenance Technician (SW) Jason Jimenez, the Chiefs' Mess caterer, from the Supply Department's S-11 Division. "We just deal with a different clientele."

The Chiefs' Mess team recently got a new crew and leading petty officer. The fresh crew focused on creating a positive workplace.

"We just came together as a team and ended up on top," said Culinary Specialist Seaman James Glenn, of the Supply Department's S-11 Division.

The friendly atmosphere improved opinions on the food, staff and service from the Chiefs who eat there every day.

"Since the new leadership took over, everything down here has gotten a lot better," said Chief Damage Controlman (SW) Holly Hearn from the Engineering Department's DC Division.

The camaraderie of the staff does not go unnoticed. The atmosphere created by the staff helps separate the mess from the rest of the ship.

"It almost feels like you're away from the ship for a while," said Chief Logistics Specialist (SW/AW) Jeffrey Quick, of Carrier Air Wing (CVW) Eight Maintenance Division. "The galley down here is top-notch compared to others. You can tell they take pride in what they do."

The Chiefs' Mess feeds nearly 350 chiefs, unlike the other mess galleys that feed more than 3,000. A smaller clientele enables the staff to show off their culinary skills and offer a larger menu. There is even a grill where custom made sandwiches are served.

"One third of the chiefs get grilled food," said Glenn. "I already know what they want when I see their face."

Although they serve less people, the days in the kitchen are hectic. Those in charge make sure long hours don't put addi-

tional stress on the 14 culinary specialists and 13 food service attendants.

"We come in at 5:30 a.m. and get off at [9 p.m.]," said Culinary Specialist 1st Class (SW/AW) Wilson Santiago, from Supply Department's S-5 Division. "They're long hours but morale is high. We got each other's back."

Temporary assigned duty workers in the kitchen are grateful for the laid back environment they get to work in.

"I worked on the galley mess decks for a month," said Aviation Boatswains Mate (Handling) Airman Jessica Hinton, of the Air Department's V-3 Division. "I'd rather work in the Chiefs' Mess than anywhere else. Everything runs smoother down here."

Staff anticipates the same liveliness to carry over to the deployment.

"I hope for deployment we can keep the same level of energy," said Jimenez. "I hope to keep everyone as happy as they've been on this last underway we've been on."

"We all know if that if the chiefs are happy, everyone is happy," said Culinary Specialist 1st Class (SW/AW) Carrol Williams, of the Supply Department's S-11 Division. "We may not be the elite of the fleet, but without us the fleet wouldn't eat." †



The Chiefs' Mess culinary specialists gather in front of the entrance to the dining room.

Meet the CMC

Story and Layout by MCSN Dustin Good

USS GEORGE H.W. BUSH (CVN 77) Command Master Chief (SW) David Colton said he believes everything in life comes full circle.

In January of 1987, he joined the crew of what was then the Navy's newest aircraft carrier, USS THEODORE ROOSEVELT (CVN 71), as a young seaman.

After bouncing from Deck Department to Supply Department as an undesignated seaman, he was able to finally strike signalman.

Just more than 24 years later, a more mature Command Master Chief Colton reported for duty on board the Navy's newest aircraft carrier, GEORGE H.W. BUSH.

There were many experiences that shaped his ideals and style of leadership throughout his Navy career, he stated.

Colton left his first duty station as a Second Class Petty Officer, and against the advice of his chief, went to work outside of his rate as a security supervisor at Naval Weapons Station, Yorktown, Va.

From that experience, he arrived at a lesson he would like to pass on to his junior enlisted Sailors: "Trust the guy who's been around the block."

Working outside of his rate had a detrimental effect on his ability to advance, so he sought the guidance of senior leadership in getting his next orders.

"The orders I thought I wanted were never the ones to enhance my career," said Colton. He was encouraged to join the crew of an Auxiliary Support Ship, where, as a signalman, he was told he would best learn his rate.

He joined the crew of the USNS HENRY J. KAISER where he reached the rank of First Class Petty Officer.

He fully matured as a First Class petty officer after receiving orders to the pre-commissioned (PCU) STEHEM (DDG 63) which would homeport in San Diego outside of his comfort zone, said Colton.

His next shore duty was in San Diego serving as a Navy drug and alcohol counselor. It was during this time he was promoted to the rank of Chief Petty Officer.

After the September 11 attacks, his shore duty was cut short and he was ordered to report to the USS PEARL HARBOR (LSD 52), where he served as the command 3M coordinator, command drug and alcohol program advisor and leading Chief Petty Officer (LCPO) for Navigation/Administration Department. Colton also put the first star on his anchors, when he was selected for Senior Chief Petty Officer.

His next shore duty brought him to an LCPO position at Naval Submarine Base Point Loma. While there he was one of the first groups of Senior Chiefs to be selected for the Navy's Command Senior Chief program.



His next sea tour took him to Japan, aboard the forward deployed minesweeper, USS GUARDIAN (MCM 5). During his time aboard he was selected to be a Command Master Chief and reported to the guided missile cruiser, USS ANZIO (CG 68).

Just last month, he joined the crew of GEORGE H.W. BUSH for his third CMC tour.

"With the crew on the verge of deployment, my job is to prepare a ready and capable war fighting team who will stand ready to take the fight to the enemy," said Colton.

"On our upcoming deployment we must look out for each other and fully embrace ship, shipmate and self," said Colton. "I want all Sailors to understand that liberty is a mission. We will establish our ships reputation shortly after arriving in our first foreign port.

Every Sailor is a leader and is in training for a position of greater responsibility. There will be circumstances where good leadership will require the senior man to take charge."

"I have the opportunity to take USS GEORGE H.W. BUSH on her maiden deployment," said Colton. "What is better than that?" †

Command **Contact Information**



USS GEORGE H.W. BUSH Ombudsman Contact Information

Sandy: (757) 848-8266
Gwen: (757) 342-8118
Courtney: (757) 342-9456
cvn77ombudsman@yahoo.com

USS GEORGE H.W. BUSH Family Readiness Group Contact Information

cvn77frg@cvn77frg.org

USS GEORGE H.W. BUSH Careline

(866) 920-1006 or (757) 444-1124