

THE AVENGER

Volume 3

March 2010



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Aviation Boatswain's Mate (Handling) Airman Eric C. Diaz, from USS George H.W. Bush (CVN 77), repairs a sprinkler on the ship's flight deck during a test of the ship's countermeasure washdown system Feb. 27. (U.S. Navy photo by Mass Communication Specialist Seaman Apprentice Michael Smevog.)

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BUSH PINS 98 WARFARE SPECIALISTS

Story by MCSN J. Scott St.Clair

USS GEORGE H.W. BUSH (CVN 77) pinned 54 new Enlisted Surface Warfare Specialists (ESWS) and 44 new Enlisted Aviation Warfare Specialists (EAWS), March 19, a significantly high number for the command.

Senior Chief Aviation Machinist's Mate (AW/SW) Scott A. Pistella, command EAWS coordinator, attributed the large increase in qualifiers to the aircraft carrier being out of the shipyards and out to sea.

"This was among one of the largest pinnings we've ever had," said Pistella. "Since coming out of the yards, activity in the program has at least doubled."

In addition to the operational state of the aircraft carrier, Pistella also credited the ship's chain of command and the proactive measures taken to improve the program.

"The program has streamlined the process of routing documents, which results in reduced wait-times between being qualified and being pinned," he said. "From the commanding officer down, the command does a good job of promoting the value of being a warfare specialist."

That value is echoed throughout the command.

"I couldn't be more proud of our professional men and women," said Command Master Chief (AW/SW/FPJ) John W. Heck. "On board ship, warfare qualifications are a cornerstone for career success, regardless of anyone's career intentions. The warfare insignia is the mark of a true Navy professional," he said.

"A warfare pin is an award that you can wear on your uniform and put on display," said Chief Fire Controlman Eric P. Kramer, assistant command ESWS coordinator. "It's something you earned that you can take pride in."

Apart from the pride that comes along with being with being a warfare specialist, the qualifications can also help further

Sailors' careers.

"Earning the pins can increase advancement opportunities and meets a promotion requirement for all E-5 and above," said Pistella. "The programs increase the effectiveness of our Sailors and create a highly trained force, while arming them with a broader knowledge base of the mission, resulting in unit cohesion."

"It helps you become more comfortable with your surroundings by increasing your knowledge of how the ship operates and departments other than your own work," agreed Kramer. "Having a pin makes you more competitive for boards," he added.

Both Pistella and Kramer noticed that the continuing high participation in the ESWS and EAWS programs shows that crew members are self-motivated.

"The word is out there," said Kramer. "Keep up the hard press and we will accommodate you in any way we can," he said.

Pistella also expressed appreciation to the departmental ESWS and EAWS coordinators for the programs' success.

"The program is by no means a one-man-program," he said. "Without the dedication of the departmental coordinators the program would not be successful. Thanks to all of the departmental coordinators and to the command itself for its participation."

Heck praised the crew members for the recent increased participation and encouraged all of the command's Sailors to take advantage of the programs.

"All George H.W. Bush Sailors have the unique opportunity to become dual warfare-qualified during their tour here," he said, "and have an extremely supportive chain of command to support that goal." †

Looking for our Web site?

It's changed. Please find us here:

<http://up-www01.ffc.navy.mil/cvn77/>



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COMMAND CORNER

From the Commanding Officer



Greetings shipmates! As usual it is a very exciting time to be a part of the crew of our Navy's newest aircraft carrier. I want to thank each and every one for your hard work and dedication during our recent Board of Inspection and Survey, better known as INSURV. Thanks to your tireless efforts and professionalism,

we not only passed INSURV, but we knocked it out of the park. Great job! Passing this challenge proves to the rest of the fleet that we're not only the most professional carrier crew in the Navy, but it also demonstrates that our mission-readiness is beyond question.

I also want to welcome aboard Cmdr. William P. Pennington, our new executive officer. Cmdr. Pennington hails from Wilton, Iowa, and reported aboard in March after attending training at Joint Forces Staff College in Norfolk. He has more than 15 years of fighter pilot experience under his belt, flying both the F-14 Tomcat and the F/A-18 Super Hornet. Welcome aboard BIG XO!

Looking back at just over the last couple of months I cannot begin to tell you just how proud I am of you, and all that you've accomplished. We took our ship out to sea for



Photo by MC3 Brent Thacker
Aviation Boatswain's Mate (Fuel) Airman Lauren M. Bennett, of USS GEORGE H.W. BUSH (CVN 77) Air Department's V-4 Division, cleans a transfer cart in the ship's hangar bay March 23.



Photo by MCSA Michael Smevog
Sailors from USS GEORGE H.W. BUSH Deck Department prepare the ship's anchor chain for an inspection from the Board of Inspection and Survey (INSURV) March 24.

three weeks, which has been our longest underway to date, certified our flight deck as operational, and helped train up the newest generation of naval aviators.

