

## DDYJ's Zimmerman tackles Fuji

By Polly Charbonneau, DDC Command Affairs

Hours from the suffocating heat and bustle of Tokyo, Jelmer Zimmerman smiled as he stretched his legs outside the small hut. "We made it!" he said.

The Navy chief petty officer spent most of July 30 trudging over volcanic rocks and ash with six other employees from the Defense Distribution Depot Yokosuka, Japan, (DDYJ) to reach the 12,385-ft. summit of Mount Fuji, Japan's tallest mountain.

"It was very rewarding but very tasking," Zimmerman said. "I felt like I actually accomplished something."

The day-long hike was sponsored by Yokosuka's Fleet and Industrial Supply Center (FISC) and the local Japanese Maritime Self-Defense Force (JMSDF) supply activity. About 120 FISC, DDYJ, JMSDF, family members and friends braved a 3 a.m. bus ride to climb the dormant volcano.

Zimmerman, an Emergency Supply Operations Center supervisor, climbed the mountain with DDYJ's transportation officer, Cmdr. Guy R. Sanchez; Ken Augustine, the safety director; Lt. Kevin McNulty, the Material Processing Center officer; Kimio Aoyama, a storage specialist; and Tamotsu Matsui, a packing specialist.

Mount Fuji is one of Japan's most recognizable features, its nearly perfect cone dominating the Tokyo skyline on a clear day. It is a popular get-away in summer – about 3,000 people a day reach the summit during the July and August climbing season, according to travel guides.

But that doesn't mean it's easy. Starting from the 5th stage – the point where the road leading up the mountain ends – hikers must climb the Kawaguchiko trail 4,823 feet to the top.

The Kawaguchiko trail is the closest of the four mountain trails to Tokyo. The average hiker takes about five hours to climb it to the summit, according to the Yokosuka base's hiking guide. The descent takes about three hours.

Mount Fuji has long been revered in Japanese Buddhism and in Shinto, Japan's native religion. A Shinto shrine is perched on the summit.

Reaching the shrine, Zimmerman said he was "jubilant," then paused. "And very tired."

## DDYJ Representatives Participate in Japanese Bon Odori Festival

By Stacy L. Umstead, DDC Command Affairs Office and Akimasa Kojima, DDYJ Command Office

Defense Distribution Depot Yokosuka Japan's outgoing and incoming commanders, key staff, and families were recently honored guests at the Bon Odori Festival held in Yokohama, just an hour's drive from Yokosuka. The event, hosted by the Central Traffic Management Command (CTMC), Japan Group Self Defense Force was also attended by representatives from local community associations to include officials from Yokohama City Hall.

Honored guests to the event, were greeted



L to R: DDC Command Affairs Rep, Stacy Umstead, Cmdr. Will Clarke and wife Danielle Clarke, LT Colonel Sakaguchi, Commander; Keihin (Tokyo-Yokohama) Area, Central Traffic Management Command (CTMC), Japan Ground Self-Defense Force; Mrs. Evelyn Vredenburgh and Cmdr. F. Kent Vredenburgh.

and donned with special kimonos called "Happi". The Happi displayed brightly colored Kanji symbols of Matsuri, which means festival of celebration. Throughout the festival, guests feasted on Oryouri (Japanese appetizers) and learned traditional Japanese dancing to the intense beat of the Taiko Drums. "There is no time to sit and rest at this festival," said Evelyn Vredenburgh, Cmdr. Vredenburgh's wife, "They keep pulling us up on the stage! I have done more dancing

tonight than I have the entire time Kent and I have been married. It is great to share in the Japanese cultural experience of Bon Odori. Kent and I will certainly miss this!"

Cmdrs. Vredenburgh and Clarke also danced (well, guess you could call it that), however, they were called upon for a more strenuous exercise...the parading of the Mikoshi, a portable Japanese shrine. With assistance from other guests in the audience, the two Navy commanders hoisted the Mikoshi on top of their shoulders and paraded it among the more than 300 attendees to the festival.

"This is a great way to end a tremendous two-year tour," said Cmdr. Vredenburgh, "And, what a great way to welcome my family and I, we are looking forward to many more cultural experiences here in Japan" said Cmdr. Clarke.

### The History of Bon Odori

Bon Odori is a Japanese Buddhist Folk Dance performed outdoors and danced in a concentric circle around a raised platform called a Yagura. Odori means dance and Bon is the abbreviated name of a Buddhist text, the Ullambana Sutra, whose Japanese pronunciation is Urabon, shortened to Bon.



Cmdr. Vredenburgh parades the Mikoshi.



Young Japanese dance team introduce new concepts of Bob Dancing through a combination of new popular music and traditional Bon Dancing.