



Blue Ridge

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**History
of the
Shellback**

BLR Magazine
Thomas Jefferson Award

Passing Exercise
USS Blue Ridge & HMAS Ballarat

Damage Control
Save Your Ship

**Congratulations to our new
Trusty Shellbacks!**



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History of the Shellback



BLUE RIDGE CONCLUDES CAMBODIA VISIT

Story by Mass Communication Specialist 3rd Class Alexandra Arroyo
Photos by Mass Communication Specialist 3rd Class Mel Orr

Sailors from U.S. 7th Fleet flagship USS Blue Ridge (LCC 19) and Marines assigned to Fleet Antiterrorism Security Team Pacific (FASTPAC) completed a port visit to Shihanoukville, Cambodia, May 5.

The visit helped demonstrate the U.S. Navy's commitment to sustaining a strong relationship between the two militaries.

For more than 30 years, Blue Ridge has maintained a presence in the Southeast Asia region by strengthening allied ties through community service (COMSERV) projects and conducting joint military exercises with neighboring nations, like Cambodia. These port visits are a tangible symbol of the U.S.

commitment in the region and continued interest in ensuring a climate for regional stability and the desire to bridge economic prosperity.

Blue Ridge crewmembers took the opportunity to experience the culture and meet people in the local community.

"I enjoyed my time here," said Culinary Specialist Seaman

Robert Zobel. "The food and the nightlife were great."

The crew took their involvement in the community to another level by volunteering at COMSERVs and giving their time to children's homes and schools. Sailors visited nearly 200 children from the Sihanoukville Providence and M'Lop Topang children's educational and social services program organizations.

"We had the chance to relive childhood and realize that no matter what the background of an individual is, children are all the same. The 7th Fleet Band performed and we played games with the kids," said Lt. Donald Baker, Blue Ridge chaplain.

Some of the COMSERV volunteers paid a visit to Life University as well.

"Visiting the university was my favorite part," said Baker. "I taught a short theology class to the university students."

The ship's Morale, Welfare and Recreation (MWR) committee offered a variety of tours including snorkeling, visits to nearby towns, and a visit to Angkor Wat, the largest Hindu temple complex in the world.

"It was unreal to know I have a half-brother in another country, who I have never met before, and was getting the chance to finally connect with him and my father-in-law because of this port visit."

-Yeoman 2nd Class Kimhong Sar



"Thank you so much for all that you do for us."

-Andrea Lee, American residing in Cambodia

"I feel grateful that I had the chance to visit Angkor Wat. Not many people get the opportunity to visit that magical place," said Information Specialist 2nd Class Dexter Balitang.

The visit provided one Sailor the opportunity to meet with distant relatives and visit the country where his family's roots began.

"I was really excited that we were pulling into my birth country," said Yoeman 2nd Class Kimhong Sar. "It was unreal to know I have a half-brother in another country, who I have never met before, and was getting the chance to finally connect with him and my father-in-law because of this port visit."

Cambodian nationals were not the only ones who paid attention to the Sailors and Marines during the visit. Foreign business owners took notice as well.

"It made me feel very proud to be an American when I saw how well Sailors and Marines interacted with locals," said Andrea Lee, an American restaurant owner residing in Cambodia. "You're all so nice and you have a great reputation in town for being polite and generous to the local population. Thank you so much for all that you do for us."



PASSING EXERCISE

USS Blue Ridge and HMAS Ballarat

Story by Mass Communication Specialist 3rd Class James Norman

SOUTH CHINA SEA – Eleven Sailors assigned to U.S. 7th Fleet flagship USS Blue Ridge (LCC 19) toured the Australian Anzac-class Frigate HMAS Ballarat (FFH-155) May 9.

Blue Ridge Sailors spent time aboard Ballarat learning the differences and similarities of our navies and ships. They were shown damage control spaces, machinery control room, cafe, quarterdeck, recreational areas and administration offices.

“Showing American Sailors around the ship was a fantastic and rewarding experience because it's important we maintain a trusting relationship,” said Australian Marine Technician Leading Seaman Brad Salter. “I think the highlight of the tour was being able to sit down in the cafe [galley] so our Sailors could interact with Blue Ridge Sailors. It was interesting to see how our two navies are similar, yet very unique.”

“I enjoyed the chance to see a foreign naval vessel, especially in a fashion at sea where we were brought here on a rigid hull inflatable boat, and left on a helicopter,” said Machinist's Mate 2nd Class Tasha Martinez. “It was amazing to see how the Ballarat worked as a diesel vessel compared to our steam ship where everything is operated by valves.”

