This Issue

Training Squadron THREE Change of Command- pg. 3
Whiting Field Paralofts “The Last to Let You Down”- pg. 4-5

Cover Photo: Capt. Paul Bowdich, Commanding Officer, NAS Whiting Field gives remarks about service members throughout our nation’s history who made the ultimate sacrifice. They were honored during a Memorial Day ceremony on May 27 at the Veterans Memorial plaza in downtown Milton. (Photo by Julie Ziegenhorn NASWF Public Affairs Office)

The Whiting Tower

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Executive Officer
Cmdr. Jim Brownlee

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Towers Award: Rear Adm. (Ret) Quinn presents Cmdr. Kerr, commanding officer, HT-18, with the Tower’s Award on behalf of the Order of the Daedalians. The award is named for the late Admiral John H. Towers, who was designated a naval pilot in 1911, and is given to the training squadron that has achieved an outstanding record in its mission-oriented flight safety program. (US Navy photo)


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Training Squadron THREE Change of Command

By LT Marcus Costa USN

On April, 26 2019, Cmdr. Mike “Amelia” Gerhart relieved Cmdr. Barnet “Luggage” Harris II as the 38th Commanding Officer of the “Red Knights” of Training Squadron THREE (VT-3) in a ceremony at the National Naval Aviation Museum onboard Naval Air Station Pensacola, Florida with Cmdr. John “Lola” Esposito assuming the duties as Executive Officer.

Harris, a fleet SH-60B Seahawk pilot, assumed command of VT-3 on Mar. 23, 2018. During his time as commanding officer, Harris’ devoted emphasis on high quality training and a safety-first culture earned the Red Knights an “Outstanding” assessment on the 2018 Chief of Naval Air Training Flight Instructor Standardization and Training inspection and an overall rating of “Outstanding” on the 2018 Naval Air Training and Operating Procedures Standardization unit evaluation, spotlighting the Red Knights as one of the premier squadrons in the Naval Air Training Command.

Gerhart is taking command of the Squadron after serving as the executive officer. A native of Palm, Pennsylvania, he enlisted in the United States Navy in November 1992. While assigned to USS Kentucky (SSBN 737) (BLUE), he was selected for the Navy’s enlisted commissioning program. He attended Auburn University and was commissioned an ensign in 2001. He reported for flight training in Pensacola, Florida and earned his Wings of Gold in January 2003.

In October 2004, after successfully completing fleet replacement training at HSL-40, Gerhart reported to the HSL-46 “Grandmasters” in Mayport, Florida for his first operational flying tour. He deployed in support of Operations Enduring Freedom and Iraqi Freedom, and participated in counter narcotics terrorism (CNT) operations in the Caribbean and Eastern Pacific. Following a successful tour as an instructor pilot with HSL-40, Gerhart reported to the USS Essex (LHD 2) in Sasebo, Japan as Mini Boss, Flight Deck Handling Officer, and V-1 Division Officer where he assisted in the humanitarian assistance and disaster relief efforts following the great Tohoku earthquake and tsunami in the Spring of 2011.

Gerhart returned to Jacksonville, Fla., where he completed a transition to the MH-60R and returned to HSL-46. In April 2013, as Officer-in-Charge of Detachment Nine, he led a four-plane MQ-8B Fire Scout detachment in support of Operation Jukebox Lotus in the Mediterranean Sea. After departing HSM-46, Gerhart reported to the Naval War College in Newport, Rhode Island where he completed the academic requirements for a Master of Arts degree in Defense and Strategic Studies in June 2015. Upon graduation, he transferred to USAFRICOM in Stuttgart, Germany where he served as executive officer and Capabilities and Requirements Analyst for the J8 Directorate.

Serving alongside Gerhart as executive officer, Esposito brings a new and unique skill set to the flight line for the Red Knights. Coming from the electronic attack community, Esposito’s perspective and experience has been shaped by his time flying the EA-6B Prowler and EA-18G Growler, as well as his time served as an International Policy Analyst in the Office of National Drug Control Policy in Washington, D.C.

Together with the experience of Esposito, Gerhart will continue to further advance the standard of excellence that has been synonymous with VT-3 throughout its 59-year history. The diverse platform experience of these two seasoned fleet aviators is sure to benefit the students of VT-3 by providing new perspectives and diversity to the training of future Naval Aviators.
Naval Air Station Whiting Field in Milton, Fla. is responsible for training future Navy, Marine Corps and Coast Guard aviators. Sixty percent of all primary flight training is conducted at Whiting, and one hundred percent of Navy, Marine Corps and Coast Guard helicopter pilots train here.

Whiting has two airfields, North and South, which conduct training flight operations for fixed-wing and helicopter training, respectively. With the massive number of flights at the installation, almost one million flight operations per year, an aviator’s support must include a high degree of expertise to keep flight training at the safest possible level.

