

SEPT 2018

THE WOLVERINE



New CO Takes The Helm

Meet the CO • Change of Command • Honoring President Ford

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WE ARE #WARSHIP 78

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A Little History

Labor Day

This holiday is celebrated on the first Monday in September. The first Labor Day was celebrated in New York City on September 5, 1882 and was started by the Central Labor Union in New York City. In 1884, it was moved to the first Monday in September where it is celebrated today. On June 28, 1894, the U.S. Congress voted it a national holiday.

September 2, 1945: V-J Day

Victory over Japan Day, or V-J Day, was declared by President Truman after the Japanese formally surrendered aboard the U.S. battleship USS Missouri in Tokyo Bay. USS Missouri was chosen for the formal surrender ceremony, as she was named after President Truman's home state.

THE WOLVERINE

USS GERALD R. FORD (CVN 78)

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FRONT COVER PHOTO

Capt. John J. Cummings, USS Gerald R. Ford's (CVN 78) then prospective commanding officer, passes through sideboys as he arrives at Ford's change of command ceremony at Vista Point onboard Naval Station Norfolk. (U.S. Navy photo by Mass Communication 2nd Class Cat Campbell)

HURRICANE SEASON

What's in your survival kit?



www.ready.gov

First Aid Kit
Potable Water
Nonperishable Food

Flashlight
Spare Batteries

A Candid Conversation: Meet Your New CO

Interview by Mass Communication Specialist 3rd Class Liz Thompson

What made you join the Navy?

Capt. John Cummings: I did not want to do a really boring job. I wanted something challenging, rewarding, and even dangerous. I had a couple of uncles who flew for the Navy. My freshman year in college, I decided I wanted to be like them and fly off of aircraft carriers. I enlisted in the reserves then applied for Aviation Officer Candidate School upon graduating from college.

What is your motivation to stay in?

Capt. John Cummings: When I first joined the Navy, it was about me. I wanted to fly off ships and do dangerous, rewarding, and challenging jobs. But by the time September 11th rolled around, I was involved in the very early days of OPERATION ENDURING FREEDOM. That's when I understood that it wasn't about me. It was about serving something greater than self — our country, our country's interests and way of life. That's one of the main drivers to doing this important job, it's something bigger than me. Another big reason I stay in is the people. The longer you stay in the more impact you can have on Sailors. I have the ability to make changes instantly that are for the right reasons and for the improvement of Sailors lives both personally and professionally. I have such a great opportunity to positively influence them and make a difference in their lives whether here on the ship, throughout the whole fleet when they leave the ship, or even when they are out at home.

What does it mean to you to be the CO of a first-in-class carrier and the newest carrier in the fleet?

Capt. John Cummings: This is the brass ring right here. There is no job in the world like this job. This is a unique challenge. Going to a Nimitz-class would have been comfortable. That's a class I know like the back of my hand from my years of deploying on Nimitz-class. Here I still get lost. The [USS Gerald R.] Ford is unique and a challenge from all the new systems that are untested and innovative and first-ever technologies. To get everything aligned and seeing this ship go out to sea with an air wing, that's going to be an immense challenge we have to figure out. There is no CO in the world that has this unique set of challenges of innovative and eye-watering new technologies.

Tell us about your call sign "Yank".

Capt. John Cummings: I grew up in the northeast, but I went to flight school in Mississippi. There are not a lot of northerners down there and there are a fair share of southerners in Naval fighter aviation. They gave me the call sign "Yank," short for Yankee. Which is ironic because I hate the New York Yankees. You can't change it either; it's a cardinal sin in fighter aviation. If you don't like your call sign you still have to keep it. Only the Ready Room can change your call sign. And if you say you don't like your call sign, guess what? It's still your call sign!

What is the biggest piece of advice that you have for your Sailors here on ship?

Capt. John Cummings: I want to tell our Sailors, "Remember, and don't forget why we are here and what our mission is." We are here to prepare for war, get our ship to the fight, and if needed, to savage the enemy. Remember that we are a warship first. Act like we are the Navy, look like it, perform like it. "Warship 78" our tactical call sign on the high seas, so watch standers use it all the time. Even back on the pier, I want us to remember that we are still Warship 78.

How would you describe your leadership style?

