

ONLINE

# WAKE

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**MEET THE EDITORS**

**CREATIVE DIRECTOR:**

**MC1 BLOSCH**

**PRODUCTION TEAM:**

**MC2 MILLIGAN**

**MC2 MOSER**

**MC2 WIDEMAN**

**MC2 SPEER**

**MCSN KEMBLE**

**PAO:**

**MCC MOORE**



**CAN YOU DECODE THE MESSAGE?**



# WHAT'S BUZZING

*What was your favorite thing to do in the Bahamas?*



**ABH3 BOBBY DILWORTH**

"I loved interacting with the locals and learning about the culture. We did a lot of sight seeing and hit up a bunch of historical spots."



**CS2 ERIC RAFFANIELLO**

"I went to Cabbage Beach, and it was gorgeous. The weather and the crystal clear waters were beautiful."



**MACS MELISSA SHEEK**

"My favorite memory in Nassau was visiting the Willie Pratt Centre for Girls with the members of the WASP W.A.V.E.S. and providing mentoring and exchanging life experiences with the young girls."

## RATE OF THE MONTH MASS COMMUNICATION SPECIALIST

THE MASS COMMUNICATION SPECIALIST RATING WAS ESTABLISHED BY THE NAVY ON JULY 1, 2006, WHEN THE PHOTOGRAPHER'S MATE, JOURNALIST, ILLUSTRATOR DRAFTSMAN AND LITHOGRAPHER RATINGS MERGED. MCS PRACTICE HUMAN-CENTERED DESIGN TO DEVELOP CREATIVE COMMUNICATION SOLUTIONS AND ALIGN COMMUNICATION STRATEGIES AND TACTICS TO THEIR LEADERSHIP'S INTENT. ABOARD USS WASP, MCS WORK IN A VARIETY OF ROLES RANGING FROM CONTENT CREATION AS A PHOTOGRAPHER, DESIGNER OR WRITER TO CREATIVE DIRECTION AND MANAGEMENT. SAILORS IN THESE AND OTHER PAST SOURCE RATINGS HAVE PERFORMED AS DOCUMENTERS, DESIGNERS AND PUBLISHERS OF INFORMATION TO SUPPORT THE NAVY.

SPECIALIST



# FORGING CONNECTIONS

By MCSN Kaitlin Young

It was Senior Chief Master-at-Arms Melissa Sheek's last day in paradise. She was in Nassau, The Bahamas, known for its white sand beaches, turquoise water and impressive resorts. Rather than spending the remainder of her time relaxing at the beach or exploring the wonders of a local resort, she, along with 24 other Sailors, volunteered her time to mentor the youth of The Bahamas.

Sheek is assigned to the amphibious assault ship USS Wasp (LHD 1). Wasp had an important mission that resulted in a three-day port visit in Nassau; they were to commemorate the 50th anniversary of Bahamian independence and the 50-year relationship between the United States and The Bahamian nations. Sheek and other Wasp Sailors recognized the importance of this mission and understood that they were not only in The Bahamas to experience its many attractions; they were there to honor and strengthen the treasured partnership between the two countries.

"I am proud of the partnership we have with The Bahamas and the significance of the history that our ship has with the country," Sheek said. "Our time in The Bahamas was more than just having fun; it was symbolic."

Wasp's time in The Bahamas was not only a symbol of the United States' longstanding partnership with the country, but it was an opportunity to grow the United States' connection with the Bahamian people. Sheek, who assisted in

spearheading the revival of the Women Achieving Victory Every Step (W.A.V.E.S.) program aboard Wasp, wanted to help put together a community outreach event during Wasp's visit.

"W.A.V.E.S. wanted to do an event in The Bahamas," Sheek said. "We worked through the embassy and Chaplain [Lt. Brandy] Bennett to find something we could do. We were told that there was a center designed to help [youth]. Chief [Religious Program Specialist Joseph Jedding] took the male Sailors to the men's facility, and Ensign [Jaliya] Wilson and I took the female Sailors to the women's facility."

