Tsunami Relief

USS Benfold’s Story
The Face of Kindness

Mere days after a tsunami ripped through parts of southeastern Asia, killing more than 200,000 people, Sailors from USS Benfold (DDG 65) and other ships and squadrons from USS Abraham Lincoln’s (CVN 72) Carrier Strike Group (CSG) provided aid to survivors in Indonesia’s Banda Aceh province and beyond, during Operation Unified Assistance.

Bringing Them In From the Cold

In 1962, a P-2V Neptune aircraft crashed on the Kronberg Glacier in Greenland after launching on a familiarization mission from Keflavik, Iceland. After an extensive search, it was officially declared lost at sea. There were other expeditions, but this year, after more than 40 years in the deep freeze of Greenland, the Navy brought its fallen shipmates home.

Below the Waterline

If the water is warm and your computer or television has power, you never think of how that happens aboard ship. Dozens of Sailors comprise the unseen force who keep the ship moving. And just like in a big city, they go largely unnoticed until the water runs cold or the lights go out. For most engineers, that’s exactly how they like it, because if no one knows they’re there, it means everything is working.
Fishing vessels and debris litter the shoreline following the Dec. 26 tsunami. Views like this greeted the Navy Oceanographic Office’s Survey Team as it traveled along the Indonesian coastline searching for navigational hazards.

Photo by JO1 (SCW/SS) James Pinsky
Speaking with Sailors

Master Chief Petty Officer of the Navy

The MCPON discusses the progress of Perform to Serve

O ne of the questions I receive most often from Sailors during all hands calls is about the progress of the Perform to Serve (PTS) program. I firmly believe this is a necessary program that our Navy will use to help build our future force and help us put Sailors where we need them the most.

Now, nearly two years of statistics, I can say with an emphatic “yes” that the program is working. Of course PTS doesn’t mean that in continuing your Navy career you should expect to transfer from one rating to another throughout your career. In fact, since the inception of PTS, more than 80 percent of Sailors have stayed within their rating. PTS shouldn’t be a reason for anxiety, either. PTS applications are submitted regardless of your intentions to continue your career or separate from the Navy. Of the 56,000 total applications, 3 percent of those Sailors haven’t been asked to separate. Even so, PTS can help us put Sailors where we need them the most.

When it comes time to put in your PTS application, you’re now receiving more options than when you’re willing to continue to serve — we want to do everything we can to allow that to happen. Of those, seven of 10 PTS applicants have been asked to separate. As we wait until the last minute greatly reduce their chances of approval. I want to emphasize: less than 3 percent of the PTS applicants have been asked to separate. As we continue to build the force of our future Navy, we want to ensure the success of our current mission and beyond.

Perform to Serve was not a program intended as a tool to separate Sailors from our Navy. It is a necessary tool to find Sailors early in their careers who are looking for challenges in other ratings, and getting them on the best path to succeed. It is a tool that is working and a program that we can expect to be in place for years to come.

The MCPON discusses the progress of Perform to Serve

Speaking with Sailors is a monthly column initiated by the Master Chief Petty Officer of the Navy as a way of reaching out to the men and women of the fleet, whether they are stationed just down the road or halfway around the world.
ONE-NET to Bring New Computers, More Secure Network to Overseas Users

The new computers are part of a larger plan under ONE-NET to replace most of the Navy’s networks overseas and put them under a centralized control authority for more than 41,000 users on shore installations from Europe to the Far East.

ONE-NET, short for OCONUS Navy Enterprise Network, is similar to the Navy/Reserve Corps Intranet (NMCI), and will provide users on shore installations overseas a single integrated network.

“ONE-NET provides centralized information assurance, intrusion detection, monitoring, reporting tools, processes and remediation,” explained David Mackenzie, program manager for ONE-NET. “Any attempts to enter the system will be noticed on ONE-NET. The network has less entry points, firewall compliance... all Navy firewalls are not under a centralized control network overseas and put them under a centralized control authority for more than 41,000 users on shore installations from Europe to the Far East.

ONE-NET will provide secure and reliable data service to all military personnel who use both the classified and unclassified sides of the network. The classified side is SPINET, which stands for Secure Internet Protocol Routed Network, while NIPRNET is the Non-secure Internet Protocol Routed Network, the unclassified side that connects to the Internet.

“Unlike NMCI, ONE-NET is not a CNO-mandated network at this time,” noted Bandur-Duvall. “Some Navy customers are still evaluating the benefits of joining this OCONUS wide enterprise network. We will begin with updating the computers for the fleets and regional users under CNI (Commander, Navy Installations) for base operating support.”