Capt. John Cummings: LBWA. Leadership By Walking Around. I don't like leading via Outlook. I like to lead in-person and talk to people. That's how you get the most done. Have a conversation, vice numerous texts or emails. That's a way to show them you care. Showing them you care is a leadership style as well. This helps in earning respect and trust — I try to do that every day, that's my goal.

What is the biggest piece of advice that you have received?

Capt. John Cummings: Easy! In 1995, I was a Lieutenant Junior Grade in VF-24. I was a brand-new fighter pilot. I had this chief, I pulled him aside and I said, 'I'm new to the job here, what do you want from me?' His response was something that I've carried with me for 23 years now, he said, "Sir, show them you care." What that meant was show that you are concerned with their personal and professional well-being. Don't tell them, show them — that will earn respect.



Capt. John J. Cummings, USS Gerald R. Ford's (CVN 78) commanding officer, poses for a group photo with his family during the ship's change of command ceremony. (U.S. Navy photo by Mass Communication Specialist 3rd Class Joshua Murray)



Capt. John J. Cummings, USS Gerald R. Ford's (CVN 78) commanding officer, poses for a selfie during the ship's change of command ceremony. (U.S. Navy photo by Mass Communication Specialist 3rd Class Joshua Murray)

What has been your proudest or most defining moment of your career?

Capt. John Cummings: Close, if not in the lead, is my first mission in Afghanistan in October 2001 dropping four laser-guided weapons on the Taliban. That first night, the first of my airwing flights after 10 years of training, to go do it for real was unbelievable. The flag the firefighters raised up at the site of the World Trade Center after the attacks was flown on the [USS Theodore Roosevelt (CVN 71)]. After the mission we parked in front of the island, and I saw that flag there. Two of my friends were on the first plane that hit the World Trade Center - a squadron mate of mine and a college buddy of mine. Both of their names were on the bombs I dropped that night. I got all choked up to think at the time, 'this is why I'm here' — to do dangerous work for our nation, to make those that gives us harm pay. That was what I trained for a decade to do, then to do just that for five months, every night, just destroying targets and eradicating the Taliban from the planet earth was fantastic.





Capt. Richard McCormack, USS Gerald R. Ford's (CVN 78) commanding officer, reads his orders prior to being relieved by Capt. John J. Cummings, Ford's prospective commanding officer, during the ship's change of command ceremony. (U.S. Navy photo by Mass Communication Specialist 2nd Class Cat Campbell)



Led by USS Gerald R. Ford's (CVN 78) Reactor Officer Capt. M..., during the ship's change of command ceremony at Vista Point onboa... Specialist 2nd Class Matthew R. Fairchild)

Change of Command



ABOVE: Capt. John J. Cummings, USS Gerald R. Ford's (CVN 78) commanding officer, gives remarks after properly relieving Capt. Richard McCormack, Ford's former commanding officer, during the ship's change of command ceremony. (U.S. Navy photo by Mass Communication Specialist 2nd Class Cat Campbell)

LEFT: The official party salutes the national ensign during USS Gerald R. Ford's (CVN 78) change of command ceremony. (U.S. Navy photo by Mass Communication Specialist 2nd Class Cat Campbell)



Matthew Kawas, crew members assigned to Ford stand in formation at Naval Station Norfolk. (U.S. Navy photo by Mass Communication Specialist 2nd Class Cat Campbell)



Capt. John J. Cummings, USS Gerald R. Ford's (CVN 78) commanding officer, gives remarks after properly relieving Capt. Richard McCormack, Ford's former commanding officer, during the ship's change of command ceremony at Vista Point. (U.S. Navy photo by Mass Communication Specialist 2nd Class Cat Campbell)

Celebrating President Ford

Story by Mass Communication Specialist 2nd Class Jason Pastrick

YOU HAVE NOT ELECTED ME AS YOUR PRESIDENT BY YOUR BALLOTS, AND SO I ASK YOU TO CONFIRM ME AS YOUR PRESIDENT WITH YOUR PRAYER. I HAVE NOT SOUGHT THIS ENORMOUS RESPONSIBILITY, BUT I WILL NOT SHIRK IT. OUR CONSTITUTION WORKS; OUR GREAT REPUBLIC IS A GOVERNMENT OF LAWS AND NOT OF MEN. HERE THE PEOPLE RULE. . . . GOD, HELPING ME, I WILL NOT LET YOU DOWN.



