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Wingspan

Vol. 13, No. 05

Naval Air Station Corpus Christi, Texas

Thursday • March 1, 2007

Steel Barrier Gate on Ocean Drive will restrict vehicular traffic at night

by Bob Torres, NASCC Public Affairs Officer

In the near future, a steel barrier gate will be erected across part of Ocean Drive that will deter vehicular traffic from accessing federal property during night-time hours. This Barrier Gate will be approximately 300 yards south of the Texas A&M light that crosses Sand Dollar Boulevard.

Because part of Ocean Drive is on federal property and has been used in the past few years for illegal activities by a criminal element, this is part of a security procedure that has been employed to combat crime.

Drug use, sex in parked vehicles and illegal drinking, sometimes with children in the vehicles, has taken place on this area of federal property and is assumed by some to be a "free zone." People engaged in illegal activities on this property will be subject to federal conviction.

"Almost every night we were finding someone smoking dope or shooting up," said Master at Arms Chief Wayne Binning. "There is drinking and open containers. A lot of people knew that the Corpus Christi Police Department doesn't patrol out there."

"It's a pretty secluded area with very little lighting," Chief Binning continues. "Almost every time we stopped, when we'd

see someone sitting in the car, there was a smell of marijuana, or we'd find some form of drug paraphernalia," he continued. "Practically on a daily basis, we'd find empty syringes and beer bottles. Most of that activity was happening between 8 p.m. to 3 a.m. Sometimes we'd find people out there with a 'cheap date,' but it was mostly about drugs."

The proposed gate is designed to cross Ocean Drive as a steel barrier, padlocked at dusk. Since the base's North Gate opens at 5 a.m. for Corpus Christi Army Depot personnel and military, the Barrier Gate will be opened at that time and closed at dusk on weekdays and weekends. There will still be Security patrols to ensure everyone's safety, but not on a set schedule. Lighting and signage will be emplaced soon to alert drivers who may have become used to accessing that area in the past.

Local fishermen who have traditionally used the area as a fishing site are still welcome during daylight hours, provided they are not participating in illegal activities. Fishermen who access the area by boat or kayak can fish freely offshore any time of the day or night.



Just beyond this sign at the telephone poles, a steel gate will be emplaced to keep vehicular traffic out of an area some consider to be a "free zone" for drug use and other illegal activities. Security personnel will continue to patrol, maintaining the safety of the area. (Photo by Lt. j.g. Caleb Booher)

Blue Angels return to their roots with upcoming Air Show

by Lt. j.g. Caleb H. Booher, Asst. Public Affairs Officer

In April, the Navy Flight Demonstration Team will soar the blue skies of Corpus Christi once again. The wildly popular, crowd pleasing Blue Angels are set to give us yet another magnificent show, possibly for the last time at NASCC. It has been two years since the Blues have visited this city, but coming to Corpus is more of a homecoming than many people may realize.

In 1946, Adm. Chester Nimitz commissioned the Blue Angels and their first home base was NAS Jacksonville, Florida. However, two-and-a-half years later in 1948, the Blues came to South Texas where NAS Corpus Christi became their home.

A significant milestone in their history was during the 1949 season. The Blues began their transition from Grumman's diesel piston engine planes to their first jet aircraft while based here at NASCC. Their final demonstration in the F8F Bearcats took place on Aug. 14 in Madison, Wisconsin and six days later in Beaumont, Texas, they flew their first show in the brand new Grumman F9F Panthers.

On Jan. 11, 1950, at the beginning of the Korean conflict, the Blue Angels were ordered to combat-duty status. After a short summer season, they disbanded and reported aboard the aircraft carrier USS



Enlisted service crewmen observe the Blue Angels during a demonstration flight. During the Blue Angels' time in Corpus Christi, they transitioned from the F8F Bearcat to their first jet, the F9F Panther. (Photo available by public domain)

PRINCETON (CV-37). There, they became the heart of VF-191, "Satan's Kittens." Tragically, while flying combat missions over Korea, their skipper, former Blue Angel Lt. Cmdr. John Magda, lost his life in the line of duty.