Both North and South flight lines have facilities, also known as “paralofts,” where inspecting, fitting and maintaining aviation safety gear happens every day. Almost all of the paraloft employees who work both fields are former military from Navy, Marine Corps, Army or Air Force and have an average of 20 years of experience each.

South Field paraloft’s aviation life support system, or ALSS, lead Joe Timbang explained that, “everyone takes a lot of pride in their work here.”

The South field paraloft caters to TH-57 Sea Ranger aviators and includes 700 helmets and 650 vests maintained by 10 people. “We’re a small manned section, but the amount of work pumped out of here is ridiculous. It’s unheard of,” said Timbang.

Vests are grouped by size so that most aviators sign out a vest based on their physical build. Each vest includes survival gear and a harness in case of a helicopter rescue. They return the vests after each flight.

“It’s always a safe product,” said South field’s Adam Galasso. “But we also never want our stuff to be used.” Understandable, since aviators do not want to be in a situation requiring the use of their vest’s survival equipment.

Unlike North Field, South Field has 80 night vision goggles, or NVGs, used by helicopter students for their training flights before they graduate. NVGs allow the aviators to train on how to conduct night operations in environments with limited lighting. The NVGs must be fitted to the student’s helmet for ease of use.

Another paraloft responsibility is to provide nametags for wingings and promotions and to maintain all flight clothing such as coveralls, gloves and boots. “We’ve been known to be one of the top paralofts in terms of customer service and quality of work,” said Timbang.

In friendly competition, North Field’s Randall
Arboghast said with a chuckle, “we’re better than South Field!” Since the T-6B Texan II flies higher than the TH-57, pilots need facemasks plugged into an oxygen producing unit to breath at oxygen scarce altitudes. “We’ve got a lot more equipment and just barely a few people more than South Field,” Arboghast noted.

A friendly and respectful rivalry, the North Field paraloft boasts 900 sets of gear including helmets, survival gear, oxygen hoses and “G-suits” capable of helping T-6B aviation students resist G-forces, or gravitational forces, during aerobatic maneuvers.

The North paraloft is 7000 sq. ft. bigger to individually house each aviator’s set of equipment. Each set is tailored to the aviator by one of the 13 dedicated workers. After all the gear has been adjusted, the aviator is then strapped into parachute lines and suspended from the ceiling to test comfort and effectiveness.

Bryant Roddy of North field, who has 14 years Air Force experience, remarked, “It’s never a dull moment. It’s challenging every day, and we make sure the student gets good equipment before they get into the fleet.”
Medical change of charge: Navy Branch Health Clinic at NAS Whiting Field held a Change of Charge for Cmdr. Maria Edusada relieving command to Cmdr. Gabriella Gonzalez. (Photo by Jamie Link NASWF Public Affairs Office)

Run for the Fallen: Aviation Boatswain’s Mate (Handling) Chief Petty Officer Andrew McDougle (left) and Air Traffic Controller Chief Petty Officer Narciso Penate, Jr., cross the finishing line holding the U.S. flag. (Photo by Lt.j.g. Drake Greer NASWF Public Affairs Office)

Blue Wahoos: Sponsored by MWR, the Pensacola Blue Wahoos and their mascot, Kazoo, taught the kids techniques for throwing, hitting, pitching and being good teammates. (Photo by Julie Ziegenhorn NASWF Public Affairs Office)

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Summer Pool Grand Opening: NAS Whiting Field MWR held a grand opening for the pool at the fitness center on base on May 25. (Photo by Jamie Link NASWF Public Affairs Office).

Military appreciation picnic: A huge crowd of Whiting team members, their families and kids of all ages enjoyed free food, a live band, games, bouncy houses, rides, exotic animals and more. Thank you Santa Rosa County and MWR! (Photo by Jamie Link NASWF Public Affairs Office).

NOLF of the Quarter: NAS Whiting Field’s triad visits NOLF Choctaw to present the crash crew with the NOLF of the Quarter Award on May 5. (Photo by Julie Ziegenhorn NASWF Public Affairs Office)
June 5, 1794
The first officers of the U.S. Navy under the new United States Constitution are appointed: John Barry, Samuel Nicholson, Silas Talbot, Joshua Barney, Richard Dale, and Thomas Truxtun. They are also asked to supervise the construction of new ships.

June 12, 1942
USS Swordfish (SS 193) sinks Japanese freighter Burma Maru northwest of Pulo Wai in the Gulf of Siam.

June 25, 1956
Fleet Adm. Ernest J. King dies at Portsmouth Naval Hospital in New Hampshire.

June 28, 1869
The Navy’s first surgeon-general William M. Wood is appointed, and serves until Oct. 25, 1871.

June 16, 1990
USS Monterey (CG 61) is commissioned at Mayport, Fla. The Ticonderoga-class guided-missile cruiser is named for the Battle of Monterey during the Mexican-American War in 1846.
Whiting Field Awards and Recognition

Congratulations to TRAWING-5 Academic Award Recipients

Five Commodore's List Recipients and one Commodore's List with Distinction receive recognition at TRAWING-5 Headquarters on May 3.