Wreaths rest against a wall of the Gerald R. Ford Presidential Museum following a wreath laying ceremony in honor of former President Gerald R. Ford's 105th birthday. Ford Sailors were in Grand Rapids honoring their ship's namesake President Gerald R. Ford, for what would have been his 105th birthday. (U.S. Navy photo by Mass Communication Specialist 2nd Class Jason Pastrick)

Sailors assigned to the aircraft carrier USS Gerald R. Ford (CVN 78) visited Grand Rapids, Michigan, July 12–15 to represent their ship in a ceremony celebrating the life of former President Gerald R. Ford in honor of what would have been his 105th birthday.

The Gerald R. Ford Presidential Foundation hosted a wreath laying ceremony where Sailors were invited to lay a wreath bearing the ship's crest at the tomb of Gerald and Betty Ford. The ceremony occurs as part of a long-standing tradition in which the current president sends a wreath to the grave of every past president on their birthday. Ford Sailors were also invited to take part in a commemorative tree planting at the Gerald R. Ford Presidential Museum.

"It's really important to be here," said Religious Program Specialist 2nd Class Chris Atwood, from Livonia, Michigan, assigned to Ford's command religious ministries department. "To learn the

history of our namesake shows us why he was such a great human being, a great president, and a great man."

Five Ford Sailors, four of them Michigan natives, made the three-day trip to honor their ship's namesake and support the local community.

"As Michiganders, the opportunity to come back to our home state is truly special," said Lt. Sarah Brower, from Grand Haven, Michigan, assigned to Ford's medical department. "It's very exciting to be able to share our stories and experiences with the community, and also to be able to serve in a different way by supporting the organizations that President Ford and his family were dedicated to."

The weekend included several volunteer opportunities with local organizations, including the Salvation Army Ray and Kroc Corps Community Center, Boy Scouts of America, and Kid's Food Basket,

a local non-profit that grows and provides after-school meals for children in need.

"I was profoundly humbled by the work and spirit of the citizens of Grand Rapids," said Brower. "The organizations that we visited are doing impressive and impactful work in the community. It was unbelievable."



Sailors assigned to USS Gerald R. Ford (CVN 78) pose for a photo with Gerald R. Ford's children during a Betty Ford statue unveiling at the Gerald R. Ford Presidential Museum in Grand Rapids, Michigan. (Photo courtesy of the Gerald R. Ford Presidential Foundation)

The group also received a personal guided tour of the Gerald R. Ford Presidential Museum from the museum's curator.

"As a lover of history, this trip really strengthened my knowledge and connection to the Ford family and what we as CVN 78 Sailors should strive to stand for and emulate," said Chief Aviation Boatswain's Mate (Equipment) Jeremy Stoecklein, from Hutchinson, Kansas, assigned to Ford's air department. "Representing the namesake of an incredibly dynamic leader in our nation is no small task. But, after this trip and spending time with President Ford's loved ones and friends, I truly believe that he would be excited to witness the hard work and dedication that our team displays every day and how integrity is at the forefront of all we do."

Stoecklein serves as the ship's historian and has personally mentored hundreds of Sailors through the command's indoctrination program.

The event concluded with the Ford family and members of the Ford Foundation unveiling a statue dedicated to former first lady Betty Ford in honor of what would have been her 100th birthday. As the sheet was pulled away, Grand Rapids was introduced to Betty's smile and outstretched hand, welcoming all who visit the Ford Museum.

"This trip showed me that President Ford and First Lady Betty Bloomer Ford still impact Americans every day in the most positive ways and their legacy will no doubt live on for years to come," said Stoecklein. "I will never forget the experience, stories, organizations, and people from this amazing town, and they will always hold a special place with me as I move on in my career and life."

As the Sailors prepared for their return to USS Gerald R. Ford, pride and humility were unanimous among the group.

"For us, it's an honor to be able to come back home and give back to a community that already held a place in our hearts," said Brower. "I feel privileged to be part of the crew and to carry forth the legacy of such a distinguished figure in the nation's, particularly Michigan's, history."

For more information and to see photos and videos of the Gerald R. Ford Sailor's trip to Michigan, visit www.dvidshub.net/unit/cvn78.