We still have quite a busy schedule ahead of us over the next few months, and looking over the horizon it is important that I stress the emphasis of family readiness. Next year, we will no longer be telling our loved ones we're only going to be out for a week or two, but we'll be gearing up for our ship's maiden deployment. Our sister carriers in both the Atlantic and Pacific Fleets have been very busy these last couple of years so I'm sure they will be more than happy to see USS GEORGE H.W. BUSH (CVN 77) enter into the deployment rotation.

You can increase our mission readiness and reduce personal stress by ensuring you have a solid family plan. Updating page 2's, Family Care Plans, Powers of Attorney and becoming active in the Family Readiness Group are a few positive steps that will set us and our families up for success.

Thank you all once again for your hard work in making us the finest ship in the fleet and I look forward to getting underway with each and every one of you.

Sincerely,
Capt. Chip Miller
Commanding Officer

BUSH SERVES UP SUCCESS TO INSURV

Story and graphic by MCSN J. Scott St.Clair

USS GEORGE H.W. BUSH (CVN 77), the Navy's tenth and final Nimitz-class aircraft carrier, successfully completed her first inspection from the Board of Inspection and Survey (INSURV), March 22-25.

INSURV is a critical inspection of the ship's overall material condition to verify it meets official Navy standards.

According to Lt. Cmdr. Alan D. Feenstra, the ship's Maintenance Manager, the inspection was divided into an in port portion and an underway portion, with more than 200 inspectors on board for the in port segment and 150 on board for the underway segment.

"We're looking for material discrepancies," said Lt. Cmdr. Dave Wuesterwald, a Damage Control Inspector in the INSURV Final Contract Team. "It's our job to report the material condition of the ship directly to Congress and ensure the Navy has a 100 percent quality product before it is completely delivered from the shipyard builders."

"There were more than 480 total inspections," said Feenstra, "Everything from inspecting berthings and fan rooms, to testing the rudder, propulsion plant, weapons and aircraft launch and recovery

systems; almost every piece of equipment on board was operated in front of inspectors."

Feenstra attributed the aircraft carrier's success to the months of preparation preceding the inspection.

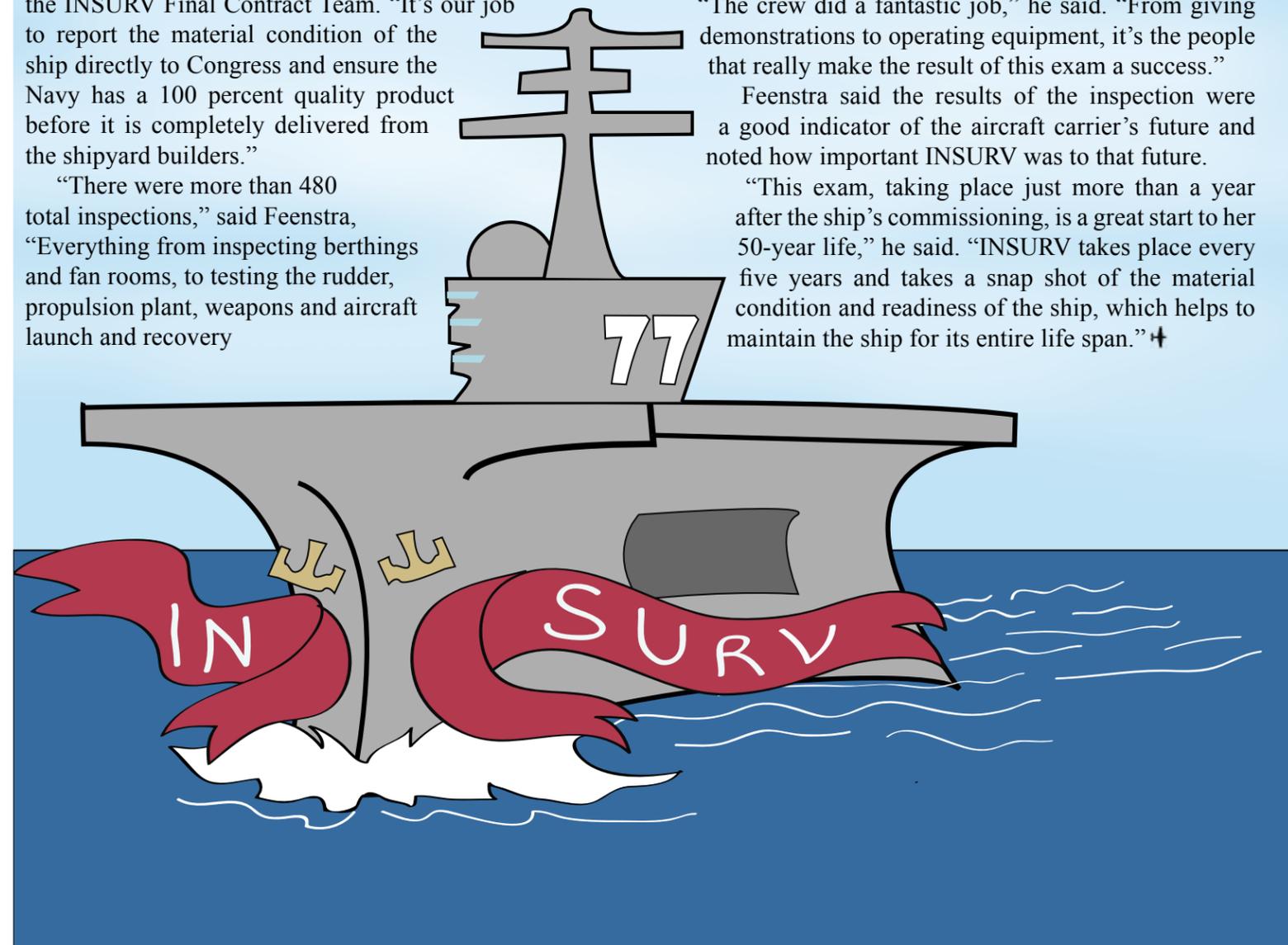
"The ship's energy was really high and all the preparation really boosted our confidence going into the exam," he said. "We easily accumulated over 20,000 man-hours of preparation, with every department and person involved in our practices. That was vital in this week's performance."

