

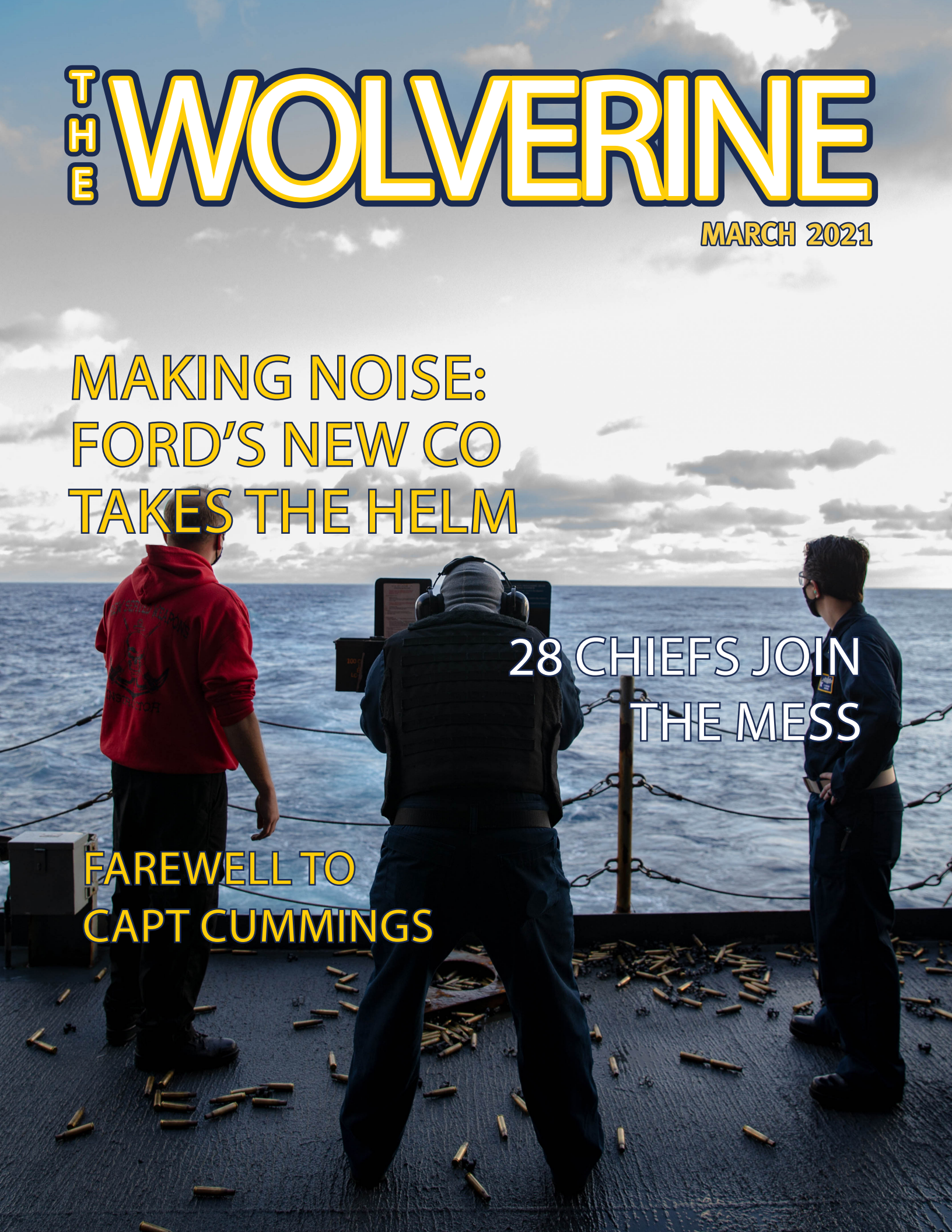
THE WOLVERINE

MARCH 2021

MAKING NOISE:
FORD'S NEW CO
TAKES THE HELM

28 CHIEFS JOIN
THE MESS

FAREWELL TO
CAPT CUMMINGS



THE WOLVERINE

USS GERALD R. FORD (CVN 78)

MEET THE TRIAD

COMMANDING OFFICER
CAPT Paul Lanzilotta

EXECUTIVE OFFICER
CAPT Jeremy Shamblee

COMMAND MASTER CHIEF
CMDM De'Andre Beaufort

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LT Ayifa Brooks
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MEDIA DEPARTMENT LCPO
MCCS Ryan Wilber

