

# SANTA BARBARA NEWS-PRESS

Toast of the Coast : 1,000 locals enjoy close-up look at USS Halsey

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"Whoa, this is so cool," said Lucy Theule.

The 8-year-old from Carpinteria uttered those words as she stepped foot on the USS Halsey on Sunday afternoon. It was her first time ever being on a guided-missile destroyer. Lucy was one of more than 1,000 people who had the opportunity to tour the 509-foot ship as it sat anchored off the coast of Santa Barbara over the weekend.

"We had never gotten to see a ship like this before," said Toby Theule, Lucy's mother. "We know that they come in the Santa Barbara Harbor every couple of years but we have always missed it, so I thought this was a good opportunity."

The destroyer, commissioned in 2005, arrived in Santa Barbara on Thursday afternoon, and the crew had a busy schedule of events, including a visit with local seniors, a softball game with the Santa Barbara Fire Department and a fundraiser at the Reagan Ranch Center, put on by the Santa Barbara Navy League. The ship was also open for public tours all weekend long.

The tours took visitors through dark corridors, narrow doorways and up steep sets of stairs. They lasted about 45 minutes each and were conducted all day on Saturday and Sunday. Visitors were given an up-close look at some of the weaponry onboard, including the 5-inch 64-caliber gun on the front deck and the Close-In Weapon System (CIWS) on the back deck which fires 3,000 to 4,500 rounds per minute.

The tour also took visitors to the bridge, which Lucy said was the highlight of the trip. "Sitting in the big chair, I felt like I was the captain. I felt like I was in charge and could give orders," she said.

"I thought of it as a cool history project, said Max Theule, Lucy's brother. "It was nice to know what it looked like and how it worked. It was cool to see it in person. I really



Local members of the public registered to take a free tour of the guided-missile destroyer USS Halsey. NIK BLASKOVICH / NEWS-PRESS



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enjoyed everything that was there and that you could go and see what it looked like on the inside."

The USS Halsey is named after Fleet Admiral William "Bull" Halsey. He was commander of the Third Fleet during World War II. Admiral Halsey was also onboard the USS Missouri as the Japanese surrender documents that ended the war were signed.

The motto of the USS Halsey is "Hit Hard, Hit Fast, Hit Often." The ship is only a few months removed from a six-month tour conducting anti-piracy operations off the coast of Somalia.

There are no plans to head back overseas any time soon, but this may be one of the last times the ship will be seen along the coast of California for a while. The guided missile destroyer will go back to its home port of San Diego for the next few months before heading to Hawaii for most of 2013.

However, the crew of the Halsey will not go with the ship. In January the USS Russell, which is based at Pearl Harbor, will sail to San Diego for much needed repairs. Then the crew of the USS Russell will take control of the USS Halsey and sail the ship back to Hawaii. The crew of the Halsey will remain in San Diego to oversee operations of the Russell.

The USS Halsey heads back to San Diego on Monday morning, but the memory of the guided-missile destroyer is likely to linger in the minds of Santa Barbara residents even after the ship has disappeared on the horizon.

"I was really impressed that we were able to get so close to all of the parts and pieces, all of the machinery and all of the buttons," said Ms. Theule.

"My daughter was able to sit in the captain's chair, so that was really nice.

"I was impressed with how the tours were run so efficiently and that we were able to see so much of the ship," she said. "We talk about the military and we pray for the military, but just having it be so close to home and to be able to see what these men and women are doing every day is very special."

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FROM TOP :

Tour guide Ensign Pat Collins leads visitors from the public through the forecandle of the USS Halsey

Max Theule, 12, pulls back the bolt of a machine gun aboard the USS Halsey.

Lucy Theule, 8, boards the Halsey during the tour. At left, Petty Officer Brad Wisner demonstrates how to use the ship's powerful binoculars. Dylan

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Richardson, 9, and other members of the tour group observe the action below.

Gunnery Officer Jun Chong describes the navigation process on the ship's bridge to members of the public.