

## ARIZONA'S LAST BAND

### Gone but not forgotten

**Karen S. Spangler**  
Assistant Editor

It was Dec. 6, 1941. Strains of dance music filled Bloch Arena at Pearl Harbor as some of the Navy's best bands competed in the semifinals at the Battle of Music – hoping to win the grand prize band trophy. The members of the band from the USS Arizona were there although they weren't one of the bands competing that evening. The Arizona's band had already competed and placed second in the semifinals a few weeks earlier on Nov. 22, 1941. In this evening's round of semifinals, the band from USS Pennsylvania had won top honors.

Couples jitterbugged to some of the favorite tunes of the time. "Jingle Bells," "Undecided," and "Jumping at the Woodside" were the selections for the jitterbug contest which was won by Pat Thompson, only 10 years old then, and her dance partner – a Sailor from the USS Pennsylvania. It was a gala evening that was to be repeated on Dec. 20 when the Pennsylvania and Arizona bands were scheduled to battle it out for first place.

The Sailors from the bands returned to their ships after an exciting evening of fun, music and competition to get some sleep. Shortly before 7:55 a.m. the next morning on Dec. 7, 1941, the first wave of Japanese aircraft blackened the airspace over their targets – the Navy's Pacific Fleet at anchor on the calm waters of Pearl Harbor.

Death rained from the normally tranquil blue skies as Japanese zeroes swooped and dived over the ships, dropping bombs and torpedoes on the unsuspecting fleet. As the attack ensued, general quarters was sounded and Sailors raced to their posts to fight the enemy.

The members of the USS Arizona Band were assigned as ammo handlers in the ship's forward ammunition magazine. At approximately 8:10 a.m., the Arizona was hit by a 1,760-pound, armor-piercing shell. It slammed through her deck, igniting her forward ammunition magazine. The musicians from the Arizona's band and most of the crew of the Arizona, total-

ing 1,177 men, never stood a chance.

In less than nine minutes, the mighty Arizona – crippled and dying – sank to the bottom of Pearl Harbor where she still lies.

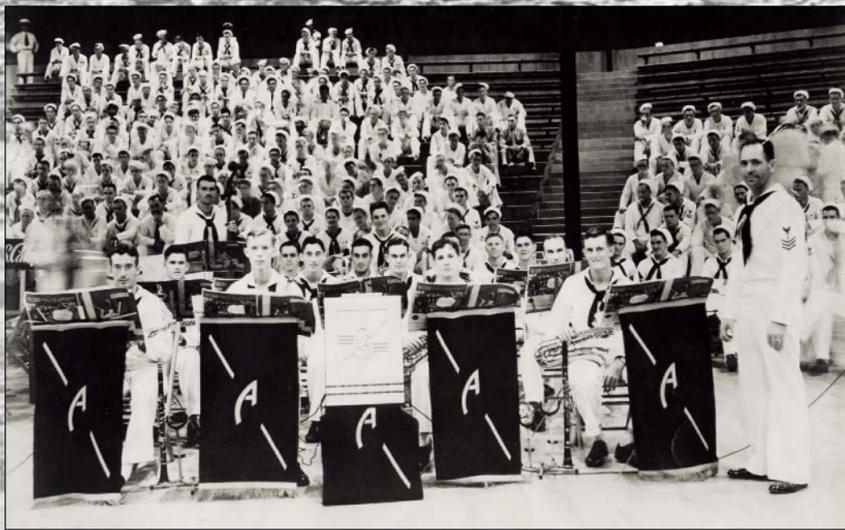
The 21 members of Arizona's last band, United States Navy Band Number 22, were: Bandmaster MUS1c Frederick Kinney, MUS2c Alexander Joseph Nadel, MUS2c Wayne Lynn Bandy, MUS2c Oran Merrill Brabbzson, MUS2c Neal Jason Radford, MUS2c Jack Leo Scruggs, MUS2c Ernest Hubert Whitson Jr., MUS2c Curtis Junior Haas, MUS2c Frank Norman Floege, MUS2c Gerald Clinton Cox, MUS2c Charles William White, MUS2c William Starks Morehouse, MUS2c Clyde Richard Williams, MUS2c Ralph Warren Burdette, MUS2c Robert Kar Shaw, MUS2c Bernard Thomas Hughes, MUS2c William Moore McCary, MUS2c Wendell Ray Hurley, MUS2c James Harvey Sanderson, MUS2c Harry Gregory Chernucha and MUS2c Emmett Isaac Lynch.