At the end of their tour in the fall of 1951, the Blue Angels were re-commissioned and returned to their home in South Texas, once again under the command of the first Blue Angels skipper, Lt. Cmdr. R. M. "Butch" Voris. NASCC soon witnessed another Blue Angels milestone when the first ever Marine pilot, Capt. John Hiett, joined the team.

The Blue Angels remained at NASCC until the middle of the 1955 season when they moved to NAS Pensacola, where they have remained ever since.

Another significant homecoming will be that of Raleigh "Dusty" Rhodes, the Blue Angels' skipper from 1948 to 1950, who will be joining us at the Air Show. Rhodes led the Blue Angels throughout their first tour at Corpus Christi, so ties with our community and its history run deep.

With the possibility of the upcoming show being the final chapter in the history between the Blue Angels and NAS Corpus Christi, it will mark yet another Blue Angels milestone in this city and is not to be missed.

From The Skipper

Looking forward to our Air Show, and honoring African-Americans

by Capt. T.E. Coolidge

Our South Texas Shootout Air Show planning is moving forward full throttle. The highlight of the show, the Navy's Blue Angels, are looking forward to being here (we keep in touch with them on a regular basis). It looks like the Air Show, scheduled for the weekend of April 14-15, will be one of the larger shows NAS Corpus Christi has hosted.

We'll have more acts, more static displays, and better ways of getting to and from the event. It promises to be fun for kids of all

ages!

The word is out that the 2007 South Texas Shootout may be the last time an air show is hosted at NAS Corpus Christi. As you know, we're working with the City of Corpus Christi to hold future air shows downtown along the bay front. It is my belief that holding the air show downtown will allow larger numbers of folks to witness the amazing aerial ballet that has made the Blue Angels so popular. It has the added benefit of getting more people downtown to enjoy the sights, restaurants, and activities the area offers.

I'll say this again, we plan on making this a great show for everyone. And something new this year for the show: operations will be conducted from our new Air Traffic Control Tower. For those of you who

don't know, we've been operating from the old Control Tower since it was built in 1941! When the new Control Tower became operational this week, Air Operations personnel moved into a state-of-the-art complex that our Sailors and pilots deserve!

In this issue, Assistant Public Affairs Officer, Lt. j.g. Caleb Booher, did a little research to tell you more about the Blue Angels. Did you know there were two times in Navy history that the Blues were home-based here at NAS Corpus Christi? And that one of the former Commanding Officers of the Blues, retired Cmdr. 'Dusty' Rhodes, is planning on attending this year's event? We expect him to come in from California to enjoy the festivities.

Captain continued on page 10

Chaplain's Column

On Pride

by Chaplain Chin Van Dang

A pastor, Reverend Smith, arrived at his church early one Sunday morning to see an elderly woman struggling to get up the steep stairs to the church. "Here, let me help you," said Reverend Smith. And, with a great deal of patience and love, he helped her to the top of the stairs. Reaching the entrance to the church, the elderly lady turned to him and asked, "Can you tell me who is preaching this morning?" With a smile, the pastor answered, "Yes, Reverend Smith." Whereupon she said, "Would you mind helping me back down the steps?"

Pride, Covetousness, Lust, Anger, Gluttony, Envy, and Sloth. These are the Seven Capital Sins. They are the seedbeds of our sinning. They are the natural drives of a human nature corrupted by original sin. The first of these is pride, the irrational urge to make of ourselves more than we can be. The virtue opposed to pride is humility, the basis upon

which all the other virtues depend.

All of us have big doses of pride. We get too big for our boots. We want to be head of the list and looked up to by all.

A visitor entering the social room of a mental institution came upon an odd sight. In the center of the room stood a young man, erect and haughty, with his hand thrust in the buttoned front of his coat. In a nearby corner stood an older man, apart from the rest, staring seriously at the ceiling. The visitor inquired as to the identity of the young man. He replied, "I'm Napoleon." Amused, the visitor asked, "Who told you that?" The fellow replied, "God told me." At this, the older man in the corner retorted, "I didn't tell you any such thing!"