Computers issued under ONE-NET won’t be low-end, according to Ken Higa, assistant program manager for Base-Level Information Infrastructure at Program Executive Office (PEO) C4I and Space, San Diego. “These new computers will exceed the typical user needs—the first shipment will have a 3.2 GHZ processor and a 40 GB hard drive. After three years, all ONE-NET workstations are slated to be ‘refreshed’ (or swapped out) to new PCs.”

ONE-NET will be composed of OCONUS Regional Network Operating Support Centers as “hubs,” with the OCONUS Local Network Operating Support Centers at remote locations, similar to the spokes on the wheel of a bicycle.

“All equipment purchased under ONE-NET will be coordinated by Chief of Naval Operations,” explained Bandur-Duvall.


More than 15,000 new computers are set to be installed at Navy bases overseas as part of the migration to ONE-NET, the Navy’s newest enterprise network.

“Approximately 7,000 new computers are to be installed for network users that fall under ONE-NET in the Far East region, beginning this spring,” said CDR Teresa Bandur-Duvall, deputy chief information officer at NET-WARCOM. “By early summer, about 8,300 workstations are to go to the European region.”

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To be considered for the “Around the Fleet” section, forward your high resolution (6” x 7” at 300 dpi) images with full credit and cutline information, including full name, rank and duty station to:

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Story courtesy of DOD.

### Initiative to Help Injured Troops Get Startup Funding

DOD has startup funding for a new initiative for service members injured in the global war on terrorism, a senior official said recently.

“We’re looking at possibilities for internships and other types of trial employment,” John M. Molino told attendees at the 17th DOD Disability Forum. “We’re also looking at possibilities for mentoring.

“We intend for every injured or disabled veteran to have as many opportunities as he or she needs to achieve his or her maximum potential on active duty or in our civilian work force,” said Molino, the acting Deputy Undersecretary for Equal Opportunity.

“We are here for the people who fight to protect us.”

In addition, the department is continuing and expanding its other efforts on behalf of people with disabilities, Molino noted.

He told the group that DOD will continue using initiatives that have worked well in the past, such as the Workforce Recruitment Program for College Students with Disabilities, which is co-sponsored with the Labor Department.

He pointed out that each year, the Office of the Secretary of Defense funds about 200 summer jobs through the college recruitment program.

“In the past 10 years, we’ve been able to document almost 2,000 hires (1,833) at DOD activities around the world,” Molino noted. “In FY04, we hired 248 persons. In mid-March 2005, we’ll release a CD-ROM with information concerning 2,000 students and recent graduates with disabilities who are looking for summer or permanent positions.”

Molino also encouraged conferences to participate in the DOD “e-mentoring” program for disabled students.
“The mentors are volunteers from our civilian workforce and the military services,” he pointed out. “This year, 50 students signed up. The matches have now been made, but we continue to need volunteers. Student goals and interests are phenomenally varied, so we need mentors in a very broad range of occupations.”

The DOD Computer/Electronic Accommodations Program (CAP) is another program Molino highlighted. It provides technology to make facilities, programs and activities usable for disabled workers at no cost to the requesting organization.

“This program now serves active-duty members of the military services and civilian employees,” Molino said. “It provides real solutions for real people by eliminating barriers in the electronic environment.”

“Legislation a few years ago authorized us to serve the entire federal community,” he said. “Last year, CAP supplied more than 5,500 accommodations to DOD organizations and partner agencies outside DOD.”

According to Molino, DOD welcomes Americans with disabilities in its civilian workforce, increasingly in the military services, and in its facilities, programs and activities worldwide.

The new DOD sexual assault policy was recently delivered to Congress by David S.C. Chu, Undersecretary of Defense for Personnel and Readiness.

The policy provides a foundation through which the department will improve prevention of sexual assault, significantly enhance support to victims and increase accountability.

“The department is moving forward to make real changes and to make those changes stick,” Chu said. “Sexual assault is a crime and is not tolerated.”

During the past year, the department has been working collaboratively with the services, members of Congress and national experts to address the crime of sexual assault within the Armed Forces. As a result, the Joint Task Force for Sexual Assault Prevention and Response was established in October 2004 as the single point of accountability for DOD’s sexual assault policy.

Its initial task was to develop policy incorporating the criteria set forth in Public Law 108-375, the Ronald W. Reagan National Defense Authorization Act for FY05, which directed the department to have a sexual assault policy in place by Jan. 1, 2005.