Later, with the loss of all of the members of Arizona's band, the other bands who had vied for first place in the Battle of Music competition voted unanimously to concede first place to the Arizona Band. According to historical reports, many of the musicians remarked that Arizona's band was the best band anyway.

The Arizona Band Trophy, on display at the Arizona Memorial Museum, shows the figure of Liberty holding a torch. Liberty stands on a bronze cup which is inscribed, "Grand Prize, Battle of Music, United States Navy 1941." Two eagles with outstretched wings are at the base of the cup.

A bronze plate on the cup's base is inscribed with the following: "1941 Winning Orchestra 1941. USS Arizona. Sic Itur Ad Astra. F.W. Kinney, Bandmaster."

The sweet sounds of Arizona's band would never be heard again. But although they were silenced forever, they are not forgotten. The words on the posthumously-awarded trophy may say it best: Sic Itur Ad Astra or "Such is the way to the stars," "or to immortality."



Official U.S. Navy photo

The last photo taken of the Arizona Band shows the band at the semifinal contest for the Battle of Music 1941, held Nov. 22, 1941 at Bloch Arena. The Arizona Band won second place in that contest and was scheduled to compete in the final Battle of Music on Dec. 20, 1941.



(Left) The Arizona Band Trophy was awarded posthumously to the Arizona Band after the band was lost during the Dec. 7, 1941 attack on Pearl Harbor. The other bands in the Battle of Music 1941 competition voted unanimously to concede the first place trophy to the Arizona Band. U.S. Navy photo by JO2 Corwin Colbert

The Arizona Band at an event on board the USS Arizona. The band and the ship were lost during the attack on Pearl Harbor. Official U.S. Navy photo.

# Memorials to World War II heroes

Karen S. Spangler

Assistant Editor

"Remember Pearl Harbor!" are words that have echoed through the years as countless ceremonies have been held to honor those heroes who gave their lives on that "date of infamy" as well as those who fought, endured and survived to tell about it.

Steeped in history and tradition, the Navy at Pearl Harbor remembers and pays tribute to those lost on Dec. 7, 1941 when death rained from the skies - and all of the heroes of World War II.

Reminders of the accomplishments and sacrifices of those heroes of yesteryear are also evident throughout the installation and Navy housing areas where numerous buildings, neighborhoods and streets have been named after World War II heroes.

Here is a brief "tour" of some of those memorials:

**USS Arizona Memorial and Visitors Center** - The USS Arizona Memorial is a memorial erected to honor the 1,177 men killed on board the USS Arizona (BB 39). The memorial is divided into three sections. The first section is the Plaque and Museum Room. The center section is the



Photo illustration

Viewing and Ceremonies room, and the last section is the Shrine Room, where the names of all of the men who were killed on the fateful morning of Dec. 7, 1941 are displayed.

**Battleship Missouri Memorial** - The Battleship Missouri (BB-63), launched in 1944 by Margaret Truman (daughter of U.S. President Harry S. Truman), has engaged in many wars: World War II, Korean War and the first Persian Gulf War. It is most famous for being the site

where the Empire of Japan surrendered to the Allied Forces, signifying the end of World War II. Her location is near the Arizona Memorial. The two memorials represent the beginning and the ending of World War II.

**USS Bowfin Submarine Museum and Park** - USS Bowfin Submarine Museum and Park is a memorial dedicated to USS Bowfin (SS 287) and other submarines that served with distinction during World War II. They were responsible for destroying

over half of the enemy forces' ships. She was launched Dec. 7, 1942, a year after the attack on Pearl Harbor. Known as "Pearl Harbor Avenger," she made nine successful war patrols.

**Navy Club Memorial** - Dedicated on Dec. 7, 1955, the Navy Club Memorial is the first memorial dedicated to those who lost their lives during the attack on Pearl Harbor. The 10-foot high, 26-ton Hawaiian bluestone boulder is situated on a grassy bank on Ford Island at a vantage point which overlooks the Arizona Memorial.