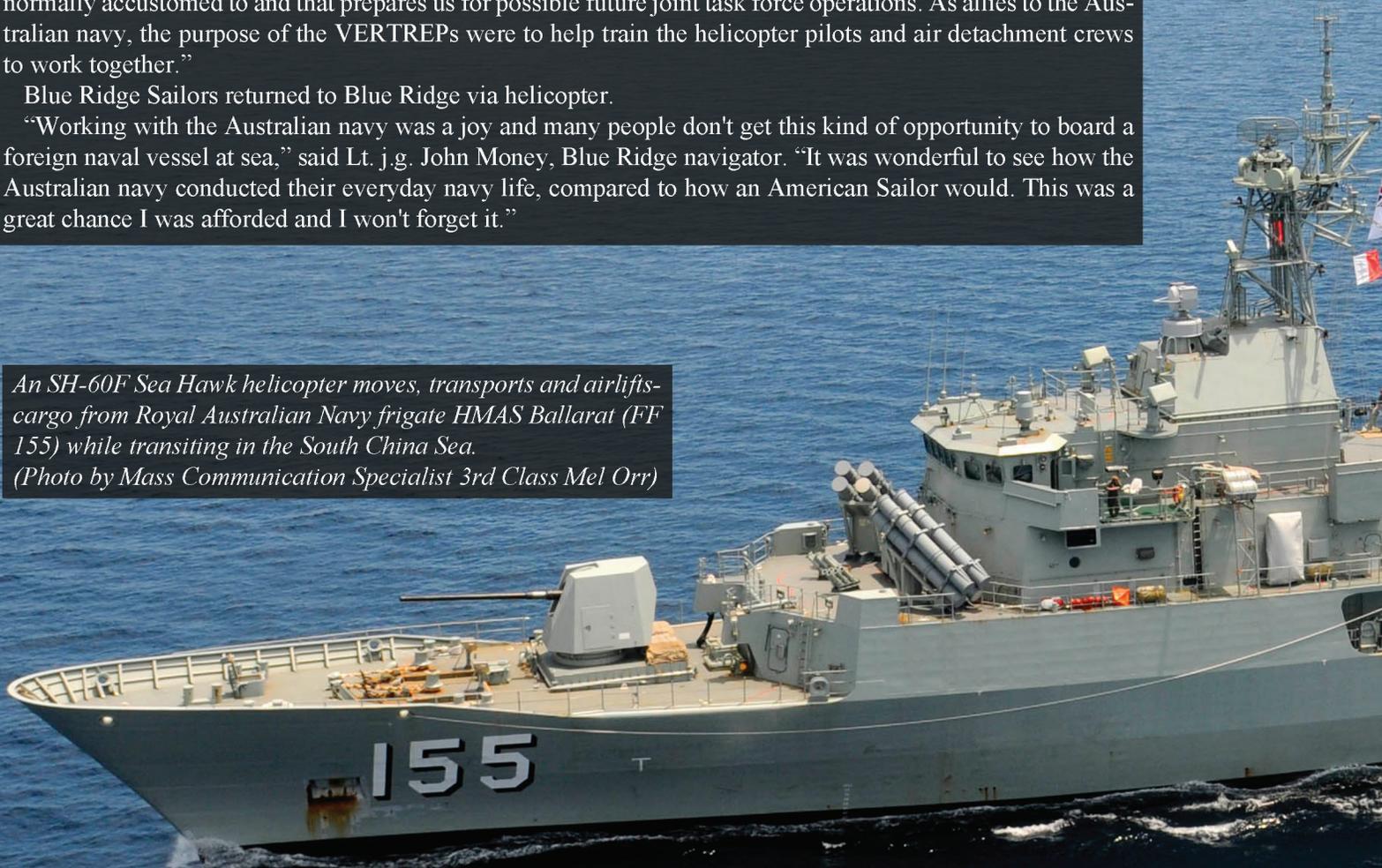
Blue Ridge and Ballarat participated in a passing exercise (PASSEX). The SH-60 Foxtrot Sea Hawk Helicopter, assigned to Warlords Light Helo Antisubmarine Squadron 51 (HSL 51) embarked aboard Blue Ridge, conducted vertical replenishments (VERTREPs) with the Ballarat, which involved practicing loading and unloading pallets from ship-to-ship.

