

USCGC MELLON Commanding Officer's  
Out-of-Hemisphere Newsletter  
May 2010

Welcome to the first edition of USCGC MELLON's Out-of-Hemisphere Deployment Newsletter. This newsletter is addressed to all MELLON family and friends. Our current deployment is unusually long for a Coast Guard cutter (nearly 5 months) and I will write you at least monthly to keep you up to date with MELLON goings-on and the activities of your sailors.

A high-endurance cutter like MELLON normally deploys for about 90 days. So why are we gone so long this time? Well, one of the Coast Guard's missions is National Defense, a mission with global reach. You may not know it, but the USCG devotes significant resources to this mission. For example, we have a relatively large footprint right now in the Arabian Gulf. In our case, MELLON has orders to support the U.S. Navy's Seventh Fleet for this year's Cooperation Afloat Readiness and Training (CARAT 2010). CARAT is a series of bilateral engagements with maritime nations in Southeast Asia. Its purpose is to enhance cooperation and understanding between the United States and the engaged country. The USCG participates because our unique skill sets in law enforcement and small boat tactics are in high demand by CARAT countries. There are nine CARAT engagements this year, but for scheduling reasons, MELLON will participate in just 5 of them: Singapore, Malaysia, Indonesia, Brunei and Thailand.



A Seattle Fire Boat happened to put on a show on our day of departure.

MELLON departed our Seattle homeport on March 31, hoping for a straight transit to Pearl Harbor, Hawaii, where we planned a 2-day port visit. But as Pacific Northwest residents know, ocean weather in early spring can be severe. That was the case when we left the Strait of Juan de Fuca for the open sea. 24 hours into our Pacific voyage, Navy weather forecasters warned us that unless we altered course, we would encounter waves up to 27 feet on our beam. Those kinds of seas can get people hurt, so we turned back toward the mainland. Then we

headed south to skirt the worst of it, before finally turning toward Hawaii near Cape Mendocino, CA. Even so, the ride was rough as MELLON rolled 15-20 degrees for 4 days. The detour added 550 miles to our trip and caused us to shorten our Hawaii stop by one day.

EM3 Brittney Worthen wrangled this bull mahi mahi



ET3 Noland Priester clowning with his yellowfin tuna

Now I like to fish and from time to time MELLON has “fish call” for the crew. But in my wildest dreams I didn’t think we’d get into the fish like this. We let the crew know that “fish call” was coming about an hour in advance. At the appointed time, we slowed the ship to trolling speed. I arrived on the fantail with my rod & reel. The only other person ready to fish was the Operations Officer, **LT Jeremy Wahrmund**. A handful of onlookers were there to watch. Our trolling jigs were in the water a mere 5 minutes before each of us hooked large mahi mahi at nearly the same time. The bridge announced “Fish On!” and the crew came pouring out, scrambling for fishing poles and tackle. For the next 2 hours we caught mahi and yellowfin tuna. When we finally stopped we had 7 mahi and 8 yellowfin. **CWO Jeff Spreen** led the food service division in a fantail fish barbeque. He fired up the grill and an hour later we were dining on our catch for lunch.

The next day, April 9, we arrived in Pearl Harbor to take on fuel, stores and personnel in preparation for the next leg of our journey - a nearly 2-week voyage to Guam. We stayed in Pearl for just 21 hours, barely long enough to catch our breath, stretch our legs and visit the Navy Exchange. We departed early on April 10 to conduct live fire gunnery training before heading to Guam.



Davey Jones Paige takes a break from instructing Pollywogs on proper etiquette before the royal court



King Neptune Pawlowski. Scary, I know.

We crossed the International Dateline at the 180<sup>th</sup> meridian on April 14 and moved our calendar ahead 1 day, skipping tax day (the IRS wasn't amused and we still had to pay). For readers not familiar with this seafaring tradition: crossing the Dateline means that we entered the Realm of the Golden Dragon. Woe betide sailors who enter the Realm for the first time. On April 18 we held a "line crossing ceremony" to transform 105 pollywogs into Golden Dragons. I'm happy to report that the Royal Court: King Neptune (**SKC Jim Pawlowski**), The Queen (CWO Jeff Spreen), Jester (**LTJG Dave Smith**), Royal Baby (**ETC David Davis**) and Davy Jones (**FSCS Craig Paige**) were pleased with the performance of the pollywogs

and found all worthy - even **CWO Chris Smasne** and **LTJG Thomas Kai** who underwent double-processing just to make sure.