In addition to all the preparation going into the inspection, Feenstra was also quick to point out the huge role the aircraft carrier's crew members played in the successful evolution.

"The crew did a fantastic job," he said. "From giving demonstrations to operating equipment, it's the people that really make the result of this exam a success."

Feenstra said the results of the inspection were a good indicator of the aircraft carrier's future and noted how important INSURV was to that future.

"This exam, taking place just more than a year after the ship's commissioning, is a great start to her 50-year life," he said. "INSURV takes place every five years and takes a snap shot of the material condition and readiness of the ship, which helps to maintain the ship for its entire life span." †





Aboard USS GEORGE H.W. BUSH there are Sailors who share a closer bond than just shipmates...

Sibling Sailors

By MCSN

J. Scott St.Clair

In a Navy with more than 120 installations all over the globe, being away from family can be difficult. For two Sailors stationed on board USS GEORGE H.W. BUSH (CVN 77), a unique situation makes the transition a little easier.

Machinery Repairman Fireman Johnathan L. Gist of Engineering Department, and Aviation Boatswain's Mate (Handling) Airman April L. Gist of Air Department, from Shreveport, La., are among nine sets of siblings serving on board the Navy's tenth and final Nimitz-class aircraft carrier.

Their unique relationship offers them both a comfort and stability that they appreciate.

"We're really close," said April. "It feels good because being away from my family is tough and having him here gives me a sense of home away from home."

"It's a good feeling," said Johnathan. "I don't always feel comfortable talking to other people and when I need that family support it's good to know she's only a J-Dial away. She's someone on board that I can rely on and trust."

Although they are pleased with the outcome, the events that led to them being stationed on the same aircraft carrier were purely coincidental.

"I was originally supposed to be on [USS Dwight D. Eisenhower (CVN 69)], but there was a sudden need for five Aviation Boatswain's Mates and I ended up on BUSH," said April.