The department needs consistent sexual assault prevention education across the services to create a greater understanding of what constitutes a sexual assault, risk factors and preventive measures. Service implementation of these policies will have a substantial impact on creating a culture of prevention and an environment that protects the health and well being of our uniformed service members. The sexual assault policy will ensure that there is uniformity in the standards of care and the same support systems are standard throughout the services.

The policies reflect recommendations from the department’s Joint Task Force on Care for Victims of Sexual Assault. Continued from page 9
areas include specific guidelines for how to investigate complaints, medical treatment and care for victims, commander’s checklists for response actions, reporting of sexual assault information, and expanding access to care through collaboration between military installations and local community support. A summary of the policy is available at www.defenselink.mil/news/Jan2005/d20050104sum.pdf.

Story courtesy of DOD.

Navy Extends Early Transition Program for FY05

The Navy has extended the opportunity for eligible Sailors interested in leaving the Navy before the end of their active obligated service (EAOS) this fiscal year under another installment of the Early Transition Program.

This voluntary program applies to Sailors in the active, Reserve, full-time support and canvasser recruiter communities.

“Because of our continued high reenlistment rates and low attrition rates, the Navy can continue to extend this early transition option to our Sailors,” explained VADM Gerry Hoewing, Chief of Naval Personnel. “As we fully develop and implement our Human Capital Strategy, we will continue to look for options that will best benefit our Sailors and the fleet.”

Those Sailors wishing to take advantage of this program must have their request received by Aug. 1. Commanding officers may grant separation leave, but permissive temporary duty and involuntary separation pay are not authorized.

The requested separation date under this program must be no later than Aug. 15; a waiver of this requirement will not be considered.

Sailors who are enrolled in the Montgomery GI Bill program will receive one month of benefits for each full month served on active duty up to a maximum of 36 months. Those discharged under this program who have served 20 months of a two-year enlistment or 30 months of a three-year enlistment will receive 36 months of benefits.

For Sailors who received an enlistment bonus, they will be required to repay the portion of bonus received for active-duty time not served. Those Sailors under a selective reenlistment bonus contract are not eligible for transition under this program.

All Sailors are encouraged to consider service in the Navy Reserves once their active-duty time is complete. The Blue to Green program also provides transitioning Sailors the opportunity to make a seamless switch to the active-duty Army without a break in service. Both of these options are available for Sailors taking advantage of the Early Transition Program.

For more information refer to NAVADMIN 026/05, available on the Web at www.persnet.navy.mil/navadmin/nav05/nav05026.txt or contact your Command Career Counselor.

Story by LT Kyle Raines, who is assigned to the public affairs office, Chief of Naval Personnel.
BRINGING THEM IN FROM THE COLD

After more than 40 years in the deep freeze of Greenland, the Navy brings fallen shipmates home

The glacier’s terrain was not the typical Navy search and recovery environment. The inherent ice and cold conditions in Greenland led to several unique problems for the team.
They had all the best training possible in the Navy, but right now, as they looked at the bodies of five aviators lost in a 1962 crash, it was obvious that the training the Navy gives was not enough for the mission at that moment. The 16-member Navy recovery team was in Greenland looking for the remains and clues to what had happened. It felt like the most futile of all struggles, but it was only one of the problems they considered essential to their survival on the rootless, killing ice of the Kronborg Glacier.

The point was unmercifully driven home as the Norfolk-based Sailors and their civilian counterparts scurried down the frigid, biter sheet of ice, trying in vain to salvage the food and tent that they had all the best training possible for which no amount of Navy training could have felt less prepared for their mission at that moment.

And that was before the team got to start their primary mission — recovering remains from a P-2V Neptune aircraft crash site that was more than 42 years old.

The Navy’s team in Greenland looking for the bodies of five aviators lost in a 1962 crash.

“The first day the wind was rough, and then it rained a little, and that changed the landscape of the scene significantly. We even lost a day due to low visibility, so the job was a work in progress.”

The adverse conditions turned even the most routine personal activities into a chore. "Doing everything took five times as long to do," said CAPT Thomas L. Sparks, from the staff of Commander, Naval Air Safety Center in Norfolk, Va. "I’d like to think that I’ve been in one of everything, but this was definitely new for me."

The P-2V Neptune aircraft crashed on the glacier after launching on a familiarization mission from Keflavik, Iceland. The Navy searched for the twin-engine, propeller-driven aircraft, but after an extensive search, it was officially declared lost at sea.

Then, in 1966, a group of geologists found the accident site not in the sea, but on the glacier, along with the bodies of several of its crew. After notifying Navy officials of the find, a recovery team was sent out to bring the remains back to the United States for burial.