**USS Nevada Memorial** - The USS Nevada Memorial stands as a continuing reminder of the day that changed Pearl Harbor and America forever. The memorial, which is located along the shoreline near Hospital Point on Pearl Harbor, was dedicated on Dec. 7, 1983, commemorating the heroism and sacrifice of the 50 men on board the Nevada (BB 36) who lost their lives.

**Parche Submarine Memorial** - The superstructure is from the World War II submarine Parche (pronounced par-chee), (SS 384), which deployed on six war patrols during the war, sinking 31,696 tons of enemy shipping. She earned five battle stars and a pres-

idential unit citation. The memorial is located in the Submarine Memorial Park at Naval Station Pearl Harbor.

**Pearl Harbor Memorial Chapel** - The Pearl Harbor Memorial Chapel was built in 1980 in honor of the Sailors who lost their lives during the attack on Pearl Harbor on Dec. 7, 1941.

**Submarine Memorial Chapel** - The Submarine Memorial Chapel was dedicated on Sept. 10, 1944 in honor of the submariners who died in World War II. The ship's bell from the submarine USS Argonaut (SS 166) still hangs in the steeple. Argonaut's crew donated the bell before she left on her third war patrol. She was sunk in action off Rabaul on Jan. 10, 1943. All hands were lost - their ship's bell still tolls for them.

**USS Utah Memorial** - In memory of the 58 Sailors who perished on USS Utah (AG-16) the morning of Dec. 7, 1941, the Utah Memorial was dedicated on Memorial Day of 1972. The Utah Memorial is an elegant, white 70-foot concrete walkway stretched out from Ford Island, extending into the waters in front of Utah's partially exposed hull. A polished brass plaque commemorating the ship and crew stands watch at the base of a flagpole.

## Pearl Harbor Memorial Fountain – a tribute to ships attacked on Dec. 7, 1941

Karen S. Spangler

Assistant Editor

The Pearl Harbor Memorial Fountain not only offers a peaceful oasis in the middle of busy schedules, but it serves as a tribute to ships that were lost or damaged during the Dec. 7, 1941 attack on Pearl Harbor.

Located in front of building 150 at Naval Station Pearl Harbor, the fountain is comprised of 12 eight-foot glass markers that rise

from a shallow pool surrounding a fountain.

The glass markers memorialize 11 ships: USS Arizona, USS California, USS Helena, USS Honolulu, USS Maryland, USS Nevada, USS Oklahoma, USS Pennsylvania, USS Raleigh, USS Tennessee and USS West Virginia.

The 12th marker is a dedication to all of those who risked their lives and sacrificed so much on the day of the attack. Each of the markers consists of a metal

station and an illuminated panel of glass. Descriptions of the ships and the dedications are etched into the glass.

The fountain was originally dedicated in 1992 and was donated by the Honolulu Council of the Navy League, headed by businessman Robert Tim Guard. It was rededicated in 1995 after the completion of major repairs to the original design which had flaws. Jack J. McGarrity designed the fountain and plaza at no cost.

Pearl Harbor survivors and others who come to explore the history of Pearl Harbor have an opportunity to visit the fountain. The fountain also serves as a backdrop for various ceremonies held by Navy Region Hawai'i, bringing together the past and the present.

It provides a setting for recognizing the accomplishments of today's Navy community while, at the same time, paying tribute to the contributions and sacrifice of those from past decades.



U.S. Navy photo by PH1 (AW) William R. Goodwin

Friendship lights outline the Chilean training ship Esmeralda (BE 43) against the evening sky next to the Naval Station Pearl Harbor Memorial Fountain.

# Aloha Jewish Chapel to celebrate 30th anniversary

Karen S. Spangler

Assistant Editor

Thirty years of history and service to the Navy community at Naval Station Pearl Harbor will be observed at a dinner and ceremony tonight as the Aloha Jewish Chapel (AJC) celebrates its 30th anniversary.

The event will begin at 6 p.m. at the chapel, located in building 1514, just inside the Makalapa Gate.