MEDIA PRODUCTION LCPO
MCC RJ Stratchko

THE WOLVERINE EDITOR
MC3 Zachary Melvin

MEDIA DEPARTMENT STAFF

MC1 Juile Matyascik
MC1 Gary Prill
MC1 Jeff Troutman
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MC2 William Spears
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MCSN Trenton Edly
MCSN Mariano Lopez
MCSN Riley McDowell

FRONT COVER PHOTO

Sailors assigned to USS Gerald R. Ford's (CVN 78) weapons department, conduct a live fire weapons qualification exercise. (U.S. Navy photo by Mass Communication Specialist Seaman Mariano Lopez)



THIS MONTH IN NAVAL HISTORY

March 1, 1942

Naval Reserve Pilot Ensign William Tepuni attacks and sinks the first German U-boat of World War II

March 5, 1945

USS Sea Robin (SS 407) and USS Bashaw (SS 241) sink three Japanese gunboats and two Japanese tankers

March 8, 1822

Crew from the schooner Enterprise capture and burn seven small pirate vessels off Cape Antonio, Cuba

March 21, 1943

USS Herring (SS 233) sinks German submarine U 163 off the Bay of Biscay

March 30, 1944

USS Darter (SS 227) sinks a Japanese army cargo ship near New Guinea, despite the presence of an escort vessel.



FOR MORE CONTENT

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<https://www.dvidshub.net/unit/CVN78>



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COMMAND OMBUDSMAN



Danni Campbell
757-805-5958

FordOmbudsman1@gmail.com



Jillian Stone
401-405-4171

FordOmbudsman2@gmail.com

4

MAKING NOISE :
FORD'S NEW CO

5

FORD CONDUCTS
BURIAL AT SEA

8

FAREWELL TO
CAPT CUMMINGS

10

28 CHIEFS JOIN
THE MESS

Making Noise Aboard Gerald R. Ford



By Mass Communication Specialist Seaman Jackson Adkins

Making noise was never a problem for Paul Lanzilotta. At 17 years old he was in high school flying aircraft and working toward his private pilots license, not typical for any high school student. From a young age Lanzilotta knew what career path he was going to pursue, becoming a naval aviator for the United States Navy.

“If you want the maximum level of awesomeness,” says Capt. Paul Lanzilotta, commanding officer of USS Gerald R. Ford (CVN 78), “where you end up is naval aviation.”

Capt. Paul Lanzilotta, from Long Island, New York, was commissioned through the Massachusetts Institute of Technology Reserve Officer Training Corps program. Lanzilotta earned his wings of gold and was selected to fly the E-2C command and control aircraft, and later earned his master’s degree from John Hopkins University in Maryland.

In his 36 year naval career, Lanzilotta has served on several different classes of ships, including three different classes of aircraft carriers, Kennedy class, Nimitz class, and now Ford class.

“It was interesting to go back to a Nimitz class carrier and see the new designs and what things can improve efficiency,” says Lanzilotta. “And now the Ford, you can see it even more.”

When Lanzilotta received the news that he was going to be Ford’s fourth Commanding Officer, he was enthusiastic to find out he got his first choice for this next endeavor.

“I knew it was not going to be an easy job, the ship has 4 things to do that [are] very challenging between now and

when I’m supposed to leave,” said Lanzilotta. “To me that is inviting, that’s something that gets me fired up.”

He didn’t necessarily want the job because Ford is the newest carrier in the fleet; he was more interested in what the ship comprised.

Speaking of his first exposure to Ford in October 2019, Lanzilotta stated, “I saw the positive attitude that the Sailors and leadership brought to the deckplates every day and I was really motivated by that.”

When asked what Lanzilotta was most looking forward to about becoming the new commanding officer of Ford the answer was simple, the crew’s team mentality and group cohesion.

“I’m a human being, so of course I have some nerves about taking over this ship but the thing that makes those nerves go away a little bit is being able to see the leadership team that’s in place as well as the Sailors on the deckplates that are ready to do the job,” said Lanzilotta.

As Ford steams into 2021, there are some monumental milestones scheduled ahead, and Lanzilotta has a positive outlook on all of it. He stated, “I want to make some noise.” With shock trials just around the corner, this is his time to do so.

“The whole crew is going to make history,” Lanzilotta added.

The Commanding Officer’s vision for the crew is simple, to reinforce a positive environment with the mind set of being a warship.

“Remaining focused on being a warship is absolutely a key part of becoming more lethal,” closed Lanzilotta.