“HSL 51 pilots had the chance to conduct VERTREPs with an air crew other than our own,” said Lt. Cmdr. Matthew Meyers, HSL 51 Air Boss. “The Australian navy uses different terminology and gestures we're not normally accustomed to and that prepares us for possible future joint task force operations. As allies to the Australian navy, the purpose of the VERTREPs were to help train the helicopter pilots and air detachment crews to work together.”

Blue Ridge Sailors returned to Blue Ridge via helicopter.

“Working with the Australian navy was a joy and many people don't get this kind of opportunity to board a foreign naval vessel at sea,” said Lt. j.g. John Money, Blue Ridge navigator. “It was wonderful to see how the Australian navy conducted their everyday navy life, compared to how an American Sailor would. This was a great chance I was afforded and I won't forget it.”

*An SH-60F Sea Hawk helicopter moves, transports and airlifts cargo from Royal Australian Navy frigate HMAS Ballarat (FF 155) while transiting in the South China Sea.
(Photo by Mass Communication Specialist 3rd Class Mel Orr)*





Royal Australian Navy frigate HMAS Ballarat (FF 155) and USS Blue Ridge (LCC 19) transit alongside each other in the South China Sea. (Photo by Mass Communication Specialist 3rd Class Mel Orr)



Marine Technician Leading Seaman Brad Salter discusses the differences and similarities of U.S. and Australian navies on HMAS Ballarat with Sailors assigned to Blue Ridge. (Photo by Mass Communication Specialist 3rd Class James Norman)



Marine Technician Leading Seaman Grant Darling explains the functions of the machinery control room aboard HMAS Ballarat to Sailors assigned to Blue Ridge. (Photo by Mass Communication Specialist 3rd Class James Norman)



The Importance of Being Qualified

Blue Ridge Sailors understand that the qualifications and standards put in place by the Navy today are instilling the confidence necessary to maintain the world's finest naval power in the years to come.



*Opinion Editorial By
Mass Communication
Specialist Seaman
Kelby Sanders*

The Enlisted Surface Warfare Specialist (ESWS) pin is all the rave among the Blue Ridge crew. Chiefs and Petty Officers aboard the ship relentlessly stress the

importance of attaining the pin to every Sailor as soon as they report aboard the ship.

When a young Sailor first arrives on Blue Ridge, it becomes immediately and substantially clear to them that ESWS is a big deal. The idea that everyone has a part to play in ship maintenance and damage control is quickly drilled into the minds of new Blue Ridge Sailors.

The ESWS program teaches a Sailor how to repair a busted pipe, how to shore up a bulkhead, and numerous other skills that are keys to ensuring our ship has a long life. More senior enlisted Sailors are entrusted with the responsibility of training the junior Sailors. Fire Controlmen, Enginemen, Electronics Technicians and Machinists' Mates among several other ratings take it upon themselves to share their knowledge with their shipmates to help strengthen our damage control capabilities.

We've all heard the unfortunate story of USS Forresteral

(CV-59) and the flightdeck fire that quickly grew out of the crew's control. On July 29, 1967 an electrical failure caused a rocket to be fired from one of the aircraft aboard the ship. What ensued is even today recognized as one of the most tragic events in our Navy's history.

One hundred thirty-four Sailors died as a result of a relentless chain of topside explosions. Though every Sailor aboard acted with resounding courage, some of them weren't properly trained on how to put out a jet-fuel, or Class Bravo fire. A fire team correctly sprayed aqueous film-forming foam, or AFFF, onto the fire, but another group of Sailors followed up by blasting the fire with water. Unfortunately, as every Sailor is taught nowadays, the water only separated the AFFF from the fire, letting the blaze again rage out of control. Another 161 Sailors were injured before the fire was finally put out.

Disaster struck our Navy again in the form of two Iraqi missiles on May 17, 1987. The Iraqi government would later apologize after thirty-seven Sailors aboard USS Stark (FFG-31) died and 21 others were wounded after an Iraqi aircraft fired upon the ship.

In another instance, most Sailors in the Navy today are well aware of what happened to USS Cole (DDG-67) on Oct. 12, 2000. We lost 17 Sailors and 39 were injured when a suicide bomber piloted his boat into the ship.

To put the Cole incident in perspective, consider this: Some of our shipmates on Blue Ridge right now actually knew some of the Sailors who were killed that day.

These tragedies our Navy suffered are prime examples illustrat-



USS Cole (above) on that fateful October day in Aden, Yemen. Cole was hit by a suicide bomber while harbored and attempting to refuel, 2000.

ing the necessity of ESWS training. Sailors on those ships fought fires and struggled valiantly to keep their ships afloat. We owe it to the veterans of our Navy's past to make every effort to become solid all-around Sailors, that is, knowing the ins-and-outs of our ship and being capable of stepping into a role that we may not normally fill. There's no time to whine or make excuses when your ship is on fire or flooding.