Prior to the dedication of the Aloha Jewish Chapel at its present site, Jewish services were held in a temporary quonset hut. The present-day chapel with its high arched ceilings and unique architecture was dedicated on Dec. 14, 1975.

Rabbi John Rosenblatt, the first rabbi at the AJC, began the tradition of a chapel for all Jewish worshipers when he allowed the congregation to vote every Friday night on the choice of prayer book (Reform, Conservative, Orthodox) that would be used in the service. The AJC has since followed that practice and all Jewish congregants who attend the services are welcome and feel comfortable, according to Daniel Bender, who has served as the chapel's director of religious education for the past 13 years.

Pearl Harbor's Aloha Jewish



Photo courtesy of Daniel Bender

Congregants of the Aloha Jewish Chapel at Naval Station Pearl Harbor carry the Torah from the former chapel location to its new home at the present site (near Makalapa Gate) which was dedicated Dec. 14, 1975.

Chapel has the distinction of being one of only a few dedicated military Jewish facilities, not only throughout the Navy but in each branch of service as well.

Another unique characteristic of the Aloha Jewish Chapel is that it is the only Jewish chapel, or synagogue, in Hawai'i that has a "mikveh."

The mikveh is a pool of fresh flowing waters to accommodate congregants who would like to immerse themselves to complete the "tevilah" or conversion process into Judaism and is an important part of Jewish tradi-

tion. According to AJC spokesmen, very few mikvehs are in existence in Jewish chapels on the mainland.

During the chapel's 30-year span at its present location, eight different rabbis (one every three years) have served AJC. Currently, Bender, a Reform Jewish educator, leads Friday evening services. The official lay leader is Cmdr. Shelly Geringer.

Bender emphasized that the Aloha Jewish Chapel has a tradition of being a chapel for all those of the Jewish faith, including Reform, Conservative and

Orthodox beliefs.

"All Jewish people are welcome, regardless of their background," said Geringer.

The chapel provides a place for those of the Jewish faith to learn more about the rituals and practices of their religion. "It's important for us to be a facilitator for the people - what do they do next?" Bender explained, adding, "We provide the stage for those activities."

"People in the military really want to do religious activity and practice Judaism correctly," said Bender.

"It's a way that people [Navy community at Pearl Harbor] who are Jewish can avail themselves of opportunities [to practice their faith and learn more]," noted Chaplain Capt. Gene Theriot, Navy Region Hawai'i command chaplain.

Another role of the AJC is to provide additional help within the local community. "When new families get here, we help them make connections with the local Jewish community," said Bender.

The chapel's "yartzeit" plaque tells the story of some of those who have passed away and are remembered.

"In addition, many former congregants keep in touch and thousands of [Sailors] have come through here and have been welcomed," said Bender. He explained that many people also

visit the chapel to see their relatives' names that have been inscribed on the remembrance plaque.

In addition to Sailors stationed at Pearl Harbor and their families, retirees and DoD civilians also find the Aloha Jewish Chapel a welcoming haven to attend Jewish worship services.

"Our mission is to be open all the time on Friday nights for Jewish Sailors and others. Everybody is welcome," said Bender. On Friday nights and Saturdays, the building is always open, he said.

Jewish services are held at the chapel at 7:30 p.m. every Friday. Bible study is offered at 6:30 p.m. on Mondays.

Words etched on the door handles leading into the chapel offer this message: "Peace be unto you." An additional welcome message over the large, wooden doors greets those who enter. "Blessed are you in your coming," it reads.

"Everyone is welcome here," offered Bender. "We want people to be part of our next 30 years," he said.

The Aloha Jewish Chapel will hold the following services during the holiday period:

- Dec. 25: First Day of Hanukkah, 6:30 p.m.
- Dec. 30: Pot luck/party and services (bring a menorah), 6:30 p.m.



## Movie Call

Sharkey Theater  
Naval Station Pearl Harbor  
(473-0726)

## TODAY

7:00 p.m. The Weather Man (R)

## SATURDAY

2:30 p.m. Wallace & Gromit: Curse of the Were-Rabbit (G)

4:30 p.m. Elizabethtown (PG 13)

7:00 p.m. North Country (R)

## SUNDAY

No movies scheduled due to power outage in the area.