What is humility? It is the basic truth about ourselves. The humble man is honest. He sees himself exactly as he is. Before God, he is himself. He did not make himself or bring himself into existence. The Creator had to do had to do that for him. The Creator had to

give him his talents, virtues, and graces. The only thing he can truly call his own are his sins. So, in the sight of God, he who has sinned is nobody. The man who can say this about himself has found his proper place before God. He has made the prime adjustment of life.

But when he looks around and sees other people, his pride begins to swell. He may say to himself, "I am taller than you, better looking. I have more money too. So, I am better than you." If he does not push the comparison beyond that, no real harm done. But when he says, "I am a better human being than anyone in the

Chaplain continued on page 4

Health Watch

Make healthy choices in March, National Nutrition Month®

by Sara Crowell, Asst. PAO

Say yes to that extra helping of vegetables this month by celebrating National Nutrition Month®! Created in 1973, National Nutrition Month® was designed to spotlight the importance of making knowledgeable, healthy food choices while developing beneficial habits. Now more than ever, general health and nutrition has been pushed to the forefront of daily life. Obesity has become a growing problem with about one-third of Americans being overweight, a number that has doubled in the past two decades. Even worse, children are becoming the



newest victims of obesity. Today, about 10% of 2-to 5-year-olds and more than 15% of children between the ages of 6 and 19 are overweight. In general, children are spending more time in front of the TV, computer and video games while busy families are spending less time making nutritious and healthy meals.

People who are overweight or obese (having a body mass index, or BMI, of 30 or more), are at a higher risk for premature death, type 2 diabetes, hypertension, dyslipidemia, cardiovascular disease, stroke, gall bladder disease, respiratory dysfunction, gout and certain kinds of cancers. To combat obesity, or to focus on being healthier, start by looking at the food pyramid. The United States Department of Agriculture provides information on the different food groups and amounts adults should consume.

By visiting www.MyPyramid.gov, you can receive information specific for your age and gender while also learning how to find the balance between food and physical activity to keep the pounds off. Having a nice,

big slice of cake won't ruin your health today, but learning good habits about staying healthy year round can make a difference to your life. Small changes, such as eating celery and dip instead of chips and dip, or going on a 30 minute walk after dinner, can set in motion a pattern that can add years to your life.

Work on setting a good example for children so they can grow up to be strong and healthy as well. If you need some help getting started, check out the classes that are being offered at Naval Hospital Corpus Christi through the Wellness Center. They are dedicated to helping you understand why fad diets don't work and helping you find one that you can use for the rest of your life. Give them a call at 961-3914 and sign up for a class that will help you loose weight, live healthier, and maintain your new lifestyle.

Celebrate National Nutrition Month® and start making healthy and positive changes today! For more information on food and nutrition, you can also visit the sponsor of National Nutrition Month®, the American Dietetic Association, www.eatright.org.

Wingspan

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Military of the Year and Military of the Quarter gather for luncheon honoring their achievements

by Anne Booher, Editor

On Feb. 15, recipients of the Military of the Quarter and Military of the Year awards gathered in the Bay Club for a luncheon and presentation. Command Master Chief Michael Cisneros served as the Master of Ceremonies and introduced the panel of sponsors and their representatives: Embry Riddle University, represented by Mrs. Jessica Parra and Toni Cox; ECPI College of Technology, represented by Mr. Robert Morrison; United Servicemen's Organization, represented by Mrs. Emma Pineda; Navy League of the U.S., represented by Mr. Richard Marcantonio; and the Fleet Reserve Association, represented by Mr. Don Larson. Sponsors provide scholarship opportunities, helpful information to the award recipients and also help fund the cost of certificates and the event itself.

ing support and encouragement that brought them where they are. He then suggested one of the most crucial lessons a military service member should learn, which is knowing what's most important to your supervisor and organization. "Understand and respect the core values and traditions of your organization," says Jackson. "Most of those rules and traditions are there because someone died doing it the wrong way." Jackson also encouraged the award recipients to determine the biggest, most essential issues for themselves and then, live their lives by those standards. "Set goals for yourself and don't be ashamed of them. If your goals change, then don't be afraid to change them, either," says Jackson.