On the glacier, the team found several bodies and departed Greenland after destroying the aircraft with explosives. That cycle started over again when the same geological team returned to the crash site many years later and saw human remains in the snow. The Navy responded by sending out another recovery team.

This time, the team included 16 people, seven Navy experts and nine civilians. They included an aircraft mishap investigator, a mountain guide, and a combat photographer and a few experienced mountain guides.

"The opportunity to finish off the decades-long mission was seen as an honor to those tasked. It was a privilege to be part of a team that was bringing back Americans who were doing their duty for the country," said Master-at-Arms 1st Class Rudy Hutchinson. "All I was hoping for was to get all of them home as the Norfolk-based Sailors and their civilian counterparts scurried down the frigid, biter sheet of ice, trying in vain to salvage the food and tent that they had all the best training possible for which no amount of Navy training could have felt less prepared for their mission at that moment."

From the beginning, the Navy crew realized this mission would be different from the prior efforts. In 1962 and 1966, the recovery teams had to dig through many feet of snow and ice to get even a glimpse of the crash site. This time, due to melting on the glacier, the entire crash site would be exposed.

So right off the bat, the weather in Greenland aided the team. That’s where the weather help ceased, according to Hutchinson, a dog handler for the Navy team.

"Besides having the site fully exposed for what we think was the first time, the weather was something tough to get used to," he said.

"It was a privilege to be part of a team that was bringing back Americans who were doing their duty for the country," said Master-at-Arms 1st Class Rudy Hutchinson. "All I was hoping for was to get all of them home as the Norfolk-based Sailors and their civilian counterparts scurried down the frigid, biter sheet of ice, trying in vain to salvage the food and tent that they had all the best training possible for which no amount of Navy training could have felt less prepared for their mission at that moment."
an aircraft on the runway or having flown in one and seeing one that obviously suffered from impact or fire damage," he said. "I tried to study up on this aircraft, obviously an older one, so that when we got to the site we could more easily find remains via the wreckage. We wanted to find them and see if we could unlock what happened to the craft."

Despite all efforts to find the crash’s cause, Huff and his team had to come to the same conclusions that the prior teams came to. The accident’s cause was, and remains to this day, undetermined. But that didn’t make their efforts fruitless. After spending time literally crawling through ice, snow and wreckage, team members finally did find more remains of the flight’s five crew members left behind.

"It was an emotional thing for us," Huff said. "It’s hard for people to understand. We were on our hands and knees digging for remains. It’s a tough thing to deal with.

"We accomplished what we felt we could going in," Hutchinson said. "I just hope that this can give some of these guys’ families a sense of closure. That’s what this mission was really all about."

And for that, their training had them prepared enough.

Ludwig is a photojournalist assigned to All Hands, and Lehrburg is a photographer’s mate assigned to Combat Camera, Atlantic, Norfolk.

Website Exclusive

Find more photos online at www.news.navy.mil/media/allhands/flash/ah200504/feature_1
The story of air crewmen in Operation Unified Assistance

Smiles, like the one on the face of this young Sumatran survivor, were all the thanks Navy volunteers needed to stay motivated throughout the relief efforts.

It's tough to forget the faces of the Sailors who hand you your first meal in days.

Mere days after a tsunami ripped through parts of southeastern Asia on Dec 26, 2004, survivors from Indonesia's Banda Aceh province, isolated from worldwide relief efforts by washed out roads, flooded fields and massive destruction, witnessed what many might call a miracle.

Launched from the very seas that killed tens of thousands of Indonesia's sons, daughters, parents and friends, scores of powder-gray flying machines and the men who ride them raced across the skies, delivering hope packaged as food,
Survivors of the Dec. 26, 2004, tsunami flocked to greet a U.S. Navy helicopter dropping off humanitarian relief. Despite the devastation, Indonesians like those pictured here remain strong in spirit. “It’s impressive to see people who have so little still give whatever they have as a way of saying, ‘thank you,’” said Aviation Warfare Systems Operator 1st Class Joseph Sabia, of Helicopter Antisubmarine Squadron (Light) (HSL) 47. “It shows a lot of character.”

Early in the relief efforts, huge crowds sometimes made landing helicopters at the aid sites unsafe for survivors and the helicopter crews. The air crewmen compromised by dropping humanitarian aid in centralized locations. Here, AE-3 (NA/CW) Dan McGourty, drops relief aid to survivors in Sumatra, Indonesia. Corpsmen like Crowe deployed with helicopter crews to remote regions of the tsunami-stricken areas to expedite Indonesian recovery from the disaster.