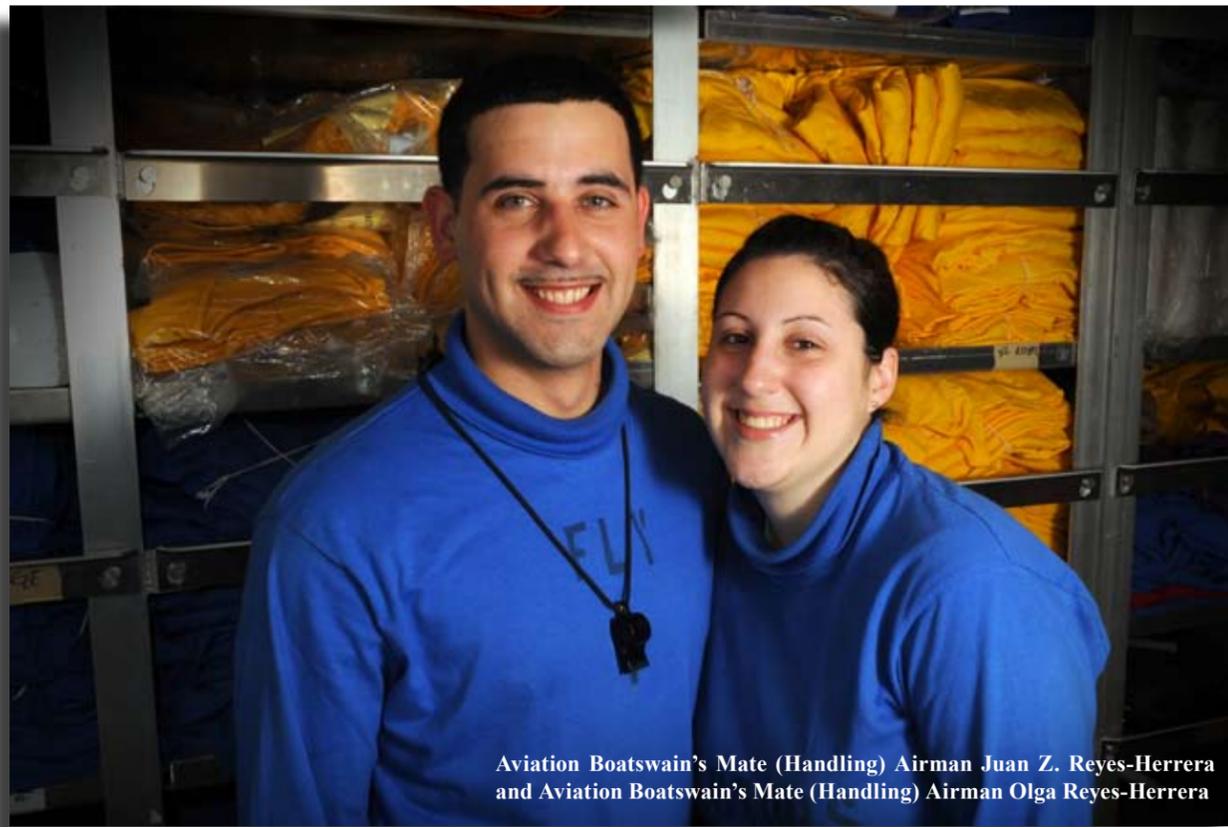
According to April, the brother and sister get to see each other every day and they try to eat together whenever possible.

"She likes to watch me work, building and manufacturing with metal, and we talk about our goals and help each other out with qualifications," said Johnathan. "When she gets homesick, I help give her stability."

Johnathan and April also spend a lot of time together outside of the work environment.

"She comes to my house and eats all my food," laughed Johnathan. "It can be hard for a single Sailor living on board, so I'm glad she can come to my house to do laundry, play with my kids, and relate with my wife."

Aviation Boatswain's Mate (Handling) Airman April L. Gist and Machinery Repairman Fireman Johnathan L. Gist



Aviation Boatswain's Mate (Handling) Airman Juan Z. Reyes-Herrera and Aviation Boatswain's Mate (Handling) Airman Olga Reyes-Herrera



Electrician's Mate 1st Class Vincent J. Smalls (top) and Information Systems Technician 1st Class (SW/AW) Jamad Smalls

Johnathan joined the Navy in July of 2008, and checked on board BUSH in March 2009. April followed suit shortly after, checking on board in May of 2009. April said her older brother's example influenced her decision to enlist.

"I expect her to look up to me," Johnathan said. "I lead by example. I wouldn't do anything I wouldn't want her to do. We keep each other out of trouble."

Since joining the Navy, neither sibling has looked back.

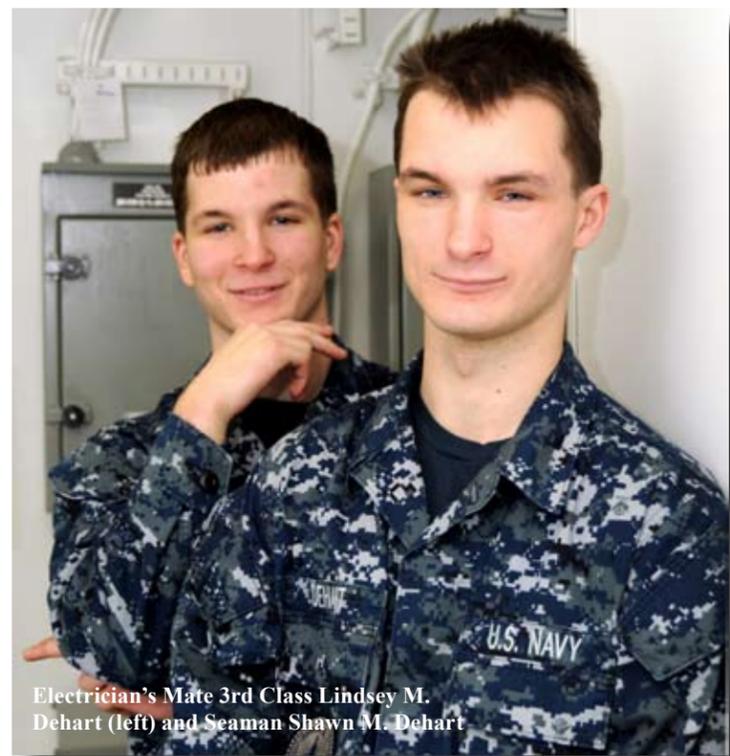
"It's a stepping stone for my career," said April. "Whether I choose to stay in or get out, it was a good move."