## THURSDAY

7:00 p.m. The Weather Man (R)

## Memorial Theater

Hickam Air Force Base  
(449-2239)

## TODAY

7:00 p.m. The Fog (PG-13)

## SATURDAY

7:00 p.m. The Fog (PG-13)

## SUNDAY

7:00 p.m. Doom (R)

## WEDNESDAY

7:00 p.m. North Country (R)

## THURSDAY

7:00 p.m. Doom (R)

## Sgt. Smith Theater

Schofield Barracks  
(624-2585)

## TODAY

7:00 p.m. In Her Shoes (PG-13)

## SATURDAY AND THURSDAY

7:00 p.m. Elizabethtown (PG 13)

## SUNDAY

7:00 p.m. The Gospel (PG-13)

## WEDNESDAY

7:00 p.m. In Her Shoes (PG-13)

## MWR

*Editor's note: Every effort has been made to provide the most up-to-date information at the time of publication. However, scheduling of these events is subject to change. It is recommended that you call the contact numbers for the individual events to determine whether or not the activity will be held.*

## OUTDOOR ADVENTURE EVENTS

- **Dec. 17:** Tandem skydiving, 8 a.m., \$130. Register by **Dec. 14**.
- **Dec. 18:** Kaena Point hike, 8:30 a.m., \$7. Register by **Dec. 15**.
- **Dec. 24:** Likeke Trail hike, 8:30 a.m., \$7. Register by **Dec. 21**.

## PEE WEE FLAG FOOTBALL REGISTRATION

Pee Wee flag football registration will be held through **Dec. 23** at the youth sports office. The cost is \$35 and includes a T-shirt, medal and certificate. To register, bring a current physical (dated no more than a year ago) and birth certificate. Leagues are open to family members of active duty, retirees, reservists and DoD civilians. For more information, call 474-3501.

## WINTERFEST AND TREE-LIGHTING

Winterfest tree-lighting ceremony and holiday celebration, hosted by Morale, Welfare and Recreation at Naval Station Pearl Harbor, will begin at 6 p.m. **today** at Club Pearl's Paradise Lounge. Winterfest will open with the tree-lighting ceremony, followed by a variety of entertainment and activities for the entire family. Activities will include holiday carols and special treats, crafts from around the world, story-

telling, a visit with Santa (don't forget your camera) games, face painting, and live entertainment. Free harbor tours to view the Festival of Lights will depart from Merry Point from 7-8:30 p.m. The following items will not be allowed on the tour: backpacks, fanny packs, luggage, diaper bags, camera bags, large cameras, tripods, purses or other items which provide concealment. Admission to Winterfest and the harbor tours is free and open to all MWR patrons, their families and sponsored guests. For more information, call 473-0606.

## WIN TRIP TO SUPER BOWL XL

There is still time to enter the Super Bowl grand prize drawing. The winner will go to Detroit to see Super Bowl XL. The prize includes airfare, hotel and tickets to the big game. The prize drawing will be held **Dec. 26**. The fun starts at 6:30 p.m. every Monday at Club Pearl. For more information, call 473-1743.

## ALPINE TOWER

The Alpine Tower Challenge Course Facility at Barbers Point near the fitness center is open and ready to train your command to become the best team it can be.

The principles of the leadership, education and development (LEAD) program are applied to facilitate the program areas of this team-building challenge course. All military commands are invited to experience the LEAD program on the Alpine Tower. For more information, call the Outdoor Adventure Center (OAC) at 473-1198 or visit [greatlife.hawaii.com](http://greatlife.hawaii.com) to reserve a day for your team.

## READY FOR FOOTBALL?

Enjoy the football game of the week live via satellite at Pool & Pizza at Club Pearl. Kickoff is at 4 p.m. or come for the primetime party that begins at 6:30 p.m. There will be free pupus as well as games and prizes at halftime. Play pool, darts or catch the game on one of the 11 televisions or three big-screen plasmas. Pool & Pizza opens daily at 11 a.m. For more information, call 473-1743.