After the presentation of sponsors, Chaplain Tim Gault led the group in an invocation, followed by CMC Cisneros introducing the guest speaker, CMDCM Abraham Jackson from HM-15.

Following the speaker, the award recipients were recognized individually at the front of the ballroom by the sponsors and also received a photo op with CMDCM Jackson. Some of the recipients could not be present because they are currently deployed. In their absence, the awards were received by either a friend or Master Chief within their squadron.

CMDCM Jackson, in addition to a long list of accolades and achievements, was the first E6 to qualify and stand as Diving Officer of the Watch, a position usually reserved for senior enlisted personnel or officers and thus, a significant achievement for an E6. CMDCM Jackson began by thanking the commanding officers and families of the award recipients for their ongoing

The Military of the Year and Quarter awards are selected by a board review from each command as the best overall candidate, with superlative conduct, grades, leadership and significant achievements. Those chosen as Military of the Quarter are automatically nominated for Military of the Year.



CMDCM Abraham Jackson (left) served as the guest speaker and Command Master Chief Michael Cisneros presided as Master of Ceremonies. (Photo by Richard Stewart)

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Relay For Life invites NAS Corpus Christi to sign up teams

by the American Cancer Society

On April 20, the Flour Bluff, NAS and Padre Island Unit of the American Cancer Society will host the annual Relay for Life event at Hornet Stadium from 6 p.m. to 6 a.m. They invite you to join in the fight against cancer by becoming a team in Relay for Life. Last year, NAS Corpus Christi contributed 12 teams of people from all over NAS Corpus Christi, including CNATRA, Coast Guard, Naval Hospital, CCAD, COMINWARCOM, and the Navy Exchange. This year, they are aiming for 15 teams.

Relay For Life is a unique community event that brings together teams of families, civic groups, co-workers, church groups, schools and neighbors to celebrate with those who have conquered cancer and remember those who have lost their lives to it. As in any relay, the teams walk continuously throughout the evening and some even throughout the night. Though the emphasis is finding a cure for cancer, a community bonding takes place. Team members camp out, enjoy food and live entertainment, and join in games and general camaraderie together. During an uplifting candlelight

ceremony, they experience love and remembrance with others whose lives have been affected by cancer.

This year, Relay For Life expects over 50 teams to participate, with 10-15 people on each team. Team members are required to raise \$100 each before the Relay. The American Cancer Society receives 100% of all team donations to use in their research, public education, and patient services programs.

With great advances in cancer research and treatment, never has the work of the American Cancer Society been so important. Their goal is to prevent cancer, save lives, and reduce the suffering of those who are affected. Relay For Life is a way for an entire community to join together and take up the fight.

If you are interested in joining a team or creating one, contact Lucia Lewis, the NAS Corpus Christi Team Recruiter, at 961-6076. Team registration packets are also available in the Base Public Affairs Office (Building 2) with Anne Booher at 961-3420.



Team "Shipwrecked for Survival" represented the Wellness Center at Naval Hospital Corpus Christi. From left to right, Lisa Parker, Angeles Ramirez, Pat Gauna, and breast cancer survivor Vinnie Mathias. (Photo courtesy of FB/NASCC/PI American Cancer Society)

Chaplain continued from page 2

neighborhood," he is in trouble.

A mother whale once warned her son, "Remember, it's when you go to the top and start blowing that you get harpooned."

We have to work on ourselves to strip ourselves of pride. Self-conquest is not easy.

The lowly, humble place has no natural attraction for us. Here is where we test our trust in God. He repeatedly assures us that every one who exalts himself will be humbled and that he who humbles himself will be exalted.

Daylight-saving time starts March 11th!