Thousands of pounds of food, shelter, medical supplies and fresh water were transported to remote regions of Banda Aceh Province and beyond by helicopter.
more industrious survivors even turned their house foundations, which the tsunami mercifully left as if it knew the tsunami’s reach, into landing zones bearing gifts of hospitality, proving that while tsunamis might take lives, homes and food, they can’t wash away character. Witnessing such unselfish acts moved Sailors liked Sabia.

But creative landing sites and scores of people rushed the helicopter, “said Hospital Corpsman 3rd Class Melissa Crowe, also assigned to HSL-47. “I can’t imagine being so hungry and thirsty that I might fight with a neighbor or friend.”

Crowe was just one of several medical personnel attached to USS Abraham Lincoln’s (CVN 72) Carrier Strike Group (CSG) who was able to conduct medical surveys and provide immediate medical care in the most remote regions of Banda Aceh, thanks to the versatility of Navy helicopters.

“Tin thankful for the technology we have that enables us to provide this kind of relief,” said Crowe. But the helicopter crews weren’t the only ones bearing gifts.

With the storm clouds of starvation being whisked away with every turn of the helicopter’s blades, the survivors, grateful just to make it another day, often came to the landing zones bearing gifts of hospitality, proving that while tsunamis might take lives, homes and food, they can’t wash away character. Witnessing such unselfish acts moved Sailors liked Sabia.

“They giving us coconuts shows that even in a disaster like this, there’s always room for kindness,” said Sabia.

According to the reactions air crewmen received at the landing zones, the Navy couldn’t have picked a better spokesperson for the United States, moreover the Navy. Saved lives, rekindled hopes, hearty handshakes, and immortality amongst tsunami survivors thanks to stories they’re sure to tell for generations all add up to air crewmen realizing that the humanitarian mission they accomplished in Banda Aceh might be as good as it gets in their life-times.

“This is probably the pinnacle of my career,” said Sabia. “I’ll probably never experience anything as devastating as this, or as rewarding. It’s a mission we looked forward to doing everyday.”

Especially when any day’s mission could end with memories like Sabia’s.

“On my fourth day I picked up a 3-year-old child who was burned all over her body,” said Sabia. “Picking her up and tending to her really touched me. I don’t have kids, but helping her really cut me to the core. I think I’ll always remember helping that little girl, and getting her to a hospital.”

And like any other day for the air crewmen during Operation Unified Assistance, the Navy’s Good Samaritans and their thunderous flying machines ascended back into the heavens leaving the survivors with food in their bellies, hope in their hearts and vivid memories of the faces belonging to the Sailors who helped them when no one else could—the faces of Navy air crewmen.
in such a devastated environment.

“We had to put some of the crew’s worries to rest,” said Hospital Corpsman 1st Class (SW) Shawn Brooks, USS Benfold’s independent duty corpsman. “[Things] like ‘are we going to see dead bodies all over the place?’ ‘What do we do?’ ‘If we get out there and start drinking the water, are we going to get sick?’ ‘Are we going to get malaria?’”

Despite educating the crew about the inherent dangers associated with working in a humanitarian relief effort as in Indonesia, true to Benfold’s name, the crew’s hearts conquered any fears. “One of the most amazing things to me,” said Brooks, “was even after the training, we had more than 300 people on board put up their hands to volunteer. They said, ‘Hey, we want to help out any way we can.’”

And they helped every way Sailors should, and some ways no one else could. Regardless, the work was grueling. “It was incredibly hot over there,” said Boatswain’s Mate 1st Class Christopher Azevedo, a Benfold Humanitarian Aid Relief Team (HART) volunteer. “There was plenty of work for us, and no matter how many helicopters we loaded with food, there always seemed to be another one coming back for more.”

A team of Explosive Ordnance Disposal

Hospitalman 3rd Class Edward C. Benfold would be proud. More than 50 years after the Korean War, this sailor was posthumously awarded the Medal of Honor for sacrificing his life to save his shipmates, 300 members of the Arleigh Burke-class destroyer bearing his name helped save the lives of tens of thousands of perfect strangers. Organized into teams of eight Sailors, Benfold volunteers flew into Banda Aceh daily to work at Sultan Iskandar Muda Air Force Base. There, they joined Sailors from other USS Abraham Lincoln (CVN 72) Carrier Strike Group (CSG) ships and squadrons, working hand in hand with international military and civilian relief workers to unload humanitarian aid from trucks to waiting helicopters ferrying aid to survivors that no one else could reach. Despite the crew’s overwhelming motivation, they did have fears about working.
the job done.

The effort had an immediate impact on the Sailors.

"I felt good about what I did," said Seaman Johan Flores. "I feel like I really made a difference. This is my first deployment, and already this is the best thing I've ever done in my life."

