

## CVN 77 Petty Officer of the Year

By MC3(SW) Derrick Noack

She tosses the hair clippers she's working with from hand to hand, behind her back like a skilled bartender, calm and confident in her craft. It's obvious she enjoys her job, as she pays careful attention to every detailed stroke of her clippers to his head. While engaged in conversation through the entire haircut, a laugh explodes from her tiny frame throughout the barbershop nearly every 10 seconds. "God dang," she says as she censors herself while her customer tells her all about his new, and over-sized, baby boy. When she finishes brushing off any loose hair from his collar, he stands up and shows her pictures and videos on his phone. "Dang, he is huge!" she tells him.

Ship's Serviceman 3rd Class (SW/AW) Asia Stewart, recently named Petty Officer of the Year for George H.W. Bush, took on the position of barbershop supervisor three months ago after working as vending supervisor for nearly a year.

Stewart's journey really begins as she was planning her escape from the projects in Savannah, Ga. She signed up for the Navy when she was 17, a senior in high school, and left for boot camp once she graduated.

"I didn't want to be like many of the other girls in my neighborhood," said Stewart. "Most of them were having kids and living off welfare. I wanted to be a role model to my brother, nieces, and nephews."

Her plan seemed to work, with her younger brother currently attending Operations Specialist "A" school and her niece heading to Army boot camp in just a few months.

“No matter where you come from, you can always live past the expectations others have for you,” she says.

Around the ship, Stewart is known as the girl involved with every Junior Enlisted Association (JEA) meeting, American Diversity Heritage Observance Committee (ADHOC) event and community relations projects, yes, even the ones on weekends. Her commitment and passion for the command, along with her initiative to lead, are what led Ship’s Serviceman (SW/AW) 1st Class Cory Wallace, Leading Petty Officer of Supply’s S-3 Division, to nominate Stewart for Petty Officer of the Year.

“Stewart is always one step ahead,” said Wallace. “She’s already working at a 2nd class level, filling supervisor positions. What puts her on top is not only her drive, but the way she interacts with the crew.”

Wallace had such confidence in his nomination of Stewart that he sent her to her first board for Petty Officer of the Quarter in a uniform so wrecked, it brought Stewart to tears.

“I was told the day of I had a Petty Officer of the Quarter board,” said Stewart. “I immediately rushed to get my dress whites ready. When I started ironing them, water rushed out of the iron, and left a huge brown spot on my jumper. I used a Tide spot-removing pen on it until the pen was completely empty, and that did not help. Crying, I ran to SH1 Wallace and told him I couldn’t do it. He went in before me and explained to the board members what happened, came out and shoved me in.”

Despite the circumstances, Stewart’s personality shined through and she won the title of Petty Officer of the Quarter. When she found out later in the year that she was up for Petty Officer of The Year, she immediately took her dress uniform to the cleaners.

“SH1 Wallace was up there again, before the Petty Officer of the Year board,” said Stewart. “This time, instead of trying to cover up a stain, he was just taking a lint-roller to my uniform before I went in.”

Stewart’s selection was announced at the ship’s holiday party. With all available qualifications and warfare pins completed, membership to every ship-based organization and now, title of Petty Officer of The Year, it seems there is nothing left to look forward to.

“I actually am excited to go on another deployment with the Bush,” said Stewart. “Last deployment I paid off all my debt. This time I’m going to work toward a degree in business management, run for an officer position in the JEA and save money.”

She advises other first-time deployers to save money at sea, in addition to smiling - no matter how bad of a day you are having.

“You never know what someone else is going through,” said Stewart. “There’s someone out there who has it worse than you. Just by having a positive attitude and saying ‘Good morning’, your energy will bounce onto someone else. There will be tough times, but we have to help each other make it to the end. Don’t forget that.”