"I love my job. I wouldn't trade it for the world," said Johnathan, who said he hopes to retire as a chief petty officer. "I want to work my way up and reap the rewards."

In addition to the Gist siblings, CVN 77 is also home to Aviation Ordnanceman Airman Aaron and Aviation



Information Systems Technician 2nd Class (SW/AW) Denisha D. Hughes and Operations Specialist 2nd Class (AW/SW) Mac O. Hughes



Electrician's Mate 3rd Class Lindsey M. Dehart (left) and Seaman Shawn M. Dehart

"Being away from my family is tough and having him here gives me a sense of home away from home."

- ABHAN April L. Gist



Seaman Shadi K. Azhari (left) and Machinist's Mate Fireman Cody T. Azhari

Boatswain's Mate (Fuel) Airman Alan Smith; Electrician's Mate Fireman Kimberly and Aviation Boatswain's Mate (Handling) 3rd Class Kevin Yates; Seaman Shadi and Machinist's Mate Fireman Cody Azhari; Electrician's Mate 3rd Class Lindsey and Seaman Shawn Dehart; Information Systems Technician 2nd Class Denisha and Operations Specialist 2nd Class Mac Hughes; Electrician's Mate 1st Class Vincent and Information Systems Technician 1st Class Jamad Smalls; Aviation Boatswain's Mate (Handling) Airman Juan and Aviation Boatswain's Mate (Handling) Airman Olga Reyes-Herrera; and the brothers Hoffman, twins Randall and Scott and older brother Richard, all Machinist's Mates 2nd Class. †

BUSH Sailors return from lending aid in

Haiti

Story by MC3 Brian M. Brooks and MC3 Joshua Sheppard

At 4:14 p.m. local time on January 12, a 7.0-magnitude earthquake struck the Southern Caribbean island nation of Haiti. This earthquake was responsible for the deaths of more than 200,000 people, and the devastation impacted more than 3 million.

USS GEORGE H.W. BUSH (CVN 77) stood ready to provide assistance to those ravaged by the tremendous earthquake. When the call came, 17 BUSH Sailors volunteered. Their mission was simple - go to Haiti and provide any assistance that they could.

The small group of BUSH Sailors were eager to help in any way but had no idea what to expect when they got there.

They left the relative comfort of CVN 77 between the days of January 19 and 21, bound for a devastated island nation.

The Sailors found themselves assisting in various ways, such as being translators for the wounded, providing clean linens for hospital staff, and helping out with the massive supply effort.

A Voice for the Wounded

USS GEORGE H.W. BUSH was very fortunate to have Sailors aboard who could speak Haiti's national languages, Creole and French. They served as translators to the medical staff both on the ground and aboard the U.S. Navy hospital ship, USNS COMFORT (T-AH 20).

"When I came to work and heard about the earthquake the first thing I thought about was my aunts who live in the Delmas area," Aviation Ordnanceman Airman Laura Y. Jonassiant, of Weapons Department. Jonassiant is a Haitian-American whose parents were born in Haiti.

When Jonassiant learned that the command was asking for volunteers to go to Haiti to help out, she jumped at the chance to be on the list to help "her people." She immediately went to her supervisors and informed them of her interests to join the team.

After a few days of waiting she was called into her supervisor's office and asked a series of questions. At first she thought she may be in trouble but soon discovered that she was getting her wish to go to Haiti, where she served as a translator assisting medical staff.

"I never knew that I could be that strong but I had to be really strong for the patients," Jonassiant said.

Jonassiant recalls when a 6-year-old girl was brought aboard COMFORT for treatment, and the staff wasn't sure if her parents had survived the quake. Jonassiant was able to find out the girl's mother did survive and was able to talk to her over the phone. She informed the girl's mother of her condition and let her know that she could come to the ship to see her daughter.

After a few days of travel the mother made her way to ship and Jonassiant happened to be on duty at the same time and was witness to their very emotional reunion.

"When the girl saw her mother that was the first time I saw her really smile since she had been there," Jonassiant said.

Helping the daughter and mother reunite was probably her most memorable moment while in Haiti.

A Different Kind of Clean-up

While some BUSH Sailors were speaking for those who could not, another group supported COMFORT's medical staff by providing full time laundry service.