Sailors Facilitate Burial at Sea aboard Ford

By Mass Communication Specialist 3rd Class Zachary Melvin

The remains of 35 service members from the Navy, Marine Corps and Air Force branches of service and 3 spouses were committed to the sea during a burial at sea ceremony aboard USS Gerald R. Ford (CVN 78) Feb. 1, 2021.

“Burial at sea is being conducted in Hangar Bay two and Aircraft Elevator 3,” a Sailor announces over the 1MC. “Maintain silence about the decks.”

The act of committing the souls of fallen Sailors, Marines, Airmen and Coast Guard to the deep, burial at sea, has been a part of Naval tradition since the inception of the United States Navy.

The ceremony was led by Ford’s Chaplain, Cmdr. Charles Johnson from Mooreland, Oklahoma, who spoke of what a great experience it was for the Sailors aboard Ford.

“It is a great honor for us to be able to do this,” said Johnson. “The ceremony of being buried at sea means a lot to those who request it. Oftentimes, this request is spelled out in their wills, or it is solemnly requested of their next of kin before their death. We on the Ford are entrusted with the last wish, often the deathbed request of a beloved family member.”

During the burial at sea, the ship halts all non-essential activity and maintains silence across the decks to honor those who have gone before. Many departments contribute in the ceremony or in the set up or tear down.

“Nearly every department on the ship contributes in some way to the burial at sea, whether it is air department assisting with the aircraft elevator or weapons department supplying the

firing detail,” said Johnson. “The Commanding Officer and the Command Master Chief, representing everyone on the ship, stand as witnesses to the entire ceremony to ensure that everything is carried out in a way that honors our deceased brothers and sisters.”

The rough waves balanced with the cloudy skies added to the solemn mood as the color guard came to attention at the Executive Officer’s command. Silence filled the hangar bay as the chaplain began the ceremony.

“We chose such a beautiful day with waves that are crashing just gently enough to move the ship,” said Aviation Ordnanceman Airman Sean Kraehenbuehl, from Saucier, Mississippi, assigned to Ford’s weapons department. “It was a peaceful moment, a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity.”

The ceremony concluded with three volleys from Ford’s seven person firing detail.

“It is very moving to witness the entire command, from the Commanding Officer down to the Sailors watching from the hangar bay, paying honor to those who served the country by wearing the uniform, many of them during wartime,” said Johnson. “It is also moving to hear the brief summaries of their lives and realize how many of the departed remained attached to the Navy long after their active service was over. For some, it was more than sixty years since they wore the uniform, but they remembered and still wanted to be buried at sea, one last act of service to the country and Navy they loved.”



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7



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PHOTOS OF THE MONTH

MARCH 2020

1. Electronics Technician 3rd Class Wesley Gilbert, from North Jackson, Ohio, assigned to USS Gerald R. Ford's (CVN 78) reactor department, observes a sunset from the ship's island, Feb. 4, 2021. (U.S. Navy photo by Mass Communication Specialist Seaman Jackson Adkins)

2. Rear Adm. John Meier, commander, Naval Air Force Atlantic, communicates with pilots assigned to Strike Fighter Squadron (VFA) 106 from the landing signal officer platform on USS Gerald R. Ford's (CVN 78) flight deck, Feb. 7, 2021. (U.S. Navy photo by Mass Communication Specialist 3rd Class Zack Guth)

3. Airman Graham Hovorka, from Cypress, Texas, assigned to USS Gerald R. Ford's (CVN 78) weapons department, fires a M9 pistol at a target during a live fire exercise Feb. 3, 2021. Ford is underway in the Atlantic Ocean conducting carrier qualifications. (U.S. Navy photo by Mass Communication Specialist 2nd Class Kallysta Castillo)

4. An F/A-18E Super Hornet attached to the "Gladiators" of Strike Fighter Squadron (VFA) 106 takes off from USS Gerald R. Ford's (CVN 78) flight deck Feb. 8, 2021. VFA-106 is using procession landing mode for the first time for carrier qualifications (CQ). (U.S. Navy photo by Chief Mass Communication Specialist RJ Stratchko)

5. A F/A-18E Super Hornet attached to the "Gladiators" of Strike Fighter Squadron (VFA) 106, prepares to take off from USS Gerald R. Ford's (CVN 78) flight deck Feb. 8, 2021. (U.S. Navy photo by Mass Communication Specialist 3rd Class Zachary Melvin)