On the morning of Friday, June 30, 2023, the Sailors packed into two vans; one going to the Willie Mae Pratt Centre for Girls, and the other going to the Simpson Penn Centre for Boys.

The facilities are meant to rehabilitate young men and women and prepare them for reintegration into society. The Sailors spent the day at the facilities, mentoring and bonding with the young men and women.

At the Simpson Penn Centre for Boys, Sailors provided one-on-one mentorship and

participated with residents in a restoration project for the facility and the surrounding area. They built benches, painted the inside of the chapel and re-paneled the carpentry building. At the Willie Mae Pratt Centre for Girls, Sailors engaged with residents in group conversations and activities, such as Zumba, coloring and gardening.

Sheek, who visited the Willie Mae Pratt Centre for Girls, said that mentorship was the most important part of the day.

“We went around the room and talked about stress, anger and things that become problematic in our lives,” Sheek said. We talked about how we overcome those things, and what helps us through life. I think we were really able to connect and that was the best part of the experience.”



Sheek said she hopes the Wasp Sailors left a lasting impression on the residents.

“We wanted to bond and connect, and we wanted to leave something behind; I think we did that,” Sheek said. “We’re just like them even though we come from different parts of the world. We all experience pain, hardships and mistakes in our lives.”

While Sheek hopes the experience sticks with the young women, she says the experience will stick with her.

“You can learn from everyone,” she said. “There are always things to learn from the people around you, regardless of their background. It was incredibly valuable being able to give back and

receive knowledge from everyone in the room.” Monique A. Greenslade, superintendent at the Willie Mae Pratt Centre for Girls, said she is certain that the young ladies took something away from the experience.

“I cannot say how important it is for persons who give service to their country to come in and do voluntary work,” Greenslade said. “It brings a spirit of hope to these young ladies and helps instill in them values and principles that will cause them to excel.”

Greenslade expressed her gratitude to the Wasp Sailors, and said she was happy and excited that they took time out of their busy schedule to visit the facility.

“Let me say how grateful we are that you took the time out while visiting this beautiful country called The Bahamas to come and do voluntary work,” Greenslade said. “You could have done many things, but you chose to come to the Willie Mae Pratt Centre for Girls.”

Sheek said she hoped the time Wasp Sailors spent with the youth showed the Bahamian people that they care. According to Greenslade, it did.

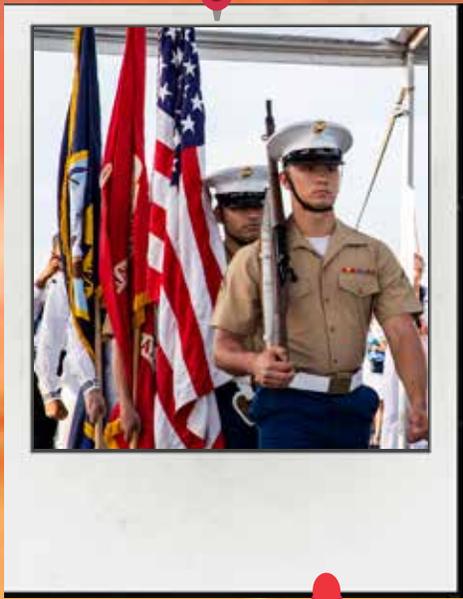
“On behalf of everybody, including the citizens of the Commonwealth of The Bahamas, we are pleased that you all spent time with our beautiful young ladies,” Greenslade said. “Those same ladies, the faces you were looking into, are the future of the Bahamas. We will never leave one of them behind. They are very important to us, and I know they are important to you.”

Wasp Sailors will return home confident that their bond with The Commonwealth of the Bahamas and its people is stronger than when they arrived.

Wasp was in Nassau for a scheduled port visit to celebrate the 50th anniversary of Bahamian independence and an opportunity to strengthen the 50-year bilateral partnership with the Commonwealth of The Bahamas, an important relationship with a key regional partner.

