

History

Hawaii is richly steeped in naval history and the Pacific Fleet Band has long been a part of this heritage. Since before the attack on Pearl Harbor, Navy Bands have been stationed in Hawaii either on ships home ported at Pearl Harbor, or attached to Navy shore installations at Pearl Harbor, Barbers Point and even Waikiki.

The most recognized and highly decorated Navy Band associated with Hawaii was Unit Band 22. This was the band stationed onboard the USS ARIZONA (BB 39) at the time of the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor, December 7, 1941.

On the night of December 6, 1941, there was a band competition called the "Battle of Music" at Bloch Arena on Pearl Harbor Naval Station. This competition began on September 13, 1941 as an elimination tournament held every two weeks. It featured Navy Bands from "capitol ships" home ported in Pearl Harbor and those attached to shore installations in Hawaii. Four bands were to compete in each round of the tournament with one winner per round selected to perform in the final competition. Each band performed a swing number, a ballad and one specialty tune and then played for the jitterbug contest. The USS ARIZONA band won the first round on September 13th and was not scheduled to play again until the final competition.



UNIT 22 BAND OF THE USS ARIZONA

The last round of the elimination tournament was scheduled, unknowingly, for that December 6th evening in Bloch Arena. Present were bands from the USS PENNSYLVANIA (BB 38), USS TENNESSEE (BB 43), and USS ARGONNE (AG 31).

Scheduled to compete but not present was the band from the USS DETROIT (CL 8), which deployed a few days earlier. Several members of the USS ARIZONA band attended the contest because the first and second place winners would be competing against them in the final competition scheduled for December 13. The USS PENNSYLVANIA band was the winner that evening.



On the morning of December 7th, 1941, while the band from the USS NEVADA (BB 36) played Morning Colors, the Japanese surprise attack on Pearl Harbor occurred. The entire USS ARIZONA Band, while at battle stations passing ammunition under gun turret number one, was killed in the

attack. In the weeks to follow, all the bands that had participated in the "Battle of Music" voted to posthumously award the tournament trophy to Unit Band 22, renaming it the "Arizona Trophy." This was a fitting tribute to the heroic members of the band who died that infamous morning. Unit Band 22 now stands the eternal watch onboard the USS ARIZONA for all sea service bands.

The Commander in Chief, U.S. Pacific Fleet Band (Unit Band 56) was formed when the Pacific Fleet Headquarters was established at Pearl Harbor in February, 1941. Not much is known about the band's history during World War II.

In 1951, Chief John Norris was commissioned as a Warrant Officer in the United States Navy. This was a significant moment, up to this time only Chief Petty Officers were assigned as Bandmasters. Chief Warrant Officer Norris was the very first officer to be commissioned into the new Navy Music Officer Program. He had been assigned in Hawaii as an enlisted musician from 1945 to 1946. Chief Warrant Officer Norris was the Director of the Pacific Fleet Band from 1959 to 1966, and again from 1967 to 1969.

The following officers have served as Bandmasters of the Pacific Fleet Band since 1956:

1956-1959	CWO3 George L. Briley
1959-1965	CWO3 John H. Norris
1966-1967	CWO4 Richard E. Larson
1968-1969	CWO4 John H. Norris
1970-1973	CWO Philip H. Field
1974-1976	CWO4 John E. Ingram, Jr.
1977-1978	LT William G. Brittain
1979-1981	LT Leo H. Leary, III
1982-1985	LCDR Harold R. Hessler
1986-1988	LCDR Thomas E. Metcalf
1988-1990	LT J. Michael Alverson
1990-1993	LT John H. Farquhar
1994- 1998	LT Gary R. Seitz
1998- 2001	LT R. G. Barrett

2001-2004
2004-

LT Dale E. Yager
LT Kenneth C.
Collins

From 1959 to 1964, the Pacific Fleet Band operated from a building at Supply Base Pearl Harbor, just inside the Halawa Gate. In 1964, the band moved across the street just inside the CINCPACFLT Gate, sharing a building with Fleet Imaging. The band moved to the Pearl Harbor Naval Station Band building at Bishop Point near Hickam Harbor when the Unit Band 03 closed in 1966. Finally, in 1967 the band moved to its current facility, Building 277, located at the Pearl Harbor Naval Station Marine Barracks Compound. The current building was used as a Marine Barracks prior to and during World War II and is a historical landmark. It served as work spaces and, during the band's first years of occupancy, barracks for band personnel.



