

Navy Legalmen Revive “Tacking on the Crow”

From Naval Justice School

The Navy’s newest legalmen revived the old tradition of “tacking on the crow” during a frocking ceremony at the Naval Justice School on May 17, 2013.

“Tacking on the crow” involves Sailors taking turns stitching the petty officer rating badge on to the sleeve of a newly-advanced Sailor, representing the new rank/rate.

Chief Legalman Cheryl Elliott, a NJS course coordinator, started the first tack with a long white thread. “Remember to make your stitches nice and even,” she said as she demonstrated the stitches for the Sailors who would be stitching the patch next.

Seaman James Cameron, Jr., who completed the Legalman Accession Course, was unfamiliar with the recently-revived Navy tradition. While being frocked to petty officer, his new third-class crow was sewn on his sleeve by his shipmates, who were also unfamiliar with the practice.

The sewing on of Cameron’s crow marked the end of the group’s journey through their 11 weeks in the legal curriculum.

“Our heritage and traditions help build pride in our Navy, connect us with past generations of Sailors, and help keep our foundation strong for generations to come,” said Chief Legalman Karyn Sigurdsson, NJS assistant course coordinator. “In particular, the revival of the tradition of tacking on the crow is a way to show our young Sailors that we are here to help guide and mentor them as they continue in the Navy.”

The last stitch was sewn by Sigurdsson. By sewing the first and last stitches on Cameron’s service dress white uniform, the course instructors symbolized the equality of all who have worn the crow and the support offered to a new petty officer.

“I felt honored to be able to participate in this genuine military tradition,” said Cameron. “It was really special that each petty officer stopped by after they

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stitched to tell me what knowledge has helped them as a petty officer.”

Over the years the tradition of stitching on the new rank had been distorted into a hazing ritual. However, the true spirit of “tacking on the crow” has been revitalized at NJS.

“It was a great and memorable experience in my Navy career,” said Legalman 3rd Class Celeste Jimenez. “This ceremony brought camaraderie.”

NJS provides accession-level and long-term legal training for all Navy, Marine Corps and Coast Guard lawyers and enlisted legal professionals, active and reserve. In addition, NJS provides training for civilian personnel, sea service commanders, legal officers, senior enlisted and others in the administration of military law. 🌟



Legalman 2nd Class Malisha Eley assists in the stitching on the rating badge of a classmate during a “tacking on the crow” ceremony.