Sailors assigned to USS Gerald R. Ford (CVN 78) weed a field during a community relations event at Kid's Food Basket in Grand Rapids, Michigan. (U.S. Navy photo by Mass Communication Specialist 2nd Class Jason Pastrick)

Outdooring Ceremony: Delivering a Culture of Diversity

Story by Mass Communication Specialist 2nd Class Kiana Raines



Participants gather around during a traditional Ghanaian Outdooring Ceremony. (Courtesy photo)

Diversity is something the Navy prides itself on; diversity of culture and diversity of thought. We are taught that our differences and our life experiences make us a stronger, and a more capable warfighting team.

Hospital Corpsman 2nd Class Bernard Akoli, originally from Ghana, assigned to USS Gerald R. Ford (CVN 78) embodies the values that a diverse Navy provides and was overjoyed at the opportunity to share his culture with his shipmates.

Akoli's journey in the U.S. began in 2010 through the Diversity Visa Lottery Program designed to create opportunities for different cultures to immerse themselves into the U.S. Akoli earned his master's degree in Europe and returned to the U.S. in 2012, after a series of interviews, Akoli was able to gain permanent residence where he then began a career in the Navy in May of 2013.

"The program was designed to bring different backgrounds to the states to increase diversity," said Akoli. "I think it is great that I get to learn about American culture and teach mine to those who

are interested."

Recently, Akoli invited Ford crewmembers to participate in a long standing Ghanaian tradition called an Outdooring Ceremony. In Ghana, it is custom to host a baby-naming, or Outdooring ceremony, to present a newborn, declare their name and announce the godparents to the world a few days to a few months after the child is born.

"Like most traditions, the ceremony has evolved over time, for us it is a period to thank God for the gift of a child and present him to our friends and family for the first time," said Akoli.

Before the ceremony, the mother and child remain at home, cared for by the elder women and family giving them time to recover before, as the ceremony's name implies, going outdoors to greet the world. During this time the baby is referred to by his or her soul name typically kept private within the immediate family.

"A baby's soul name is based off of the day in the week they were born," said Akoli. "My son was born on Monday so his name would be

'Joojo' in the dialect of my wife's tribe, and 'Kwadwo' in mine which literally means 'a male born on Monday'. His last name is my father's last name, 'Awudor', so my son's soul name is 'Joojo Awudor'. Typically this name is never written down or spoken outside the immediate family, but I am happy to share this because I want the crew and my friends to experience and appreciate my culture."

Akoli took time during the ceremony to explain the different elements of the ceremony to ensure his non-African guests were fully immersed in the experience.

"It was an honor to present my son's name for the first time," said Akoli. "His name is Aviad Johan Akoli. Aviad meaning father of eternity, Johan after my father John and Akoli which is my last name.

"Being able to share this experience with everyone was amazing, just mind blowing," said Akoli. "I believe these kinds of experiences bond us closer together and makes people more tolerant to each other's unique differences."

Akoli wasn't the only one overjoyed by the experience. Those invited left with an inside look at another culture and a bond they will never lose.

"I was honored that Akoli invited me to be a part of this special moment for his family," said Aviation Boatswain's Mate (Equipment) 1st Class Chaonon Tao, a Sailor assigned to Ford's air department. "It was a beautiful ceremony and I learned a lot about his values and the significance of a name in their culture."

Lt. Cmdr. David Kim, a chaplain aboard Ford was asked to give a blessing during the ceremony. The event provided Kim the opportunity to reflect on his own experiences as a Korean-American.

"HM2 [Akoli] approached me early on as an excited dad eager to include the command in this special moment," said Kim. "Being Korean and growing up in an ethnic church I was reminded of my childhood during the ceremony. In my culture we have a similar tradition called

a 100-day ceremony, where if the child lives to 100 days, which they almost always do now, we have a big celebration to celebrate the baby and determine its path in life.

It was an honor to be able to partake in the ceremony and to see that he has no shortage in mentors in faith and that it is important to him to merge his spiritual values with his work values," said Kim.

Akoli hopes that by welcoming all to share in his culture he will inspire other exchanges and the world will become a more tolerant and accepting place where diversity is cherished and celebrated.

"A world where people are tolerant and accepting of all cultures is something I want my kids to be able to see and I am happy to do my part to contribute to that," said Akoli.



Hospital Corpsman 2nd Class Bernard Akoli holds his son during a traditional Ghanaian Outdooring Ceremony. (Courtesy photo)

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