1967, PRIOR TO THE BAND'S PARTICIPATION
IN THE CORAL SEA CELEBRATION

the Schofield Barracks Army Band. Ports of call for band performances on these trips included Melbourne, Perth and Sydney, Australia, as well as New Zealand, New Caledonia and American Samoa.

From 1959 to 1969 the band traveled extensively representing the Commander in Chief, U.S. Pacific Fleet throughout the Pacific. During these years the band performed engagements in Pusan and Seoul, South Korea, Guam, the Philippines and Okinawa. Also, in 1960 and 1963, the band, combined with the Barber's Point Naval Air Station Band (which closed in 1965), traveled to the South Pacific for festivities surrounding the "Battle of the Coral Sea Commemoration Celebration."

This trip was made once every three years, rotating with the Hickam Air Force Base Band and

In 1968 the band was deployed to South Vietnam for three to four weeks. The band traveled to their performance sites on whatever military aircraft were available at the time. This created some delays in travel. In one instance the band was marooned in Cam Ranh Bay for nearly a week while waiting for any available plane to take them to their next destination. The band did have one notable "close call," arriving at an airfield within an hour of its having been shelled by the enemy. During this tour, the band performed concerts in Da Nang, Ben Hoa, Cam Ranh Bay and Saigon.

Over the course of the next several years, the Pacific Fleet Band occasionally traveled to

Australia and other Pacific ports in support of the Commander in Chief, U.S. Pacific Fleet. However, it would never again be led by the same officer for such a lengthy and fulfilling period as with Chief Warrant Officer Norris.



THE PACIFIC FLEET BAND AND CHORALE

From the mid 1970's through the early 1980's, the Pacific Fleet Band performed many concerts here in the Aloha State with such noted local performers as Jimmy Borges, Cheryl Barash, Melveen Leed and Ira Nepus. In 1977 the Pacific Fleet Chorale was formed to compliment concert performances by the Pacific Fleet Band. This ensemble was an all-volunteer chorus, comprised of active duty members and dependents of all branches of the armed forces stationed on Oahu. The last concert appearance of this associate unit of the Pacific Fleet Band was in 1980. Another highlight during 1980 was a March concert at Kapiolani Park. This Concert was held in association with "Rim of the Pacific Exercises" and featured the International Sea Services Combined Wind Ensemble. This group was made up of various military musicians from the participating countries' naval forces. In 1986, under the direction of Lieutenant Commander Tom Metcalf, the Pacific Fleet Band made an historic fifteen day trip to China with the first visit by a U.S. Navy ship to China in thirty-seven years.

The Pacific Fleet Band made two significant overseas deployments while then Lieutenant J. Michael Alverson was at the helm. First, in 1988 the band traveled to India for the ceremonies commemorating the 150th Anniversary of the American Consul in Bombay. Then, in 1989 the band made a trip to Australia. Performances thrilled audiences in Melbourne, Cairns and Canberra culminating with an outstanding performance at the world famous Sydney Opera House.

Although traveling abroad little since 1989, the Pacific Fleet Band has maintained an active schedule supporting the Pacific Fleet and the local civilian community in Hawaii. The musicians of the Pacific Fleet Band perform their duties with the same zeal and pride that characterizes all Navy Musicians from the past to the present. September 1995 saw the Pacific Fleet Band participating significantly in four major events of international interest. The first was the dedication of the Battle of Midway Monument on Midway Island. The highlight was the premier performance of *The Battle of Midway Island* march, written and conducted by