# On The Deckplates





# The Bahamas:

## *Returning to Legacy*

By MC2 Amber Speer

**U**SS Wasp's first trip to the white beaches and clear waters of the Bahamas was made long ago. In fact, this first trip was not made by the amphibious assault ship USS Wasp (LHD 1); it was rather made by a merchant schooner originally named Scorpion.

Purchased, outfitted and commissioned in 1775, the first ever Wasp set sail in the company of USS Hornet, a merchant sloop. From Baltimore, they sailed for the Delaware Capes to join Commodore Esek Hopkins' squadron: the first American squadron to get to sea.

The fleet made their way to The Bahamas, arriving at the Abaco islands on March 1, 1776. Wasp was one of two ships to cover the Marine units that stormed ashore and assisted in the taking of Fort Montague and Fort Nassau from Britain. Here, they took as much ammunition and weaponry as they could before Wasp returned to the states two weeks later.

Wasp returned to The Bahamas recently, arriving on June 28 and departing July 1. This time around, the primary mission was celebrating.

In 1973, the Commonwealth of The Bahamas earned its independence from Britain after 255 years of control under the crown. On July 10, 2023, The Bahamas celebrated its 50th anniversary of governmental independence.

"The U.S. Embassy is hosting a reception onboard," said Captain Chris Purcell, executive officer of Wasp. "Not only are we celebrating their independence but we're also celebrating the United States' relationship with the Bahamian government. Wasp has a special connection with The Bahamas; our presence goes back as far as the history of the United States."

The trip was an opportunity for Wasp to grow the friendship between the United States and The Bahamas. Sailors aboard Wasp were more than excited for the opportunity to see one of the islands and experience Bahamian culture.

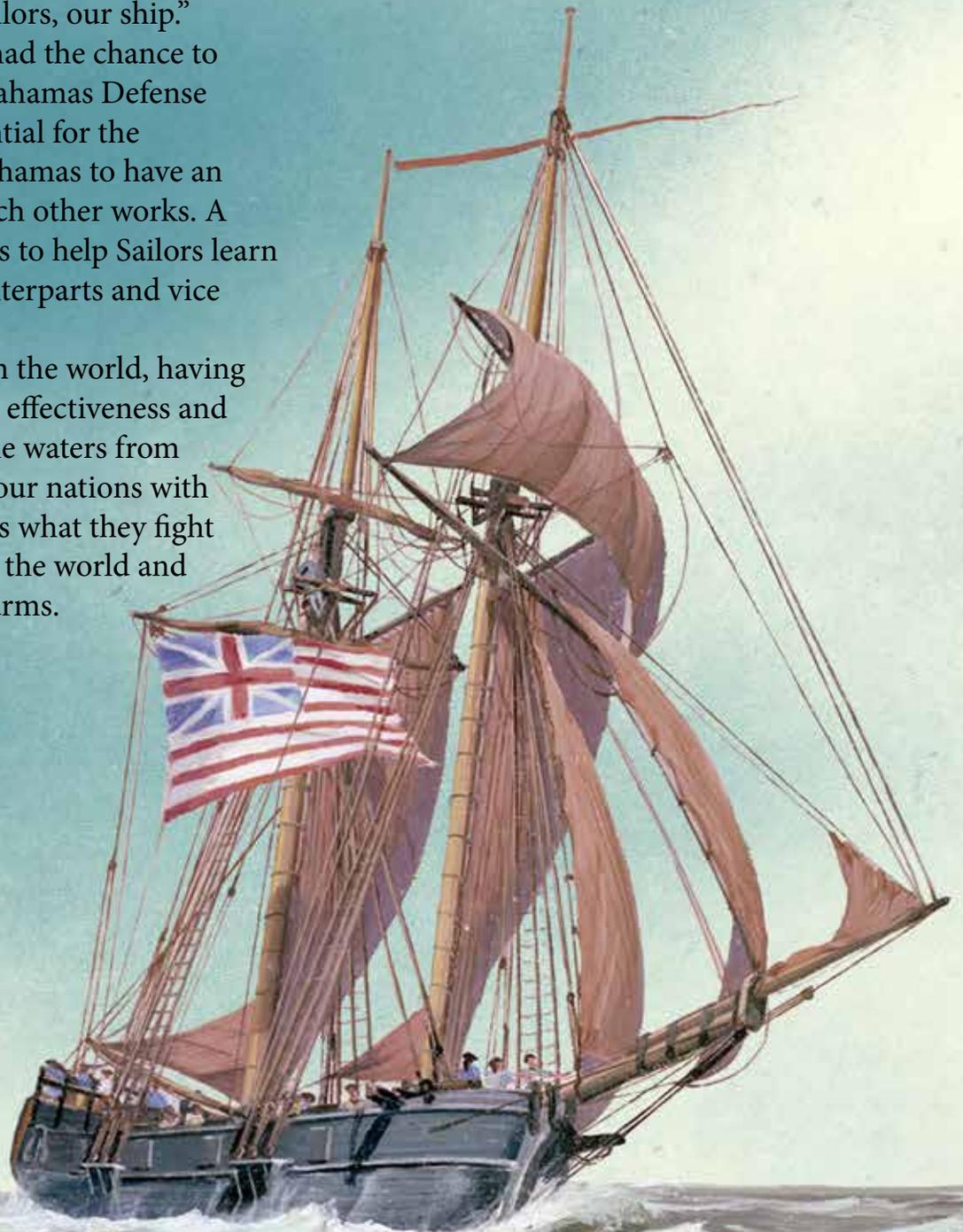
"I've never been outside the country," said Aviation Machinist Mate Airman Apprentice Alex Wells. "I think it's really cool how the Navy is giving me the opportunity to travel, and I want to take full advantage of this opportunity. I want to try their food and see what life is like there."