What good are Logistics Specialists if they can't put out a fire in their space? What good are Information Systems Technicians if they can't patch a ruptured pipe in their shop? After all, it's the trying times--those crucial do-or-die moments that define you as a Sailor.

Through decades of experience and commitment, the Navy has learned from its mistakes and developed a stellar training program for handling these situations.

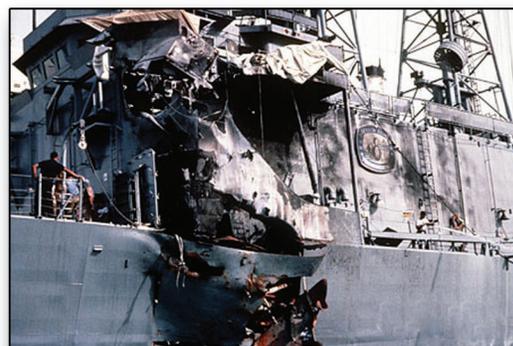
I for one, being new to the Navy but also realizing the seriousness of the situation, intend to make ESWS a top priority for myself. I'd be a hypocrite if I did not.

Blue Ridge Sailors need to know that they can trust their shipmates if tragedy actually strikes our ship. If you can't trust me to be in the right place and to do the right thing, then I've put the whole crew in jeopardy.

I'm sure we all have an enormous amount of respect for our predecessors and the honor, courage and commitment they've shown to uphold our Navy's legacy. In return, we have a duty to carry on their legacy by continuing to be the finest Navy in the world.



USS Forrestal in the Gulf of Tonkin during the Vietnam War, 1967.



USS Stark after being hit by missiles during the Iran-Iraq War, 1987.

DAMAGE CONTROL

Save Your Ship



Story by Mass Communication Specialist 3rd Class James Norman

“General quarters! General quarters! All hands man your battle stations!” Blue Ridge Sailors know all this announcement too well. We all know what to do and where to go when we hear the General Quarters announcement but the Repair Division organized a day dedicated to damage control (DC) training that challenged crew members to take their ability to another level.

The damage control training day included demonstrations of pipe patching, donning self-contained breathing apparatuses (SCBA), CO2 bottle operations, space desmoking, dewatering eductors and the use of the Navy Firefighters Thermal Imager (NFTI).

Repair Division chief petty officer, Chief Damage Controlman Ernest Thomas, said “I thought it would be a great idea to give our Sailors this up-close and personal training on our DC equipment so that when the time comes, they'll be ready.”

Thomas added, the training had most Sailors eager to learn because the opportunity to see and handle the firefighting gear doesn't come very often.

One piece of equipment that was provided for Sailors to learn more about was the NFTI, a camera used as a thermal detector allowing you to clearly image very big fires to objects in ambient room temperatures.

Damage Controlman Fireman Steven Woolums gave training on the NFTI, desmoking and explained the importance of Damage Control for the ship.

This training is good because it gives our Sailors the basic knowledge to possibly save their shipmates.

- Damage Controlman Fireman Steven Woolums

This type of training on such a large-scale format never been held aboard Blue Ridge. Many Sailors from all over the ship decided to partake in the event to help further their own DC knowledge.

Legalman 1st Class Zandee Galang said she's been on other ships and this was the best training she's come across and hopes the Repair Division does it more often.

“So far, this type of training has been the best way to learn for me because you actually have the opportunity to ask questions and get individual hands-on training,” said Galang.

For Sailors who are not Enlisted Surface Warfare Specialist (ESWS) qualified, the training was also a good way to get familiarized with the DC equipment.

Culinary Specialist Seaman Recruit Jared Becker said that although handling the fire hose was a fun experience, he also took back a lot of information with him to help with his DC personal qualification standards.

“I came up to the main deck for DC training today with a positive outlook knowing I could get some potentially helpful information for not only my shipboard DC qualification, but for my ESWS qualification as well,” said Becker.

Photos by Mass Communication Specialist 3rd Class Fidel Hart & Mass Communication Specialist 3rd Class Mel Orr



Asian American and Pacific Islander Heritage Month

Asian American and Pacific Islander Heritage Month (AAPIHM) is a celebration of the contributions from generations of Asian and Pacific Islanders that have enhanced American history, society and culture.

