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The **76**er

October 6th 2012

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Feature Story

BREAKING THE MOLD!

Story by MC3 Godette Photo by MC3 Stewart

ALRE

NAVY'S FIRST FEMALE ABE TO BECOME AN ALRE

I am sure most of us have heard the saying, "There's a first time for everything," but most of us have not been around to witness actual history in the making—until now.

Aviation Boatswain's Mate (Equipment) 1st Class Kimberlee Hazle, from the ship's Air Department, will be commissioned November 1st as the Navy's first ever female Limited Duty Officer (LDO) in the Aviation Boatswain's Mate (Equipment) community. After that, she is headed to USS Nimitz (CVN 68) to become the Aircraft Launch and Recovery Equipment (ALRE) Maintenance Officer.

Upon meeting Hazle, it is easy to see that commanding a flight deck runs in her blood. After all, her lineage includes an uncle who retired from the Navy as an ALRE and was a crewmember aboard the storied USS Forrester during the tragic fire of 1967. With almost 50 years of 'sea salt' coursing through her veins, it is not surprising that Hazle had this goal in mind since the day she took the oath. The surprise for her, however, was just how quickly it happened.

"From day one, I knew I wanted to be a flight deck officer," she said. "When I found out I was selected, I was surprised it happened so early in my career, but I was ready to go and get started with my new job right away."

Hazle might have been taken aback, but to those that work around her, it was not that big of a shock.

"She is very mature, and she is definitely a go-getter," said Chief Warrant Officer Sam Gyasi, Ronald Reagan's ALRE Maintenance Officer. "She wanted it, she applied herself, and she got it."

Others echoed Gyasi's sentiment, alluding to her passion for what she does and how she leads. Chief Aviation Boatswain's Mate Jeff Scarano, V-2 ALRE Maintenance Chief, said Hazle made it to this point by supporting her Sailors, being a strong role model for those working for her,

She was the driving force behind the Navy's first all-female catapult team on board the USS Stennis.

performing in-rate qualifications and expanding her technical knowledge.

"She is a well-rounded Sailor who has done what the Navy has asked of her: education, community service, technical knowledge, Sailorization and leadership," Scarano added.

The driving force behind Hazle's accomplishment was not a desire to serve her own interests, but a focused desire to do more for the Aviation Boatswain's Mate community through command and making decisions at a higher level.

"I wanted to leave my mark on the community I love so much," said Hazle.

She added that the Navy makes it easy for Sailors to excel because the keys to success are laid out and all they need to do is follow directions.

Hazle also strongly suggested that Sailors take advantage of the experience residing within their chain of command, "The chain has gone through most, if not all, the things you will have to go through to get to the top."

Someone who has been watching Hazle grow into the Sailor she is today is Chief Aviation Boatswain's Mate Kendrey Lusk, Ronald Reagan's Bow Catapult Leading Chief Petty Officer, who worked with Hazle 11 years ago on USS John C. Stennis (CVN 74) when she was just an airman recruit.

"Over the years, the biggest change I've seen in her is how she has learned to take on responsibility," said Lusk. She took



that advice and ran with it."

When talking to Hazle nowadays, it is pretty clear that any fear she once possessed has long since passed. When asked if she feels any pressure or hesitation going to her new job, she relates it more as a sense of obligation, "I just want to do well and be an example for whoever comes after me, whether male or female."

Those around her are far more confident and expressive about her likelihood of success.

"She will excel as an ALRE Maintenance Officer," Scarano said. "She knows the equipment and operations of ALRE, and, further, will guide and instruct the most junior Sailor on a successful path."

Others are ensuring that she's heading off the Reagan with the advice and wisdom that they've gained over the years.

"First, I told her to remember where she came from and to always take care of her people because the people that work under her will be the gauge of how successful she is," added Scarano. "I also told her to never be afraid to ask questions and always take ownership of whatever you do, good or bad."

With her newly appointed position, Hazle has no doubt become a pioneer in the AB community and, although she will be the first female ever to hold the position, she just wants to be looked at as the next person to do the job.

"I don't want to it to be looked at as a female thing," said Hazle. "I just want to be looked at as the next LDO."

As far as advice for future female Sailors who look to break down barriers in the future, Hazle's advice to them was to not make it an issue and take all your tasks head on.

"I did what I had to do to be who I wanted to be," she said.

Hazle may be the first to accomplish the feat of becoming a female LDO in her future community, but she is very humbled and thankful to everyone who took part in helping her realize her dream.

In October 2005, she had a book published titled "Wisdom of Twin Souls."

"Nobody ever really does anything by themselves, especially in V-2," said Hazle. "I feel like everyone I ever worked with helped get me to this point, whether it was a good or bad experience. The good experiences will always stick with you and the bad experiences help you make sure you don't put your Sailors through the same thing."