"I never thought that I would receive the call to pack up a full sea bag and leave the next day," said Ship's Serviceman 3rd Class Philip E. Foster. "I just said, 'roger that,' and started to get ready."

According to Foster, the laundry division was open 24 hours a day with three shifts throughout the day. They not only washed the laundry from the medical ward but the crew's regular laundry as well.

"The first few weeks were very busy for all of us in laundry," Foster said. "We had a lot of blood-contaminated sheets that would show up on yellow laundry bags so we would have to put on an apron, gloves and a mask in order to handle them."

Although the Sailors didn't work in the medical ward, they would still get a glimpse of the numerous patients who were received by the ship.

"Every day we would see new patients coming through with one arm and two legs or no legs at all and their faces would be covered in scars from the fallen rocks," said Ship's Serviceman 3rd Class Cedric E. Daye.

Foster went on to mention that seeing everything first hand has brought the "real world" to him and made him see it in a different light.

"It really makes you appreciate the [BUSH] and how good we have it," Foster said.

Daye was very grateful for the opportunity to help a country in need.

"If I ever get the chance to do something like this again, I would do it," Daye said.

The Movers and Shakers

Other members of the BUSH team were on the ground in an effort to load up supplies for the Haitian people displaced by the earthquake.

Aviation Support Equipment Technician Airman William J. Fansler, of Aviation Intermediate Maintenance Department, reflected on their first morning in Haiti after sleeping in a field the night before. He remembers waking up around 6 a.m. and beginning to load supplies in to helicopters.

"We were loading boxes of Meals Ready-to-Eat (MRE) and cases of water onto the helicopters, which would take us two to three minutes to load each helicopter."

Fansler went on to say that once one helicopter was loaded a new one would arrive around five minutes later.

They worked with little rest until 3 p.m., but their day was just beginning. They had one more helicopter to unload: the MH-53 Sea Dragon that was to take them to USS CARL VINSON (CVN 70).

VINSON was down in Haiti to provide airlift support and boots on the ground as well.

Once aboard CVN 70, the BUSH Sailors assisted the ship's crew for five days until receiving orders to report to Naval Station Guantanamo Bay, Cuba, also known as GITMO, where they began assisting in logistical operations to get supplies and people to the disaster area. GITMO was used as a staging ground for the helicopters bringing supplies to Haiti.

"We would go out to aircraft after they landed and would manifest their cargo and personnel and make sure that they went to the right place," said Fansler. "We worked side by side with all of the other

branches to aid those in need."

Four Sailors from the group went back to Haiti for four days to assist operations on the ground.

"When we went back to Haiti we continued to load helicopters at the Port-Au Prince airport," said Aviation Boatswain's Mate (Handling) Airman Jennifer Pena, of Air Department.

"There were moments when we doubted if we were really making a difference," said Fansler. "But, we realized that all cargo bound for Haiti would pass through GITMO, so it gave us a great feeling of satisfaction in our work." †



BUSH Sailors Honored at Norfolk Admirals Game

Story and photos by MC3 Brian M. Brooks

USS GEORGE H.W. BUSH (CVN 77) Sailors participated in the opening ceremony of a Norfolk Admirals minor league hockey game March 26 benefitting the Navy Marine Corps Relief Society (NMCRS).

Aviation Boatswain's Mate (Handling) 1st Class (AW/SW) Franklin I. Santiago, USS GEORGE H.W. BUSH Sailor of the Year, had the privilege of dropping the hockey puck in the ceremony before the start of the game.

"It is a great honor to represent the command at an event like this," Santiago said. "This is my first hockey game and I'm really looking forward to the excitement of the game."

After the puck drop, the crowd's attention was directed on the ship's Color Guard as they marched onto the ice rink. Damage Controlman Fireman Monique Gale, of GEORGE H.W. BUSH Engineering Department, joined the Color Guard



USS GEORGE H.W. BUSH (CVN 77) Color Guard renders honors during the national anthem at a Norfolk Admirals hockey game March 26.

on the ice and sang the national anthem.

The BUSH Sailors were invited by Kathy Nelson, director of the (NMCRS) Norfolk Office, to partake in the game's opening events as part of the Admirals hockey 2nd annual

NMCRS fundraiser night.

"We are very proud to partner with the local commands, the Admirals and other various contributors to make events like this a success," Nelson said.

"IT IS A GREAT HONOR TO REPRESENT THE COMMAND AT AN EVENT LIKE THIS."

According to Nelson, a retired U.S. Navy captain, last year's fundraiser raised more than \$4,000 to help local Hampton Roads Sailors and Marines.

"I think that it's great that we get to show off to the community," said Aviation Support Equipment Technician 2nd Class (AW/SW) Craig M. Yaskow, the color guard assistant leading petty officer. "I hope we get the chance to perform at more games in the future." †



USS GEORGE H.W. BUSH (CVN 77) Sailor of the Year, Aviation Boatswain's Mate (Handling) 1st Class (AW/SW) Franklin I. Santiago, drops a hockey puck for the opening ceremony at a Norfolk Admirals hockey game March 26.