AAPIHM was first established in 1978 by President Jimmy Carter for the first ten days of May as Asian/Pacific Heritage Week, and in 1990, President George H.W. Bush proclaimed the entire month of May as Asian Pacific American Heritage Month. In 2009, President Barack Obama changed the name to Asian American and Pacific Islander Heritage Month.

The month of May was chosen because two important anniversaries occurred during this month: the arrival of the first Japanese immigrants in U.S. on May 7, 1843, and the completion of the first trans-continental railroad in the U.S. with significant contribution from many Chinese laborers on May 10, 1869.



United States Navy Ethos

We are the United States Navy, our Nation's sea power – ready guardians of peace, victorious in war.

We are professional Sailors and Civilians – a diverse and agile force exemplifying the highest standards of service to our Nation, at home and abroad, at sea and ashore.

Integrity is the foundation of our conduct; respect for others is fundamental to our character; decisive leadership is crucial to our success.

We are a team, disciplined and well-prepared, committed to mission accomplishment. We do not waver in our dedication and accountability to our Shipmates and families.

We are patriots, forged by the Navy's core values of Honor, Courage and Commitment. In times of war and peace, our actions reflect our proud heritage and tradition.

We defend our Nation and prevail in the face of adversity with strength, determination, and dignity.

We are the United States Navy.

BLUE RIDGE MAGAZINE NAMED BEST in Department of Defense

Story by Mass Communication Specialist 3rd Class Fidel Hart
The Defense Media Activity and the Office of the Assistant Secretary of Defense for Public Affairs named Blue Ridge the best Department of Defense newsletter format publication in the 2011 Thomas Jefferson Awards.

The Thomas Jefferson Awards Program, named after the nation's third president and author of the Declaration of Independence, recognizes military and civilian employee print and broadcast journalists for outstanding achievements in furthering the objectives of the Department of Defense Internal Information Programs.

U.S. 7th Fleet flagship USS Blue Ridge (LCC 19), won first place for the 2011 calendar year issues of the Blue Ridge newsletter, during an awards ceremony at the Defense Information School, Fort Meade, Md., May 4.

The newsletter was introduced February 2011 and was instantly popular among Sailors and their family members.

The focus of the publication is communicating command information to Blue Ridge Sailors and their families. As the flagship for U.S. 7th Fleet, Blue Ridge visit many ports throughout the Asian-Pacific region. The newsletter's online version, linked to more than 8,000 followers on Facebook, also allows readers throughout the region to follow the ship's stories and imagery.

Prior to the annual Thomas Jefferson Awards program, Blue Ridge was awarded first place in the 2011 Navy Chief of Information Merit Award in the same category.



Story and Layout by Mass Communication Specialist 3rd Class Mel Orr

Photo by MC3 Mel Orr



Photo by MC3 Mel Orr



Photo by MC2 Rafael Figueroa



Photo by MC2 Rafael Figueroa

The Crossing the Line Ceremony, “Wog Day” as it’s commonly referred to, is a time-honored naval tradition commemorating a Sailor’s first crossing of the equator. This tradition dates back to ancient times when ships first sailed the world and was originally created as a test for seasoned Sailors to ensure their new shipmates were capable of handling long, rough times at sea. Sailors who have already crossed the equator are nicknamed “trustworthy shellbacks” and those who have not are dubbed “slimy pollywogs,” or simply “wogs.” These wogs go through a series of trials before facing “King Neptune” and his royal court to be judged as to whether or not they are worthy enough to become shellbacks. As early as the 19th century, the line-crossing ceremony was a brutal event, often involving beating pollywogs with boards and wet ropes and sometimes throwing the victims over the side of the ship, dragging the pollywog in the surf from the stern.

Photo by MC3 Fidel C. Hart



Photo by MC3 Mel Orr



Photo by MC3 Fidel C. Hart



Photo by MC2 Rafael Figueroa



Photo by MC3 Fidel C. Hart

An account recorded on Sept. 25, 1708, by Woodes Rogers, an English privateer, describes one aspect of the ceremony's brutality

"This day, according to custom, we ducked those that had never passed the tropic before. The manner of doing it was by a rope thru a block from the main-yard, to hoist 'em above half way up to the yard, and let 'em fall at once into the water; having a stick cross thru their legs, and well fastened to the rope, that they might not be surprised and let go their hold."

Efforts to curtail the line-crossing ceremony did not begin until the 1980s and now most navies have since instituted regulations that prohibit physical attacks on Sailors undergoing the ceremony. Today, wog day is a fun-spirited ritual often involving tame physical tests and fun ordeals, but maintains the customs and traditions of the ceremony involving King Neptune and his royal court.



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