And they did, again and again. Each evening, the crew eagerly waited to hear their names announced over the ship's 1MC, placing them on the next day's HART. In this lottery-drawing environment, once a Sailor's name was called, he knew he'd better make the most of his opportunity, because volunteer HART duty only came around once every 15 days.

From the very beginning, Benfold's crew accepted the ship's new mission with the right attitude, despite ending a port call in Hong Kong early, and delaying an eagerly anticipated trip back home to San Diego.

But Sailors aboard Benfold knew that helping out strangers in a foreign land was absolutely part of the Navy's mission.

"It's my job to help people out," said SN Frank Jimenez-Medina. "I'm from Colombia, and I would want us to help out people from my country, too, so I wanted to help here."

But Benfold's contributions to Operation Unified Assistance included far more than bodies eager to move supplies onto Navy helicopters. The destroyer also served as a floating gas station close to shore for the countless helicopters from Abraham Lincoln's CSG.

Although several ships in Abraham Lincoln's CSG supported helicopter opera-

ments, several factors contributed to Benfold being such a popular landing platform.

"We'd like to say it's because of our box lunches that the pilots like to come here," said Operations Specialist 1st Class Eric Gonzales. "But our current mission and our proximity to land made us an ideal platform."

Benfold typically operated closest to land because of an embarked hydrographic survey team remapping the Indonesian waters affected by the Dec. 26, 2004 tsunami.

"The tsunami wiped out tons of shoreline," said Forrest Noll, a hydrographer with the Naval Oceanographic Office. "It changed the landscape drastically. What used to be the high point of the beach is all under water. One harbor has disappeared; you can't even tell it was there."

For some of Benfold's Sailors, it will be an experience that will last a lifetime.

"This is the kind of stuff that you never forget," said Jimenez-Medina. "I'll always be saying that I was here and helped. My children will know and my grandchildren will know that I was here."

And, maybe Hospitalman 3rd Class Edward C. Benfold knows, too.

Benfold's benevolence communicators deployed to support the relief efforts at Sultan Iskandar Muda Air Force Base, and took note of the Sailors' steadfastness while helping survivors, regardless of the conditions.

"Our impression," said Aviation Ordnanceman 1st Class (EOD) Kevin Parra, EOD master technician, EODMU 11 Det. 1, "is seeing the Sailors out here being tasked with a job that they're not normally required to do, and doing it well.

"Everybody just came out here and they endured the rain, they endured the heat, the mud and the arduous conditions to get the job done."

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Pinsky is a photojournalist assigned to All Hands.
When you turn on your faucet at home, water flows. Flip a switch, and you have light. Adjust the thermostat, and you have heat. In cities you have power plants, water plants, sewage plants, heating and air conditioning companies and fire departments, all of which have their own specialists who know their job, and only that job.

GSMFN Weston Rebbe, wipes the underside of a gas turbine engine after the accidental release of halon gas during Basic Engineering Casualty Control Exercises.
All that time below decks allows the engineers to become one with their equipment, like a mechanic with his prize car on which he knows every ding, every wire and the exact pitch of the engine when it is working correctly.

"I listen to the sounds of the ship," said Fonteno, "and with eight and one-half years sea time, I can hear when something's not quite right."

The years of sea time is not rare for engineering ratings. Many of them choose back-to-back sea duty, and the years of experience usually keeps ships like USS Donald Cook ahead of the game.

"I'll take what I know from the five ships I've been on and drill my guys on it, so we are ready for any inspection that might come up," Fonteno said.

Donald Cook's engineering department hands out written knowledge tests at random, even on the mess decks and in berthing. "Our chief and LPO keep on us all the time, with questions," said Hudson.

"If we don't know the answer, it's always 'look it up and get back to me.'"

In the jungle of equipment and pipes found in the main machinery spaces, knowing the answers isn't easy. From the moment a new fireman checks aboard, they're learning where each lever, valve, gauge and button is and, more importantly, what it does.

"I've been aboard for three weeks and all I have been doing is learning about the spaces," said GSMFA Weston Rebbe. "It's not how I envisioned it would be in school. Everything is a lot more open and exposed than I expected."

Navy ships have one engineering plant that handles all this and a whole lot more, because this floating city must move. But, just like at home, when you're aboard ship, as long as the room temperature is tolerable, the water is warm and your computer or television has power, you never think of the work that goes into making it happen. Dozens of Sailors comprise the unseen force who keep the ship moving. And just like in a big city, they go largely unnoticed until the water runs cold or the lights go out.