6. An MH-60S Sea Hawk helicopter, attached to the "Tridents" of Helicopter Sea Combat Squadron (HSC) 9, approaches USS Gerald R. Ford's (CVN 78) flight deck, Feb. 4, 2021. (U.S. Navy photo by Mass Communication Specialist Seaman Apprentice Trenton Edly)

7. A T-45C Goshawk, attached to Training Air Wing 1, approaches USS Gerald R. Ford's (CVN 78) flight deck, Feb. 4, 2021. (U.S. Navy photo by Mass Communication Specialist Seaman Jackson Adkins)

8. Aviation Machinist's Mate 1st Class Steven Lazio, from Hernando, Florida, assigned to USS Gerald R. Ford's (CVN 78) aviation intermediate maintenance department, set up an engine test on an F-18 engine on the ship's fantail. (U.S. Navy photo by Mass Communication Specialist Seaman Mariano Lopez)

A FIRST-IN-CLASS COMMANDING OFFICER: FAIR WINDS AND FOLLOWING SEAS, CAPT J.J. CUMMINGS



By Mass Communication Specialist Seaman Sarah Mead

In college, Capt. J. J. Cummings, USS Gerald R. Ford's (CVN 78) Commanding Officer (CO) also known as "Yank," was uninspired by the idea of spending his life in a traditional job buried in an office cubicle. During his freshman year, he was introduced to Naval Aviation by two uncles who were naval aviators. The idea of launching and landing aircraft from a ship was unfamiliar to Cummings, but it captured his interest. And after a little research, he determined that being a fighter pilot offered the excitement and challenge he was seeking. He set a goal to fly the Grumman F-14 Tomcat, which he achieved roughly six years later.

"It was 1986 right after Top Gun came out and, for the record, I wanted to do this before I saw the movie," said Cummings. "My recruiter told me it was really tough to get accepted into Aviation Officer Candidate School, so we came up with an alternate plan to make me stand out."

Advised that being "prior enlisted" would increase his chances of getting accepted, Cummings enlisted in the Navy Reserves as a Hospital Corpsman, took a semester off from college and went to boot camp at Great Lakes. After Hospital Corps 'A' School, he was stationed with a Marine Reserve unit in Maine.

"In the reserves, you get 'activated' for one weekend a month and two weeks a year, and my unit would spend the two weeks down in Camp Lejeune in the crazy hot North Carolina summer," said Cummings. "I learned a lot about leadership digging fighting holes with private first classes and lance corporals, sitting there for two weeks, sweating, covered in bugs, and mosquitos. It made me very resilient."

Although balancing his reserve responsibility

and school schedule was difficult, Cummings says it was worth it, and he appreciates the perspective his enlistment provided him as a commissioned officer.

"When I checked into my squadron, I looked at the squadron CO and thought, 'I want to be that guy. That guy is influential and I want his job one day,'" said Cummings. "Years later, while on deployment I watched the ship's Executive Officer (XO) and CO and thought their jobs appeared even more appealing given their increased influence and responsibility."

After 16 years Cummings achieved his goal of becoming a fighter squadron XO and then CO. Three years later he was selected for the Navy's Nuclear Propulsion program. As an Aviation Nuclear Officer, Cummings served as the XO of USS Nimitz (CVN 68) and then the CO of USS Anchorage (LPD 23). After a 27 year career, he became the CO of the first-in-class carrier USS Gerald R. Ford.

After a month aboard, he realized that this was where he was meant to be and couldn't imagine being assigned anywhere else. He was grateful the Navy sent him to Ford.

"Being a part of ship's company exposed me to new areas of the Navy that I would have never experienced if I had stayed in the cockpit," said Cummings. "Now I feel like I have a greater understanding of what goes on in the Pentagon, Washington, D.C., and the Naval Yard."

Cummings says his greatest accomplishments as Ford's CO are the underways when the mission was accomplished as a direct result of the hard work of Ford Sailors. He is especially thankful to the XO, Command Master Chief, head of departments, wardroom and the Chiefs' Mess for contributing to Ford's success.

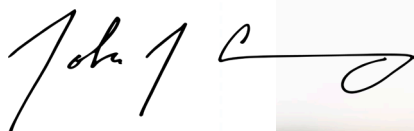
“One of my proudest moments as Ford’s CO was during the March underway in 2020 when the COVID-19 pandemic hit the nation,” said Cummings. “Sailors had only communicated with their families via email during this time. So, we steamed the carrier off the coast of Cape Hatteras, North Carolina within cell phone range. I went on the 1MC to tell Sailors to go down to the hangar bay and call their families. The smiles on their faces were one of the most memorable moments of my tour.”