## HOLIDAY EATING TIPS

Discover ways to keep the pounds off and your energy up during this hectic holiday season by visiting [www.greatlife.hawaii.com](http://www.greatlife.hawaii.com). Click on the "sports & fitness" link and then "fitness programs." You can print and paste the information to your refrigerator and share with family and friends. Or sample a few of the low calorie holiday dishes. Learn what the 80/20 rule of balanced nutrition is. Take control during these tempting times and make your New Year's resolution more manageable.

## DIVING CLASSES

Ocean Concepts offers scuba equipment rentals, repairs, air fills and classes. Boat dives are available daily. The hours of operation are: 8 a.m.-7 p.m. Monday-Friday, 8 a.m.-5 p.m. Saturday, Sundays and holidays. Upcoming classes include: PADI Open Water Diver Course (one-week program), PADI Advanced Open Water Course (weekend program), PADI Rescue Diver Course, Emergency First Responder (EFR) and PADI/DAN Oxygen

Provider Course (one-week program) and PADI Dive Master. Pearl Harbor pick-up and drop off are available. For more information, call 422-5990.

## RED PIN WEDNESDAYS

Red Pin Wednesdays is offered from 5-10 p.m. each Wednesday at NCTAMS Rainbow Lanes Bowling Center. Bowlers who roll a strike when the head pin is red will win a free game coupon. For more information, call 653-5576.



- **Dec. 11:** Surf lessons, depart from LIP at 10 a.m., \$7.
- **Dec. 12:** Monday Night Football, 6:30 p.m., free.
- **Dec. 13:** LIP Birthday Bash, free cake and ice cream at 6:30 p.m., free.
- **Dec. 14:** Tree trimming at all Liberty centers, free.
- **Dec. 14:** Waikiki Shuttle, depart from LIP at 6 p.m., \$5. Register by **Dec. 13**.
- **Dec. 17:** Jump into the Holidays with Liberty, skydiving, depart from LIP at 9 a.m., \$65. Register by **Dec. 14**.

## Weekly events:

- Sunday:** Chess tournament, 6:30 p.m.
- Monday:** WWE wrestling, 6:30 p.m.
- Tuesday:** 8-Ball tournament - 7 p.m.
- Wednesday:** Game show - 6:30 p.m.
- Thursday:** 9-Ball Pool tournament - 7 p.m.

## Community Calendar

To have your activity or event featured in the Community Calendar, e-mail your requests to [hnn@honoluluadvertiser.com](mailto:hnn@honoluluadvertiser.com) or fax 473-2876. Deadline is Thursday for the following week's issue. Items will run on a space available basis.

Registrations are still being accepted for the **Armed Forces Communications Electronics Association (AFCEA) TechNet Asia-Pacific Golf Tournament 2005**, which will be held **today** at the Kaneohe Klipper Course, Marine Corps Base Hawai'i - Kaneohe Bay. The tournament will be in a scramble format with four-player teams. Prizes will be awarded for closest to the pin, longest drive and hole-in-one. Registration today begins at 9:30 a.m. The tournament will begin with a shotgun start at 11 a.m. and an awards banquet will begin at 5 p.m. Entry fees are \$55 for active duty enlisted military, \$65 for active duty military officers and retired military, \$70 for DoD employees and \$75 for civilians and contractors. For more information, call Danny Matsuura at 659-1416 or email at [dannymatsuura@att.com](mailto:dannymatsuura@att.com).

The Aloha Jewish Chapel will host a **dinner and service** in celebration of the 30th anniversary of its founding beginning at 6 p.m. **today** at the chapel, building 1514 just inside the Makalapa Gate of Naval Station Pearl Harbor. Dress for the event is casual. RSVP by calling 218-0406.

**Jake Shimabukuro**, ukulele master, will perform at noon **Dec. 10** at the NEX audio department.

**Ronna Bolante and Michael Keany**, authors of "The 50 Greatest Hawai'i Albums," will be available for book signings at the book department of the NEX on **Dec. 11**.

There are still slots open for the **Million Dollar Sailor** class which will be held from 7:30 a.m.-3:30 p.m. **Dec. 12-13** at Fleet and Family Support Center (FFSC), Naval Station Pearl Harbor. The two-day class is designed for junior Navy personnel who will learn about proper budgeting techniques, credit management, savings and investment options, insurance needs, military pay and allowance, consumer rip-offs, how to obtain a loan, and new and used car purchasing techniques. For more information or to register, call FFSC at 473-4222.