"The only time we are noticed is when something goes wrong," said Gas Turbine System Technician (Mechanical) 2nd Class (SW) Darrell Hudson. "Most people don't have any idea what we do down there until they come down for their warfare qualifications."

For most engineers, that's exactly how they like it. "When no one knows we're there, it means everything is working," said GSM2(SW)Leslie Cachero. "It means we're doing our job."

While underway, their job requires a 24-hour watch and hourly checks of all equipment gauges. The amount of time spent below decks might throw many people into a state of depression, but engineers are a different breed.

"I like to stay down there," said GSM1(SW) Kelvin Fonteno, Main Engine Room 1's leading petty officer. Most of Cook's engineers seem to agree. "We are in our own little world down there," said Hudson. "The first month and a half of the war [Operation Iraqi Freedom], we spent below decks, and when we were called topside for quarters, the sun blinded us. It makes you feel like a mole."

All that time below decks allows the engineers to become one with their equipment, like a mechanic with his prize car on which he knows every ding, every wire and the exact pitch of the engine when it is working correctly.

"I listen to the sounds of the ship," said Fonteno, "and with eight and one-half years sea time, I can hear when something's not quite right."

The years of sea time is not rare for engineering ratings. Many of them choose back-to-back sea duty, and the years of experience usually keeps ships like USS Donald Cook ahead of the game.

"I'll take what I know from the five ships I've been on and drill my guys on it, so we are ready for any inspection that might come up," Fonteno said.

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The three decks in each of the engine rooms might be more exposed than Rebbe...
thought, but they are in no way uncluttered. The engine room of a Navy ship is one of the most amazing examples of creative use of space you’re likely to find. In some cases, it’s hard to determine where one device ends and the next begins.

One surprise to most visitors is that the main spaces of Donald Cook are as spotless as the mess decks.

“While gas turbine plants are typically cleaner than other plants, we pride ourselves on how our spaces look,” said CWO2 Phillip Snarr, the main propulsion assistant. “This is Donald Cook’s standard, and we keep it this way 24/7.”

Not all engineering spaces can be kept as clean as the engine room, though. Case in point, the general workshop, home to the hull technicians (HT) and damage controlmen (DC) in repair division. The shop is not dirty, but it’s in constant use, with Sailors welding, grinding and fabricating anything the ship might need.

HTs, besides being the Navy’s plumbers, are capable of a multitude of jobs, from welding an overhead mount for a television to repairing the flight deck so the ship can conduct flight ops.

“When pulling out for a family day cruise, the tug smashed the line-up lights for helicopter landings and the aft safety nets,” said HT1 Jacob Fehr, the LPO of repair division.

Due to the structural damage and the intensity of the job, Donald Cook decided to use Shore Intermediate Maintenance Activity (SIMA) for the repairs. The ship was due to get underway again in two days for exercises and without repairs, the ship would not be able to participate. Because of the time repairs would take, SIMA was unable to take on the task.

“The job came back to us in ship’s company, and we had it fixed in eight hours,” said Fehr.

“K” division’s damage controlmen are the ship’s elite fire fighters who make up the at-sea fire party and handle all of the damage control training for the crew. To keep the at-sea fire party trained to the level the ship expects, members attend numerous fire fighting schools and drill constantly.

“We are trained to be the ‘best of the best’ in fire fighting and damage control. If something really happens, we are the ones who are called on.” said DCC(SW/AW) Stephanie Rutledge.
In the eyes of a DCC there is no such thing as a perfect drill, there is always room for improvement. According to Rutledge, “We just have some young DC men who need to be molded, but it won’t take long for the young fire party to improve since the ship is in a phase of training heavy on damage control.”

To “top-siders,” engineering may seem to be one of the most exclusive clubs on the ship. In fact, on Donald Cook’s mess decks, there’s a section of seats that belong exclusively to the engineers, DCs and HTs included.

“When I was a seaman I sat anywhere on the mess decks. But once I became an engineer, I was told, ‘you don’t sit over there anymore. You’re one of us now. You sit with us,’” Hudson said proudly.

“Engineers carry the ship,” Rutledge said. “If anything goes down in engineering, the rest of the ship can’t do their jobs. A lot of people forget that. They take their water, lights, AC and electrical power for granted and don’t realize that it’s all supplied by the engineering department.”

So, the next time something stops working, it shouldn’t be the first time you take notice of the ship’s engineers. Think of them as you drink fresh water at the water fountain or while you enjoy your e-mail from home. And the next time you pass an engineer in the “p-way” you might want to thank your shipmates who work below the waterline.

McCoy is a photojournalist assigned to All Hands.