Set your clocks forward one hour.

GROUP FITNESS CLASSES

The Battle of the Stars is raging! New classes with new instructors are now available. Only the classes with the best attendance will remain after March. Your attendance will be a vote for your favorite "Aerobic Star" and class. Dance classes, step, cycle, weight-lifting, Pilates, and yoga are only a few of the choices.

RUNNING OF THE GREEN

St. Patrick's Day 5k Race will be held on Saturday Mar. 17 at 8 a.m. with check-in time at 7:30 am. Wear green and drink green Gatorade. Race starts at Sunfish Beach.

ORAC

Sailing and windsurfing classes are now forming for April, May and June. Classes are held every other weekend and are \$25.00 per person for Saturday and Sunday. Individuals and groups are welcome.

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E-Street Gym

Captain's Cup Golf
Deadline: April 20th
Event Date: May-August

Tennis Doubles Tournament

Deadline: May 10th
Event Date: May-June
Contact the E-Street Gym at 961-2401.

Clarice's Creations

Stop by Clarice's Creations, the NAS Ceramic Shop, and learn the art of ceramics. Clarice's Creations has over 6,000 molds available, green ware, bisque, paints and brushes.

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Child Development Home Program

The Child Development Home Program is looking for a few good homes to add to the long list of homes offering quality child care to the military and civilians of NASCC and NS Ingleside. Navy CDH certification is required to become a Navy CDH provider. Certification is processed through MWR CDH office and includes health screening, training, home inspections and background checks.

For more information, on becoming a certified Navy Child Development Provider or to set up an appointment, please call the CDH office at 961-1166.

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MWR News and Events

by Laurie Garcia, NAS MWR

Gulf Winds Golf Course will host a St. Patty's Day special for 50% off 18 hole carts!

Aquatic News: Lifeguard registration begins Mar. 1 at E-Street Gym or Bayside Pool. Lifeguards training dates and times: (subject to change)
March 31 12-6 pm
April 7-8 12-6 pm
April 14-15 12-6 pm
For more information, call Earl Olsen at 961-3260.

Lighthouse Lanes: St. Patrick's Day Tournament-Mar. 17 at 7 p.m. No Tap Tournament-Mar. 24 at 7 p.m.

Gonzalez Liberty Center

The GLC is now equipped with WIFI.

X Box Tournament: Come to the Halo 2 tournament on Mar. 10 at 2 p.m., hosted by the GLC and Game Crazy. Free food and prizes. Sign up at the GLC by Mar. 5.

San Antonio River Walk Evening Out: Enjoy and evening along the scenic San Antonio River walk during the evening hours on Mar. 17. We will be leaving the Liberty Center at 5 pm Saturday and will return before the sun comes up! Sign up at the GLC by Mar. 9.

Poker Tournament: On Mar. 21, join us for some high stakes action as the GLC hosts a poker tournament. Tournament starts at 6 p.m. Sign up by Mar. 14.

Navy Motion Picture Service "New Releases": Babel; Bobby; Casino Royale; Charlotte's Webb; déjà vu; For Your Consideration; Happy Feet; Her Minor Thing; Let's Go to Prison; Night at the Museum; Rocky Balboa; The Fountain; the Holiday; The Pursuit of Happiness; The Grudge 2.

Contact the GLC at 961-6405.

MWR

MWR needs Private Organizations to help with the concessions at the 2007 Air Show scheduled for Apr. 14 through 15. Contact Monica Zamorano at 961-2655 for more information.

Fitness Express

NEW PERSONAL TRAINING STAFF

Fitness Express welcomes Jessica Combs to our fitness staff. She is an experienced trainer and has 2 degrees in health/physical education and kinesiology.

Culture shock for a Naval officer in Iraq

by Bob Torres, PAO

It's uncommon for an Ensign to be assigned to a "General Staff," dealing with flag grade officers at any time during his or her career. Ensign Clyde "Tre" Le Gaux, III, from Training Wing Four did just that when he deployed to Iraq in February 2006.