Cummings says it’s important to him to show his Sailors that he cares about them. Whether it’s having a conversation, serving them food on the mess decks or letters of appreciation to their families, he prioritizes showing his Sailors that he cares.

Now that his command tour is coming to an end, Cummings is excited to see his successor, Capt. Paul Lanzilotta, bring the ship to new levels of excellence. He understands it’s time to say goodbye to his beloved crew.

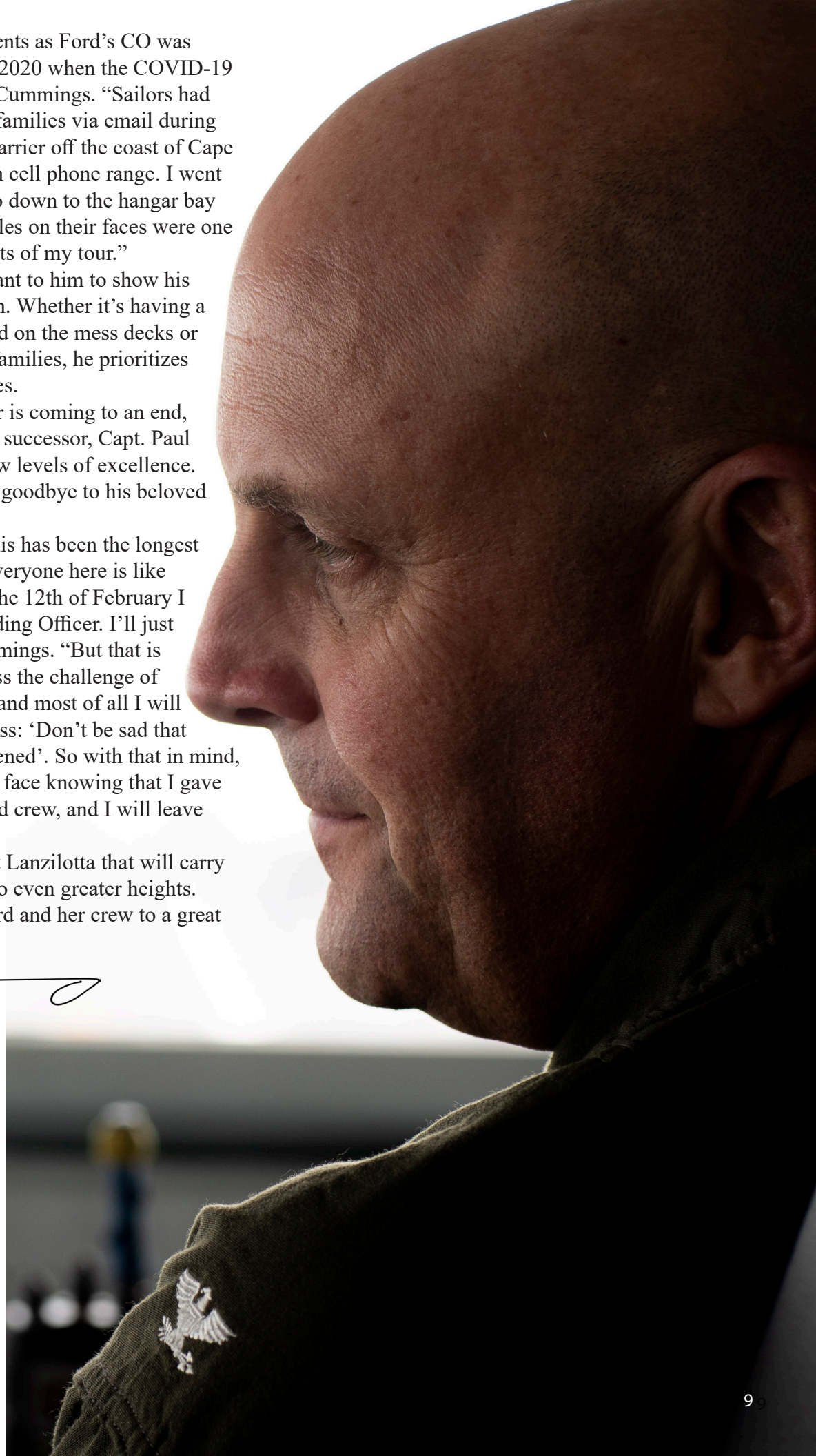
“At two and a half years, this has been the longest command tour of my career. Everyone here is like family and with one salute on the 12th of February I will no longer be the Commanding Officer. I’ll just be another Captain,” said Cummings. “But that is how the Navy works. I will miss the challenge of this ship, the flight operations, and most of all I will miss the crew. To quote Dr Seuss: ‘Don’t be sad that it’s over. Be happy that it happened’. So with that in mind, I will leave with a smile on my face knowing that I gave everything I had to this ship and crew, and I will leave with no regrets.”