Ambassador J. William Middendorf, II. It was written in recognition of the men who fought and died to change the course of the war in the Pacific. That ceremony was a precursor to the final ceremonies of the "End of World War II Commemoration" and the 50th Anniversary of VJ-Day Celebrations. Highlights of the band's extensive participation were a Presidential Wreath-laying Ceremony on the USS CARL VINSON (CVN-70) in Pearl Harbor, an International Parade of Ships and Aircraft off the coast of Honolulu, a Presidential Parade and Review through downtown Honolulu and Waikiki, and an old-fashioned Hangar Dance on board the USS CARL VINSON honoring all our WWII veterans. The next event was the opening ceremonies for the Asia/Pacific Center for Security Studies. During all these events, the US/Russian naval exercise, Cooperation from the Sea 1995 was taking place. This marked the first visit of a Russian warship to Pearl Harbor and the Pacific Fleet Band was very much involved while hosting a visiting Russian Navy Band. All these events were attended by the President, Secretaries of Defense and the Navy, Congressional Representatives, senior unified and component military commanders, and a host of foreign civilian and military dignitaries. The Pacific Fleet Band performed over 40 engagements during this nine day period.



**HAWAIIAN SINGER JIMMY BORGES
PERFORMS WITH THE BAND IN 1989**

In recent years, along with numerous parades the Pacific Fleet Band continues to participate in many annual events including the December 7th Commemoration Ceremony, Memorial and Independence Day Celebrations, the Twilight Tatum and combined military band concert for Armed Forces Day. In addition to these events, the band has played an active role in opening the USS MISSOURI and Vietnam Memorials and closing Naval Air Station Barber's Point in 1999. In 2001 the band

performed for the opening of the movie *Pearl Harbor* onboard the USS JOHN C. STENNIS (CVN-74) and the 40th Birthday celebration of the USS KITTY HAWK (CV-63) in Guam.

The Pacific Fleet Band of today and the musicians who make up this band are a far cry from the first Navy musicians, who can be traced back to 1798. At that time, each ship chose a "shantyman" to sing during seafaring duties, while the crew joined in the refrain. A drummer kept the beat and a fifer piped the tune as sailors hauled in their lines. A select breed of sailor, Navy musicians must now meet strict musical requirements before entering the service. After recruit

training, their skills are finely tuned at the U.S. Navy School of Music, a tri-service training command for all Navy, Marine Corps, and Army musicians, in Norfolk, Virginia. After graduation, enlisted musicians are assigned to one of twelve Navy Fleet Bands worldwide.

The personnel of any Navy Band are true professionals and possess academic training from high school diplomas to doctoral degrees. Many band members have experience as performers and instrumental instructors, or have obtained their civilian teaching credentials before entering the Navy. All are capable of playing any style of music with little preparation and most are required to be proficient at playing more than one instrument.



**PERFORMING WITH THE JAPANESE MILITARY
SELF DEFENSE FORCE BAND AT ALOHA TOWER
CIRCA 1995**

The Pacific Fleet Band is under the operational control of the Commander in Chief, U.S. Pacific Fleet. Much of the band's activity is in support of the ships of the fleet and the many shore based military commands. Musical support is also provided for other armed forces' functions when needed. Pacific Fleet Band military performances consist primarily of providing ceremonial music for Changes of Command, Retirements, Morning Colors, Sunset Parades and Ship Arrivals. Other duties include

bugling details for military funerals, reception music for flag officers, government officials and visiting foreign dignitaries, and entertainment for special functions such as Navy Birthday celebrations and various command social events.

The Pacific Fleet Band also supports events in the civilian community such as the King Kamehameha Day parade on Maui, the Fourth of July parade in Kailua, the Veterans Day parade on Kauai and the Ho'olaule'a Festival on Oahu. Other engagements include recruiting concerts, music clinics and master classes in local schools. The Pacific Fleet Band features several versatile performing units. These groups accomplish the many and varied tasks given to the band. For more information on these units see the Groups page.

Today, the Pacific Fleet Band is an organization comprised of highly skilled and versatile Navy professionals dedicated to representing the Commander, U.S. Pacific Fleet throughout the Pacific region. The pride and professionalism that has become synonymous with the Pacific Fleet Band is a large part of the traditions, past, present and future, of the United States Navy.