Commander, U.S. Pacific Fleet will host the second annual **holiday concert** beginning at 6:30 p.m. **Dec. 16** on the USS Bowfin lanai. The event is free and open to the public. With holiday tunes ranging from the traditional to the contemporary, the performance promises to entertain all ages. In addition to featuring the Pacific Fleet Band, this year's entertainment includes the Joint Military Choir from Kunia as well as a special visitor from the North Pole. Guests are invited to bring books suitable for donation to local elementary school students (grades kindergarten through five). For more information, call the U.S. Pacific Fleet Band at 474-4151, ext. 13.

The following are the **hours of operation for Oceans Chief Petty Officers' Club** during the holidays:

- **Dec. 24:** 2:30 p.m.-8.
- **Dec. 25:** closed
- **Dec. 31:** 5 p.m.-1 a.m.
- **Jan. 1:** closed

OVERALL RATING:



**Doom:** Something has gone wrong at a remote scientific research station on Mars. A legion of nightmarish creatures lurks behind every wall, killing what few people remain. Sarge, Reaper and their team must use every weapon at their disposal to carry out their orders: nothing gets out alive.

**Elizabethtown:** After causing the shoe company he works for to lose hundreds of millions of dollars, Drew is fired for his mistake, and promptly also dumped by his girlfriend. On the verge of suicide, Drew is given a new purpose in life when he is brought back to his small Kentucky hometown following the death of his father.

**The Fog:** A thick fog enshrouds a coastal town. The fog is reminiscent of one 100 years earlier that wrecked a ship and drowned the seamen aboard. Sure enough, the sailors are back and out to kill whomever they find.

**The Gospel:** A young singer turns his back on God and his father's church when tragedy strikes. He returns years later to find the once powerful congregation in disarray. He is forced to deal with family turmoil, career suicide.

**In Her Shoes:** Maggie is fun-loving and irresponsible. Her older sister Rose is a lawyer who watches Maggie's wild life with disdain. When an attempt to live together fails miserably, they go off in different directions to find the missing pieces in their lives.

**North Country:** See Review

**Wallace & Gromit: Curse of the Were-Rabbit:** Wallace and Gromit are cashing in with their humane pest-control outfit, "Anti-Pesto." With only days to go before the annual Giant Vegetable Competition, they are finding out that running a "humane" pest control outfit has its drawbacks.

**The Weather Man:** Chicago weatherman, Dave Spritz, has a shot at the big time when a national television show calls him for an audition. Professionally, Dave is on top, but his personal life is in complete disarray. The harder he tries to control events, the more he finds life, like the weather, is completely unpredictable.

JO3 Ryan C. McGinley  
North Country

"North Country" is a fictionalized account of the true story of a landmark sexual harassment lawsuit in 1984. It is a story that rewrote history as far as women's rights in a little mining town in northern Minnesota. It's a sad and depressing story, one that will undoubtedly garner Charlize Theron another Oscar nomination. But like her previous efforts in "Monster," Theron demonstrates remarkable acting chops next to a story that would not survive without her.

Josey Aimes (Theron) leaves her abusive husband at the beginning of the film, to start out fresh and provide for her children on her own. After a stint washing hair at a beauty salon, Aimes takes a job at the nearby mine making six times what she was earning at the salon. The problem is, the mine is not perceived as a woman's environment. Only one in 29 employees is female, and those females that do work at the mine endure harassment that is downright depressing and often times shocking.

Despite a dramatic story, the film is relatively predictable and morose. Director Niki Caro does right by limiting the courtroom scenes and interjecting them throughout the film, but everything hinges on Theron. She cries, fights, struggles and cries some more, all the while trying to hold together a movie that has no other viable character.

Don't get me wrong, Theron is amazing portraying a desperate woman trying to fight against her children, parents, friends, employees and pretty much everyone else for the right to go to work like everybody else. But her performance outshines the film itself, leaving little room for supplemental characters or plot lines. "North Country" is a one-woman-show that will be remembered not for its importance in women's rights, but for how many tears it takes to start a river of Oscars.