BUSH SAILORS RETURN HOME FROM NIMITZ DEPLOYMENT

Story and graphic by MCSN J. Scott St.Clair

More than 70 USS GEORGE H.W. BUSH (CVN 77) Sailors returned to Norfolk, Va., March 22, after an eight-month deployment with USS NIMITZ (CVN 68).

The Sailors were sent from the Navy's tenth and final Nimitz-class aircraft carrier, to the first Nimitz-class aircraft carrier to receive training, qualifications, and to aid NIMITZ in her routine deployment to the Western Pacific in support of the Maritime Strategy.

The Sailors arrived at Naval Station Norfolk's Air Mobility Command terminal where they were welcomed home by family, friends and their BUSH shipmates.

"Our Sailors did marvelous work," said Capt. "Chip" Miller, BUSH's commanding officer. "It's only fitting to give them a great homecoming."

Sailors from BUSH's Air, Supply, Weapons, Reactor, Operations, and Aircraft Intermediate Maintenance Departments detached from the aircraft carrier July 29, for what was originally scheduled to be a six-month deployment. The deployment was extended for an additional two months that, while difficult, proved to be well worth it for many.

"The extra two months were worth it," said Aviation Support Equipment Technician 2nd Class (AW) Matthew I. Brandvold. "It gave us more time to accomplish

goals like qualifications and certifications. I feel that the knowledge and experience I acquired out there is something I can bring back with me."

According to Miller, the NIMITZ's commanding officer had nothing but positive feedback about the Sailors' performance, feedback that he takes pride in.

"I'm so proud of our Sailors," said Miller. "They had the opportunity to gain so much experience that they can now bring back to benefit us. It really adds depth to our team when we have Sailors that have been through a full deployment."

Of the six departments that provided volunteer augmentees, Air Department personnel made up the overwhelming majority with 56 members.

BUSH Air Boss Cmdr. Matthew G. Westfall expressed his gratitude to have many of his Sailors back and to work with them for the first time.

"I'm meeting 42 of my Sailors for the first time tonight," he said, "and they're showing up with qualifications and experience. They're bringing a lot to an already solid team."

Westfall also said he has high hopes for the returning Sailors and for the future.

"We have everybody home for the first time," he said. "This marks the end of our Air Department training abroad. Now the tables have turned, now we can begin qualifying Sailors from other commands. We're paying back our debt to the fleet." †