Le Gaux is not your typical O-1. He served more than two years in the Army, from his hometown in Sacramento, CA before receiving a lateral-service transfer to the Navy in 1996. When he received orders, he didn't back away.

"From what you see in the news and things like that, when we landed in Baghdad, International Airport, I expected to see bombs going off everywhere and constant gunfire," Le Gaux recalled. "It wasn't quite like that. The whole time I was at Camp Victory, six months, we had four mortar rounds come in. I wasn't even there when it happened. I was in Haditha."

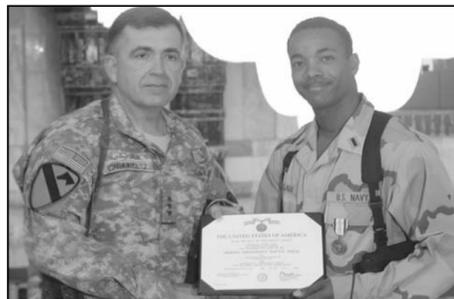
"I went over there and had no idea what I'd be doing," said Le Gaux. "I figured I'd be working with the general staff as an Admin officer, reviewing orders, spell-checking and things like that. Then, I was approached by an Army colonel who asked me if I wanted to go the Syrian border to help the JAG officers on investigations."

"Less than 24 hours later, I was on a Blackhawk

headed to Haditha," he continued.

"When I got there, I met up with an investigating officer. I would be assisting a JAG officer, basically as an Admin officer. I worked directly for Army Maj. David Mendelson and the Investigating Officer was Col. Gregory Watt. There was also a two-star and three-star general at Camp Victory and the Green Zone. When we got to Haditha, we wound up going to the firm's base and talking to the company commanders. Then we talked to the locals and saw the different places and houses where events had happened."

Le Gaux continued on page 10



Lt. Gen. Peter Chiarelli, Commander Multinational Corps Iraq, presents Lt. j.g. Clyde "Tre" Le Gaux, III (right) with the Meritorious Service Medal. (US Army photo)

CBP P-3 Operations Center receives prestigious award

by Juan Muñoz-Torres, CBP Public Affairs

On Feb. 22, the Office of the US Interdiction Coordinator (USIC) Awards Committee presented the US Customs and Border Protection (CBP) P-3 Operation Center in Corpus Christi with top honors in the "Superior Performance in Fixed-wing Aviation Support" and "Golden Eagle Award" categories. USIC Awards recognize top-performing units and organization that have shown exceptional innovation, tactics, aggressiveness, and results in the war against illegal drug trade.

The superior performance recognition for aviation support was awarded to the Corpus Christi CBP P-3 Operations Center after the aircrews from the facility contributed to the seizure of over 84,330 pounds of illegal drugs - with an estimated street value of \$3 billion - during the 2005 calendar year. The Golden Eagle Award was presented to a specific aircrew from the facility after an operation on August 14, 2005 resulted in the seizure of 2.8 metric tons of cocaine - with a street value of about \$220 million.

CBP aircraft aircrews from Corpus Christi flew over 5,130 hours on counter-drug operations dur-

ing the year, often sight unseen, providing constant aerial surveillance and coordinating reports to marine assets on the water, which are critical to the tracking, interdiction, and confiscation of illegal drugs, drug traffickers, and their assets. During the same period of time, the P-3 Operation Center in Corpus Christi flew over 90 missions for FEMA during Hurricane Katrina and Rita recovery efforts.

"What makes the P-3 operation centers so successful is that the people doing the mission, from the support teams to the aircrews, are diligent in tracking down bad people wanting to do bad things to our citizens and to our country," said the Director of Air Operations for the P-3 Operations Center in Corpus Christi, Kenneth Knight.

The mission of CBP Air and Marine is to protect the American people and critical infrastructure by using an integrated and coordinated force to detect, interdict and prevent acts of terrorism arising from unlawful movement of people, illegal drugs, and other contraband moving toward or crossing the borders of the United States. CBP Air and Marine is the largest law enforcement air force in the world. For more information, visit www.cbp.gov.



