

"AHOY SHIPMATES", this is to be on the History channel.

NAVAL BASE POINT LOMA -- "Drop and give me 20," isn't a phrase Sailors aboard the attack submarine USS SALT LAKE (SSN 716) typically hear on the mess decks while underway. That all changed recently when "The Gunny" embarked with the History Channel's "Mail Call" to film the show's 50th episode.

One of the History Channel's top-rated shows, "Mail Call" is a weekly series that answers viewer's questions about technology used throughout history by the Armed Forces. The show's host, Gunnery Sgt. R. Lee Ermey, brought the "Mail Call" crew out for a day of filming to answer viewer's questions about life at sea on an attack submarine. "We get lots of email asking about submarines and what it's like to be

a Submariner, so we're here to answer the mail," he explained as he waited to board the submarine operating off the coast of Southern California.

Best known for his role as the Gunnery Sergeant in the 1987 war movie "Full Metal Jacket," Ermey served 11 years in the Marine Corps. He rose to the rank of Staff NCO serving two years as a drill instructor and a tour of duty in Vietnam. He was medically retired in 1971 and was later awarded the honorary rank of Gunnery Sergeant. "I've got the best job in the world now," Ermey says of his job as "Mail Call's" host. "I have the privilege to go out and have the best in the business demonstrate how the military works," he said. "And, I get to bring the U.S. military to the people."

The Gunny took time to talk to crewmembers and sign autographs during

an embark in USS SALT LAKE CITY (SSN 716). R. Lee Ermey and the crew of History Channel's "Mail Call" embarked the attack submarine off the coast of Southern California to film an episode of the 30-min. show answering viewer's questions on life aboard an attack submarine at sea. The episode is tentatively scheduled to air in late April. Check your local listings for exact dates and air times. U.S. Navy photo by ETC(SS) Jorge L. Perez. RELEASED.

Machinist's Mate Second Class Joshua B. Hildebrand won't forget the Gunny's visit anytime soon - Ermey presented him with his hard-earned "dolphins" during a ceremony on the mess decks. "What a surprise to have the Gunny give me my fish," Hildebrand said. "After all the hard work of the past year to get qualified, it made the day even more special." Hildebrand is now "qualified in submarines" and has earned

the right to wear the dolphin insignia. The dolphins signify that he has acquired specific skills, knowledge and experience, has demonstrated proficiency in all aspects of the submarine's operations and is a trusted member of the ship's crew.

"We are so pleased to have the Gunny and "Mail Call" here on SALT LAKE CITY

for the day," said the boat's Chief of the Boat, or COB, ETCM(SS) Brian Schell. "What a great opportunity for the crew to show off SALT LAKE CITY and what we do," he said.

Throughout the day of filming, Ermey took time to talk with Sailors, sign autographs and have his photo taken with crewmembers. "I'm the only guy in the world that gets told 'choke me' for a photograph!" he said laughing. "He was great," said ETEC(SS) Jorge L. Perez. "He wanted to meet all the guys on board. He must have had his picture taken 100 times."

This will mark the first time "Mail Call" has devoted an entire episode to one specific topic according to the show's executive producer Robert Lihani. "We're very excited about this show," he said. "It's our 50th episode and we think it's going to be a special one." The episode, tentatively scheduled to air in late April, will feature segments on navigation, propulsion and weapons aboard the submarine. Other topics the show will address include how the sub makes air and water, how the submarine dives and do submarines really have the best food in the Navy?

"We're looking forward to seeing the episode," said CDR Tracy Howard, the commanding officer. "I've got the best crew in the Submarine Force and this is an excellent opportunity for their friends and family to see them at work."

"What an incredible honor it has been to ride SALT LAKE CITY and see you fine men at work," Ermey told the crew on the 1MC at the end of the day. "Semper Fi!"

FOLLOW UP

The Mail Call segment on Submarines is scheduled for the History Channel Sunday April 25th at 10:00PM and again Monday the 26th at 2:00AM.