Cummings is confident that Lanzilotta that will carry the success of Gerald R. Ford to even greater heights. He finds comfort in leaving Ford and her crew to a great leader.



(Top Left) Capt. J.J. Cummings, commanding officer of USS Gerald R. Ford, prepares to take off in an F/A-18F Super Hornet attached to the “Gladiators” of Strike Fighter Squadron (VFA) 106, on Ford’s flight deck, Feb. 8, 2021. (U.S. Navy photo by Mass Communication Specialist Seaman Jackson Adkins)

(Bottom Right) Capt. John J. Cummings, USS Gerald R. Ford’s (CVN 78) commanding officer, watches from the pilot house as Ford transits the James River Oct. 25, 2019. (U.S. Navy photo by Mass Communication Specialist 3rd Class Zachary Melvin)



ANCHORS

By Mass Communication Specialist Seaman Jackson Adkins

The fouled anchor is the emblem of the chief petty officer of the United States Navy. Attached to the anchor is a length of chain and the letters U.S.N. The “U” stands for unity, “S” stands for service, and “N” stands for navigation. The fouled anchor symbolizes the trials and tribulations that every chief must endure on a daily basis. To the novice, the anchor chain and letters only identify a chief, but, to a chief, these have a more noble and glorious meaning.

Justin Knighton dropped out of high school his senior year and decided he needed a push in the right direction. “One day I woke up and decided I needed to change my life. So, I decided to join the Navy,” stated Chief Aviation Boatswains Mate (Equipment) Justin Knighton, from Euless, Texas, leading chief petty officer of Ford’s bow catapults.

Whether Knighton knew it or not he found that push. He would become a chief petty officer in the United States Navy 13 years down the line.

Becoming a chief meant a lot to Knighton and his family. His wife’s grandfather is a retired Chief Hospital Corpsman.

“It was a very happy moment for me when I got to tell my wife,” said Knighton.

Being a chief is more than wearing anchors and getting

to eat in the chiefs mess. The title comes with much responsibilities, to Knighton it means completely switching roles.

“As a chief petty officer, that’s kind of turning point, it’s time for you to give back,” said Knighton. “It’s time for you to make sure that your junior Sailors all the way up to your first class petty officers have the same opportunities, if not

“It’s something I’m fortunate enough to experience. Some people will never get the opportunity to experience, you only become a chief one time”

EMNC Katherine Nakaya

better than what you had so they can promote and be your replacement.”

To Chief Electricians Mate Nuclear Katherine Nakaya, from Nenifee, California, Ford’s reactor department career counselor, being a chief and going through chief season means a certain camaraderie that only comes with being a part of the community.

“One of the reasons I joined the Navy was to experience



OF

GOLD



the camaraderie,” said Nakaya. “Seeing the camaraderie in the [chiefs] mess has been eye opening for me.”

Although chief season this year may have been slightly different because of COVID-19. 28 chief selects participated in Ford’s chief season this year. With Virginia States COVID-19 guidelines group gathering are limited to ten so some activities were altered by breaking into smaller groups.

However, this did not stop Knighton or Nakaya from having a memorable experience.

“It’s something I’m fortunate enough to experience. Some people will never get the opportunity to experience, you only become a chief one time,” said Nakaya.

Chief season is meant to break down selects and build them back up to better themselves for the title for which they will hold.

“Things I had seen before and been around before are now viewed in a different light,” said Knighton.

Knighton and Nakaya along with 21 other chief selects received their anchors in Ford’s hangar bay February 6, 2021. Ford’s remaining five chief selects will be pinned at a later date.



FROM THE CREW OF USS GERALD R. FORD (CVN 78)



I WANT YOU

**TO HAVE A SAFE AND
HAPPY ST. PATRICK'S DAY**

WE ARE #WARSHIP 78