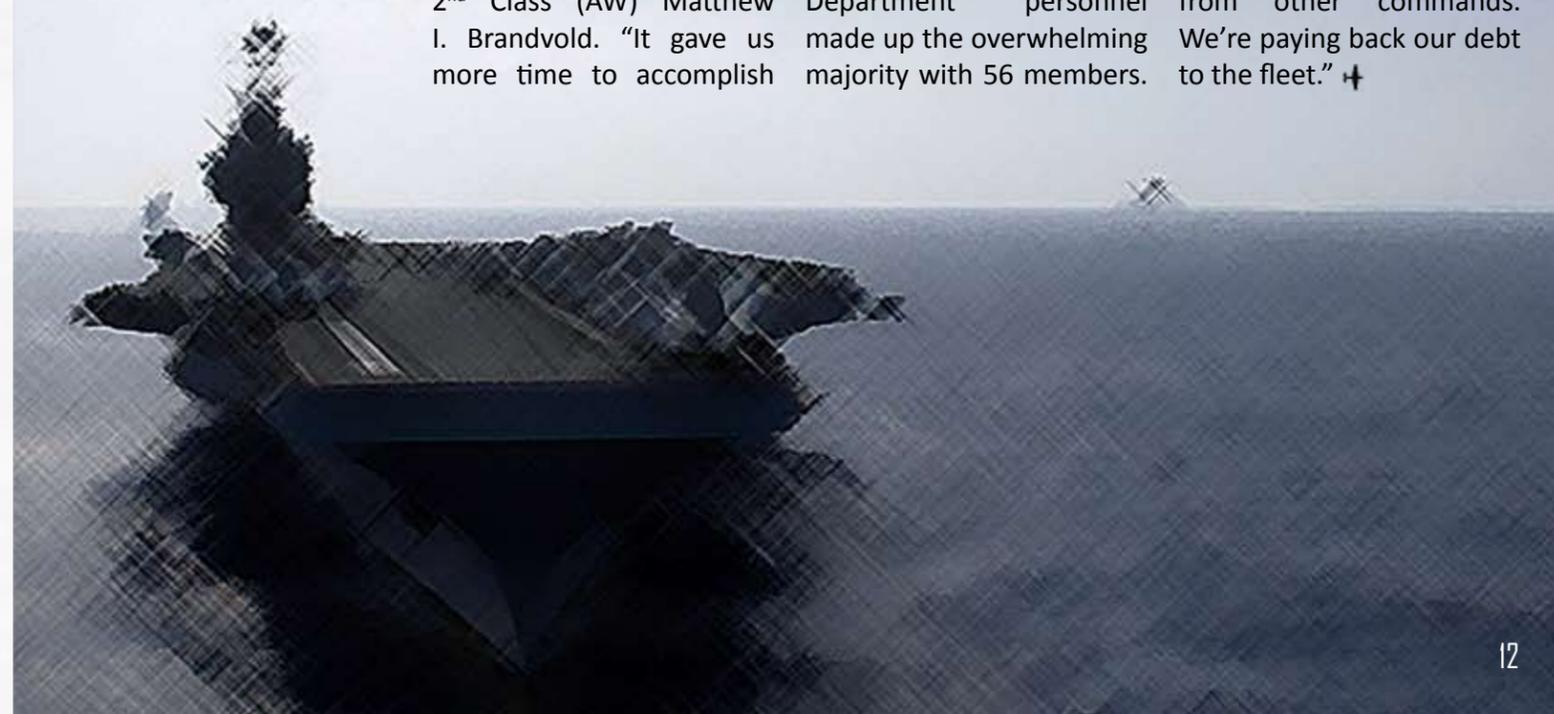




Photo by MC3 Brent Thacker



Photo by MCSA Michael Smevog



Photo by MC3 Brent Thacker



Photo by MCSA Michael Smevog



Photo by MC3 Brian M. Brooks



Photo by MC3 Brian M. Brooks



Photo by MC2 Micah P. Blechner



Photo by MC2 Micah P. Blechner

UNDERWAY

Clockwise from above: Sailors assigned to Air Department participate in a foreign object debris (FOD) walk down on the ship's flight deck March 12; Seaman Rhuttie S. Guieb, of Deck's Department 3rd Division, takes lee helm on the ship's bridge March 1; Hospital Corpsman 2nd Class Marquis T. Plant creates a crown in the ship's dental laboratory March 16; Culinary Specialist Seaman Matthew J. McQuon of Supply Department's S-5 Division, prepares a deck for tiling March 12; Aviation Ordnanceman 3rd Class (AW/SW) Phillip A. Barton performs maintenance on a hatch March 15; Lt. Kelly Koren and Hospital Corpsman 2nd Class (SW/AW) Melissa S. Metz, of Health Services Department, diagnose a patient during a mass casualty drill in the ship's forward mess deck March 4; Sailors from Weapons Department approach the firing line on one of the ship's aircraft elevators during a live-fire weapons qualification exercise March 5; Aviation Boatswain's Mate (Handling) Airman Taylor L. Chandler, of Air Department, performs restoration work on the ship's flight deck March 3.

April 2010 Navy Events Calendar

Monday

Tuesday

Wednesday

Thursday

Friday

| | | | | |
|--|--|--|--|--|
| | | | 1 Federal Employee System FFSC Little Creek 9 a.m.-Noon | 2 |
| 5 | 6 Developing Your Spending Plan FFSC Little Creek 8:30-10 a.m. | 7 Banking and Financial Services FFSC Little Creek 9-10:30 a.m. | 8 Parenting Teens FFSC Oceana 2-4:30 p.m. | 9 New Parent Resource Awareness Workshop FFSC Norfolk 8 a.m.-Noon |
| 12 Parenting in the Military FFSC Oceana 9-11:30 a.m. (M&Tu) | 13 Parenting in the Military FFSC Little Creek 9-11:30 a.m. | 14 Career Planning FFSC Northwest 1-4 p.m. | 15 Welcome to the Military FFSC Little Creek 1-4 p.m. | 16 Interview Techniques FFSC Little Creek 9 a.m.-Noon |
| 19 Parenting in the Military FFSC Northwest 1-3:30 p.m. (M&Tu) | 20 Home Ownership FFSC Little Creek 6-9 p.m. (Tu&W) | 21 Building Healthy Relationships FFSC Oceana 2-4:30 p.m. | 22 Couples Workshop FFSC Norfolk 4-6:30 p.m. | 23 |
| 26 Retirement Planning FFSC Oceana 2:30-4 p.m. | 27 Building Healthy Relationships FFSC Little Creek 6-8:30 p.m. | 28 Car Buying Strategies FFSC Norfolk 1-2:30 p.m. | 29 | 30 |

To Register, contact: FFSC Oceana: 443-2923, FFSC Norfolk: 444-2102,
FFSC Yorktown: 887-4606, FFSC Northwest: 421-8770, FFSC Little Creek: 462-7563