This voyage was the first time many Sailors got to visit another part of the world. A milestone for Wasp, the ship docked at its first foreign port since departing from Japan in 2020.

“Part of why a lot of Sailors, myself included, joined the Navy was to see other parts of the world,” Purcell said. “Now our Sailors are getting an idea of what it’ll be like to go on deployment and get all those port visits. It’s a huge step for our Sailors, our ship.”

Wasp Sailors also had the chance to interact with the Royal Bahamas Defense Force. As allies, it is essential for the United States and The Bahamas to have an understanding of how each other works. A major goal of this trip was to help Sailors learn from our Bahamian counterparts and vice versa.

No matter where in the world, having unity will directly impact effectiveness and efficiency in defending the waters from adversaries. Connecting our nations with port visits reminds Sailors what they fight for: the freedom to travel the world and be welcomed with open arms.





# TAKE CARE OF YOURSELF TAKE CARE OF THE GYM



## **WIPE EQUIPMENT!**

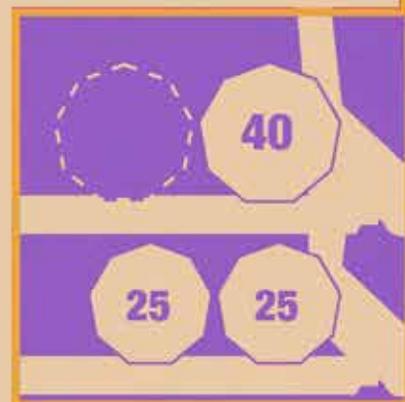
*Be courteous to other sailors using the gym.*

*Wipe equipment down after use to help keep the gym clean.*

## **RACK YOUR WEIGHTS!**

*Put equipment back after each use.*

*Re-racking weights makes equipment easier to use and to find.*



## **LISTEN UP!**

*Keep one earbud in and one ear open at all times.*

*(This applies to all spaces on the Wasp!)*