

Clayton brothers prove fire is in their blood

By Penny Randall
Staff Writer

The July 16 opening of Joe Williams Field Joint Fire Station/Air Ops Center was a special day for NAS Meridian Fire Chief Andrew Clayton in more ways than one.

Besides the many special guests invited to the event, Clayton wanted to make sure one person was there -- his brother, Anthony Clayton -- who happens to be the city of Meridian's fire chief.

"It was really a great day for everyone," Clayton said. "And I wanted to make sure I shared it with my brother. We are very close and I rely on him for a lot of advice from his years of fire fighting."

Andrew Clayton assumed his responsibilities as NAS Meridian fire chief just two months after his older brother, Anthony Clayton, was named city of Meridian fire chief on Sept. 30, 2009, by Mayor Cheri Barry.

Andrew, who was serving as the training chief for the department for the previous 18 months, wasn't sure he wanted to pursue the job as fire chief and went to his big brother for advice.

"I actually told him, 'I will whoop you if you don't take the job,'" Anthony said laughing. "He didn't need much convincing -- just some reassuring. He's paid his dues and put his time in. I'm very proud of him."

Andrew has served 21 years at NAS Meridian, including a year stationed at Joe Williams Field. Anthony has served 28 years with the City of Meridian in various fire department positions.

Anthony said he would have many questions for his brother about the state-of-the-art components that are featured in the Joe Williams Field station. "We are definitely going to have to talk about this station and see if we can incorporate some of these features into the new stations that the city of Meridian is planning to build."

Andrew said he was glad his brother had the chance to see the new station.

"We have a mutual fire agreement with Meridian as well as Kemper County," Andrew said. "The opening of the new station was a great opportunity to bridge the relationship with both communities. It gave Anthony an opportunity to meet Capt. Gibson and Cmdr. Donohoe."