

# Flotilla faces tide problems

## Water level poses potential threat

by Karen Robin  
Times Writer

So far, there seems to be only one little problem the U.S. Navy ships are having with their visit to Anchorage.

Each of the ships has to keep up with the constant fluctuating tides. In two days of dealing with the variance in water level that can range up to 30 feet, one small disaster has followed after another.

But there's just no fighting Mother Nature. If she wants 30-foot tides in the Cook Inlet, then there will be 30-foot tides in Cook Inlet.

Before they arrived, the Port of Anchorage figured out how to fit seven ships neatly into only four berths so none of them would have to ride at anchor in the Inlet.

"But the only problem might be the ship moored next to the dock will be moving up and down a lot with the tides," said Eric Morrison, the assistant port director.

Because three of those dockside ships have another ship tied to it, their mooring problems might compound.

"We'll just keep a close eye on it," said the USS Truxtun's operations officer, Lt. Cmdr. Jay Gardiner.

"We can handle a 12-foot tide, but anything more than that and we've got problems," he said.

That seems to be the case with the other Navy vessels in port.

"We never see more than a one-foot tide in Pearl Harbor," said Lt. j.g. Peter Webb of the USS Harold E. Holt.

The USS Brewton, another frigate, is lashed alongside the Harold E. Holt.

In adjusting lines to accommodate the Inlet's tides Wednesday, the Harold E. Holt nearly lost its gangway when it fell from the pier.

When the minesweeper USS Excel arrived Tuesday, it came in on a low tide and the crew wrestled with a gangway for hours trying to lower one end to the deck riding far below the dock, before finally settling on using the floating dock at the end of the pier.

The USS Enhance is tied alongside.

Another minesweeper, the USS Gallant is moored behind the Excel with the USS Implicit tied next to her. On Wednesday at low tide, crewmen were backing down the gangway tilted at a 45-degree angle to avoid slipping to the deck below.

The Truxtun is the only ship moored alone.

The biggest problem, Gardiner said, comes at low tide when crews will have to watch that the lines that secure the ship to the dock are long enough. Although they are 40,000-60,000 pound test strength, they will break when 9,000 tons of ship starts to pull hard.

Lines crews will be on duty to keep a watch on the lines and to slacken or take them up as needed.

If the ships rise with the tide and the lines are too loose, Gardiner said, they will pull away from the dock and strain communications, water, sewage, steam and fuel lines that may be attached.

Those lines also may be pinched if the ship rises.

The ships will be open to the public today, Saturday and Sunday from 1 to 4 p.m. for tours.

## The fleet's in

HAVING sixteen hundred sailors in town is like, wow!

The U.S. Navy normally is overpowered in these parts by the Army from Fort Richardson and the Air Force at Fort Richardson.

After all, this isn't Honolulu or San Diego. Sure, there's a lot of ocean at our doorstep, but mostly we see tankers and freighters and cargo ships, plus every now and then a Coast Guard cutter. This summer, we have the cruise ship Sagafjord putting into port every other week or so.

But things are different for today's Fourth of July celebration and the holiday weekend ahead.

**SEVEN SHIPS** are tied up at the Port of Anchorage, in one the biggest showings-of-the-flag in decades in upper Cook Inlet.

The largest of the ships is the USS Truxtun, a nuclear-powered guided missile cruiser. There are two fast frigates, the USS Brewton and the USS Harold E. Holt.

And there are four minesweepers, the USS Enhance, the USS Excel, the USS Implicit and the USS Gallant.

For some 30 days the ships have been at sea in training exercises, interspersed with stops at such ports of call as Seattle, Ketchikan and Kodiak.

And now Anchorage.

We're glad to have them here.

**A HAPPY BIT** of timing brings them to Anchorage to celebrate Independence Day with us. The nation's birthday is an especially appropriate time for our civilian community to salute those on active duty in the service of the United States.

It's a time, really, to say thanks to all the men and women of our armed forces, here and everywhere around the world.

And it's good this year that we can extend those thanks to 1,600 sailors and their seven ships of the line. Have a Happy Fourth in Anchorage!

# City celebrates with guns and hugs

By CHRIS GEIGER  
Daily News reporter

Like their cohorts nationwide, Anchorage residents turned out by the thousands for a strenuous day of relaxation on the Fourth of July.

Fireworks competed with the evening sunshine. Picnickers scuttled off to the woods and parks. And floats rolled down Northern Lights Boulevard.