The 01 Deck  
Plunge over  
the Trench

On April 21 we arrived at the Marianas Trench, 90 miles from Guam and took the opportunity to hold “swim call” at the deep end of the ocean. About 80 crewmembers jumped into the ocean with a charted depth of 28,000 feet. Several hardy and fearless sailors jumped in multiple times. Sage warrant officer **Devin Scroggins** asked a 20-something crew member, “do you know what the difference is between you young people jumping into the ocean and us over-40 cuttermen? We old sailors make the ocean even saltier!” A fun event was marred, however, when we drifted into jellyfish which stung several swimmers. Two of the sting victims exhibited severe symptoms. They received the best emergency care from **HSC William Epps**, **HS3 Cassie Gilmore** and – yes – **CDR Matt Walker**. Both were flown by helicopter to the naval hospital on Guam where they were treated and released in good condition. All of us were relieved and happy to see their smiling faces at Quarters the next day.

We pulled into Guam on April 22 and stayed 4 days. If you haven’t been to Guam, it is a beautiful tropical island U.S. territory with friendly people and a rich history, especially WWII history. Guam was our first real break in over 3 weeks. The crew enjoyed snorkeling, swimming, hiking and generally exploring the island. Nearly everyone (see next paragraph) got quality rest before departing on April 26, bound for our first CARAT engagement country: Brunei. Along the way, MELLON passed through another WWII historic spot on April 30: Leyte Gulf and Surigao Strait in the Philippines. Here the greatest naval engagement in history occurred Oct 23-25, 1944. United States naval forces under Admiral Kinkaid defeated two more powerful Japanese task forces with tactical surprise and daring heroics. The Imperial Japanese Navy was left unable to defend the sea lanes leading to the Japanese homeland after the Battle of Leyte Gulf, leading to an inevitable American victory in the Pacific.

It isn't easy keeping a 42 year-old cutter in top shape, especially when we are far from home and our support networks. When vital systems failed our crew put forth tremendous effort and dedication to restore them. A myriad of systems experienced degradation and outages, but these in particular warrant special recognition because of their importance and how our technicians and officers spent precious liberty hours and/or worked exceptionally long and under arduous conditions:

Close-In Weapon System: **ETC Harry Carter, ET2 Robert Gutzeit, ET2 Cordell Benner**, with special TAD assist from **ETC Jim Stolle**.

MK75 Gun Weapon System: **GMC David Neal, GM1 Chad Bowie, GM3 Brandon Gilbert** and **GM3 Matthew Winters**.

No. 2 Electrical Switchboard: Lead - Electrical Div: **ENS Michael Prosser, EMC Robby Payne** (special TAD assist), **EM1 Hans Schaffer, EM2 Michael Dunphy, EM2 Jon Giammalvo** and **EM3 Thomas Hoffman**. In support - Main Propulsion Div: CWO Devin Scroggins, **MKCS Justin Fitzpatrick, MK1 Ronald Strader, MK1 Nicholas Reiser**, and **MK2 Geoffrey Greenler**.

Several crewmembers received special recognition in April:

Temporary Cutterman pins went to **BM3 Sean Slycord, ENS Taylor Gruver, FN Caleb Stephenson, FN Morgan Gill, SN Julia Garcia** and **FN Min sub Yoon**.

1-Year Sea Service Ribbons to **SN Lahilahi Simeona, HS3 Cassie Gilmore, FN Min sub Yoon, FN Orenthal Floyd** and **EM3 Giovanni Schuler**.

Good Conduct Awards went to **IT1 Kris Chirico** (3<sup>rd</sup> award) and **GM3 Brandon Gilbert**.

Promotions. **Dane Whalen** advanced to Operations Specialist Third Class.

**OS1 David Dolphin** received an Achievement Medal and **DCC Eli Loftus** received the CG Commendation Medal for sustained, superior performance and contributions to MELLON during their tours.

**MK1 Jeremy Morales** was MELLON's Sailor of the Quarter for Jan-Mar 2010.

Welcome Aboard to new MELLON crewmembers: **EM1 Hans Schaffer, SN Robert Lovito, DC3 John Reichard, SN Jacob Stewart, SA Corey Mahliot** and **SA Brice Cuomo**. I also extend a hearty welcome to our temporary crewmembers, **ETC Jim Stolle** and **EMC Robby Payne**.

Finally, farewell to our shipmates who departed MELLON this month for new assignments: DCC Eli Loftus, OS1 David Dolphin, FN Morgan Gill, **ME3 Jose Gonzales**, **GM2 Camilo Martinez** and **SN Jason Hovel**.

In closing, I would like to mention a unique opportunity for a close family member (child, parent or sibling) of a MELLON crewmember. The program is called 'Tiger Cruise' and it allows family members to ride aboard MELLON on the way back home from Hawaii to Seattle Aug 15-23. Your sailor has details about 'Tiger' eligibility and I will have more information in the next Newsletter. Until then, I hope this letter finds MELLON family and friends safe and well.

Sincerely,

Dave Klipp  
Captain

ps: Questions or suggestions about items in this newsletter? Please write me at [David.S.Klipp@uscg.mil](mailto:David.S.Klipp@uscg.mil)