NAS Whiting Field Water Quality Report

As part of the Safe Drinking Water act, each year the Environmental Protection Agency requires community water systems to deliver a consumer confidence report. In 2018, NAS Whiting Field detected ten (10) drinking water contaminants and none of them were above the EPA acceptable level. Please go to:


then click on NAS Whiting Field, 2018 report, to view the 2018 Annual Drinking Water Report and learn more about your water. This report contains important information about the source and quality of your drinking water onboard NAS Whiting Field. If you would like a paper copy of the 2018 Annual Drinking Water Quality Report, please contact Brooke Boyd at (850) 623-7026 or via email at jacquelin.boyd@navy.mil at NASWF Public Works Department, Environmental Division.
Congratulations to TRAWING-5 Wingers

TOP ROW: LtCol Gregory R. Curtis, USMC, CO-HT-28; Lt.j.g. Patrick R Fonda, USN, HT-8; Ens Ryan A Adair, USN, HT-28; Ens Jordan E Davis, USN, HT-18; Ens Christian M Lavachek, USN, HT-28; Ens Oliver X Ni, USN, HT-28; Lt.j.g. Cody R Hull, USN, HT-18; Lt.j.g. Daniel E Logan, USN, HT-18; 1stLt Philip B Bowers, USMC, HT-8; Lt Andrew C Dinmore, USN, HT-18; LtCol James T Hoffman, USMC, Deputy Inspector General 3d Marine Aircraft Wing

MIDDLE ROW: LtCol John R Beal, USMC, XO HT-18; Lt.j.g. Alexis R W Kaula, USN, HT-8; Ens Jacob C Best, USN, HT-28; Lt.j.g. Spenser B Jones, USN, HT-18; Ens Hermes Ammirabile De Biasi, ITNAV, HT-18; Lt.j.g. Alyssia Lamonaca, USCG, HT-18; Lt.j.g. Peter S Chambers, USCG, HT-8; Ens Nathan B Marshall, USN, HT-28; Ens George N Smith, USN, HT-8; Lt.j.g. Sean J Murray, USN, HT-18; Capt Douglas Rosa, USN, Commodore TW5

BOTTOM ROW: Cmdr Jessica Parker, USN, CO HT-8; Ens Gabriel R Larios, USN, HT-18; Lt.j.g. Joshua M Greenstein, USN, HT-18; Lt.j.g. Rachel M Seaman, USCG, HT-28; Lt.j.g. Meghan E Treece, USN, HT-8; Lt.j.g. Sean S Kshimetski, USCG, HT-28; Lt.j.g. Christopher V Scoaga, USN, HT-18; Lt.j.g. Rushi S Desai, USN, HT-18; Ens Mary G Waters, USN, HT-8; Ens Christopher A Spadaro, USN, HT-28; Ens Olivia, C Czerewko, USN, HT-18

(May 10)

TOP ROW: Cmdr Nathan K Moore, USN, XO HT-28; Lt Jeffrey R Davis, USCG, HT-8; 1stLt Michael R Dartnell, USMC, HT-8; Lt.j.g. Raffaele Nigro, ITNAV, HT-28; Ens Peter C Shelton, USN, HT-28; Ens Bradley D. Scheiner, USN, HT-28; Lt Tevin L. Porter-Perry, USCG, HT-8; Lt.j.g. Matthew J King, USN, HT-8; Lt.j.g. Tanner S Williams, USN, HT-28; Col Jeffrey M Pavelko, USMC, Deputy Commodore TW-5

MIDDLE ROW: Cmdr Kenneth M. Kerr, USN, CO HT-18; 1stLt Michael A Fecteau, USMC, HT-28; Ens Kevin D’Osvialdo, ITNAV, HT-28; Lt.j.g. Tomas M Hetzel, USN, HT-8; Lt.j.g. Carlton B Spalding, USN, HT-8; Lt.j.g. Benjamin S Thomas Junior, USN, HT-18; Ens Anthony N D Smith, USN, HT-18; Ens Maxwell C Bevill, USN, HT-8; 1stLt Ethan C Lare, USMC, HT-18; Capt John C Compton, USN, Commander Navy Region South East Operations Officer

BOTTOM ROW: Cmdr Jessica R Parker, USN, CO HT-8; Ens Alana A Brady, USN, HT-8; Ens Carlie R Spore, USN, HT-28; Ens Andrew J Grant, USN, HT-28; Lt.j.g. Micahel W Vare, USN, HT-8; Ens Kyle G Petryts, USN, HT-28; Lt.j.g. Joshua G Hilario, USN, HT-18; Lt.j.g. John W Kazanjian, USN, HT-18, USN

(May 23)