One of the biggest attractions yesterday was the U.S. Navy flotilla berthed at the Port of Anchorage. More than 3,000 people at a time crammed onto the docks, while others driving to

Americans celebrated the nation's 209th birthday with outdoor parties at the Washington Monument, sunbathing in California and a rain-soaked Texas hoe-down. Story, Page A-3.

and fro practically halted traffic over the Ship Creek bridge.

Visitors waited for up to two and a half hours — in lines more than 300 yards long — to tour the ships.

"I think it's the first time since World War II we've had this many people on the docks," said Lt. Cmdr. Grant Petersen, Navy public affairs officer. "It's a nice

day, and there are a lot of military people around Anchorage."

"We had a lot of people (visiting the flotilla) at the Portland Rose festival, but probably not this many," said Bosun's Mate Second Class David Garrigus, an Alaska-born crew member of the USS Gallant.

Garrigus plans to spend his holiday weekend backpacking the Chugach State Park, partying in Anchorage, and visiting friends here he hasn't seen for 19 years — "if they can make it to the boat."

Garrigus said he's served four and a half years in the Navy, and

two in the Army. Now he plans to transfer to the U.S. Coast Guard.

"In the Coast Guard, I can stay up here (in Alaska)," he said. "The more I come back here, the more I want to stay."

The flotilla consists of two frigates, four minesweepers and a nuclear-powered guided missile cruiser. The cruiser USS Truxtun was by far the most popular destination.

Many flotilla visitors came to show their children the vessels, or to revel at the technology on

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Grace Robb of Anchorage and Sarah Fox of Dallas, Texas, looked through each of the 50 flags at the gun salute on Fort Richardson.

## Anchorage marks the Fourth with variety of celebrations

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display. Some were simply curious.

"I just came to check out the reactor," said a young man in torn jeans. "I've got nothing better to do."

"I want to see how my tax dollars are working," said a middle-aged father of three.

"I just like this military stuff ... I play war games all the time," said a tall man with long, blond hair.

A young woman who formerly worked on commercial fishing boats said, "I just want to see what their state rooms look like."

Signs that the flotilla was in Anchorage for the Fourth popped up elsewhere in town, such as one on a Spenard Road escort service, reading: "Welcome US Navy, 3rd Fleet ... You're at Liberty Here."

Not everyone spent their Fourth with the military, however. The Brother Francis Shelter, on Third Avenue, held an afternoon picnic for the city's homeless, complete with volleyball, horseshoes, and lots of donated food.

"This is a peace dinner," said co-proprietor Bob Eaton. "I'd rather be here."

The shelter provides food and a place to sleep for about 1,000 needy people each week.

more in the winter, Eaton said. It will be two years old in October.

On a day when most people are celebrating with their friends and family, the shelter's picnic provided an alternative, Eaton said.

"For many of these people, all their friends and family are here," Eaton said.

About 220 attended the Brother Francis picnic, only two of which were inebriated — "contrary to the stereotype," Eaton said.

Eaton said about a dozen of the picnickers were people he'd never met, who were just here to see the state.

Elsewhere in town, skydivers stepped out of planes over Muldoon and trailed American flags on the way down, as part of the St. Patrick's Parish Carnival on Muldoon Rd.

Throughout the day, a few hundred people attended the church's annual celebration to eat watermelon, play bingo, and throw softballs at milk-bottles.

"The nice thing about this was that people could stay in their own neighborhood," said Father Robert Fitts, who manned a "Hug Therapy" booth there.

Fitts offered hugs in a variety of styles and prices, from the bear hug at 50 cents to the

more expensive cheek, sandwich and group hugs. He sold about 40 hugs throughout the day, he said, without a trace of fatigue.

"Hugs are energizing ... I'm not tired at all," he said. "And I don't have to tell you how many free ones I gave out."

At one point, Fitts said, Archbishop Francis Hurley showed up at the carnival — and at the booth.

"He didn't bat an eyelash," Fitts said.

Area residents who weren't hugging or looking down gun barrels were probably occu-

pled with the more typical trappings of the Fourth, such as parades or picnics in the park. This year's parade drew the "largest crowd ever," according to Dave Stock of American Legion Post 1, which organizes the event each year. Stock has seen 40 Fourth's in Anchorage, and helped organize parades when they were held on Fourth Avenue.

"Now that the city's so much bigger ... it just seemed better to have the parade on Northern Lights (Boulevard)," Stock said.