As nozzleman during a mainspace fire, MR2 Richard Sanchez will be the first man into the space after halon has been deployed.

EM2(SW) Patrick Frank studies for an advancement exam while standing switchboard watch in Main Engine Room 2.

The engineers of Main Engine Room 1 have custom painted many parts of the engine room, including the deck.
Leaving home and family to join the Navy is hard enough for most, but when you sign your name to a contract not knowing what you will be doing for the next four years, it can be downright frightening.

Still, thousands of recruits sign up every year with hopes of ending up in a job they enjoy. A recruit can easily become a fireman in engineering on a frigate or just as easily direct aircraft on a carrier as an airman. Seaman Pierre Shannon became a seaman aboard USS Cole (DDG 67).

Like all undesignated Sailors, he is trying to find where he fits in our Navy. Should he strike into a rating aboard Cole, so he can quickly leave deck department and work with hospital corpsmen in medical? Or maybe ride out his time in deck and get into a rating elsewhere in the Navy?

Shannon, even though promised an "A" school, has decided to remain in deck and become a boatswain’s mate. He likes his job and has excelled among his peers aboard USS Cole.

"The work we do in deck is hard and it has made us into a very tight group, almost family," said Shannon. "I turned down my guaranteed Master-at-Arms ‘A’ school because I really enjoy what I do now."

Undesignated Sailors are the backbone of the naval work force, and many of them choose to make the Navy just a passing phase in their life. But for some, the shot in the dark hits its mark and they find a career and a home.

McCoy is a photojournalist assigned to All Hands.
There are some people out there, people typically under the age of 25, who were wondering what all the fuss was when Johnny Carson died in January. For them, NBC’s “Tonight Show” means only one thing – Jay Leno.

I am definitely not one of those people. It seems like I can always remember at least knowing about Carson, either through commercials or listening to my parents talk about what they had seen him or one of his guests do the night before.

And when I was about 12, I considered it a seminal moment in my life when my mom and dad began letting me stay up late to watch Carson’s monologue. It didn’t take long for me, then a lanky, rail-thin preteen, to understand the hype, even if I could only watch for five or 10 minutes.

Fact is, Carson was as brilliant and quick-witted a comedian then, in 1989, as he was in 1969. The bits all seemed so seamless to me, no matter if he was playing “Carnac the Magnificent” or just chatting with sidekick Ed McMahon or one of his more than 25,000 guests. He was a natural, or at least it seemed that way.

And that’s why I was shocked when I was skimming through the Associated Press’ timeline of his life and saw this tidbit: “1943-1946 – serves in U.S. Navy.”

What? How could I have not known that the man I felt I knew so well had such a strong connection to me, in this day? But I guess I shouldn’t feel too bad, very few people outside of the crew of USS Pennsylvania (BB 38) actually knew he served during World War II. Well, he did, and quite proudly at that.

Carson enlisted in the Navy after graduating from Norfolk High School, Norfolk, Neb., in 1943. The 17-year-old enlisted in the Navy on June 8 as an apprentice seaman enrolled in the V-5 program, which trained Navy and Marine Corps pilots. He had hoped to become a pilot with the program, but instead was sent to Columbia University for midshipman training before being stationed in the Pacific aboard USS Pennsylvania.

Although he came aboard the ship on what was officially the last day of war, Aug. 14, 1945, Carson still got a firsthand lesson in the consequences of battle. Two days prior, Pennsylvania was torpedoed in the Bay of Okinawa, and as the newest and most junior officer, Ensign Carson supervised the removal of 20 dead Sailors.

That proved to be the low point in his Navy career. Carson was later known for taking time to entertain the enlisted crew, constantly performing magic and comedy acts to keep spirits high. That continued for another year, before Carson left the Navy and enrolled at the University of Nebraska. Sixteen years later, nearly everyone in America would know his name.

And the rest, as the cliché goes, is history.

His banter and clever skits, peppered with his trademark heartland charm, made so many people feel like they knew the man behind the show. For 30 years, watching Carson every night was akin to having a 60- to 90-minute nightly visit from your next-door neighbor.

He was sort of a status symbol to me. After all, getting to stay up to watch him made me feel like an adult before I was 13. And I soon learned his comedic abilities were more than I could have imagined then.

As we now look back at his life, most people will take the time to talk about how he made them laugh as he perfected the art of late-night chat and comedy.

And me? Now I think I’ll remember him a little differently. Ludwig is a photojournalist for All Hands.
If Part of Your Record is Missing...

You’re an Incomplete Sailor

See your Admin Office or PSD. Check your record annually.