Members of the CBP P-3 Operations Center Corpus Christi receive USIC coins and CBP pins in recognition of unit excellence. (Photo courtesy of CBP)



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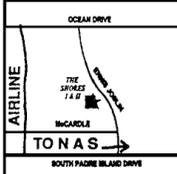
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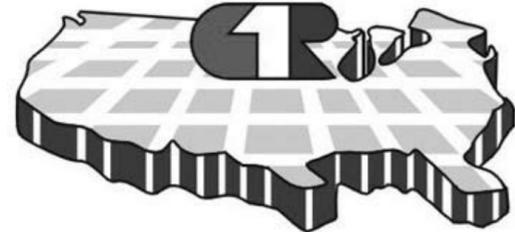
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CCAD holds Broken Wing ceremony for test pilots

by Jamey Giddens, CCAD PAO

On Feb. 6, Corpus Christi Army Depot honored two of its test pilots with the Army Combat Readiness Center's Broken Wing Award at CCAD Hangar 44. The awards were presented in recognition of the test pilots' safe landing of an aircraft during a recent in-flight emergency. CW3 Marc Latimer and CW4 James Turner, test pilots with CCAD's Directorate of Quality Assurance Aviation Division, were presented the award for the heroic efforts they displayed during an acceptance test flight on a UH-60 Black Hawk aircraft this past Oct. 11, 2006.

While conducting maximum power checks on the aircraft's engines at 6,000 feet, the pilots detected hydromechanical unit failure. All engine instruments stopped functioning properly, causing the pilots to begin looking for a landing area. CW3 Latimer and CW4 Turner shut the engines down and started a "power off" descent.

By manipulating engine controls, the

CCAD pilots were able to maintain proper rotor RPM to keep the aircraft in the air, maintaining control as the aircraft descended throughout the clouds without power. By swapping engines, moving controls and using every known emergency procedure, they tried to recover power to at least one engine prior to landing. As they came out of the clouds, they made a sharp right turn to land at the San Jose Island air strip. While CW3 Latimer continued to guide the aircraft to the strip, CW4 Turner managed to regain partial power to the engines. A short distance to the strip, they both noticed a truck parked in the middle of the runway. CW4 Turner worked to get power back to the aircraft as CW3 Latimer made a high speed run to their only safe landing spot. Both pilots successfully worked to slow the aircraft and maneuver it away from the truck. Upon landing, the crew and aircraft were recovered by CCAD before darkness fell.



CW4 Turner (left) and CW3 Latimer receive the Broken Wing Award from Deputy to the Commanding General of AMCOM, Dr. Richard Amos. (Photo by LI2 Paul Hewitt)



Mineman honored, then bids farewell

by Ed Mickley, Naval Mine and ASW PAO

Mineman 1st Class (SW) Samuel Dorbandt was recognized as Mineman of the Year and awarded the Navy and Marine Corps Achievement Medal Jan. 26, just prior to being transferred due to the USS PELICAN's (MHC 53) decommissioning.

Each year throughout the Mine Warfare community, countless minemen's names are submitted, accompanied by a detailed work history and accomplishments, to compete for the title to be the best. Chosen for exemplary dedication to duty, field

expertise and professionalism, Mineman of the Year is a well-deserved honor for the recipient.

MNI Dorbandt was also awarded the Navy and Marine Corps Achievement Medal for his dedication and service to CREW LOYALTY and the PELICAN.

Family, friends and shipmates were present to congratulate Dorbandt and wish him fair winds and following seas. His transfer to another Mine Warfare Crew is the first of many as CREW LOYALTY and

PELICAN approach their decommissioning slated for March 16, 2007. Dorbandt was presented with a historic photo of the USS PELICAN and a ship's coin by CREW LOYALTY's Commanding Officer, Lt. Cmdr. James Storm.

"Days like these are the very reason I wanted to become a Commanding Officer," stated Storm. "These sailors work in tough conditions and always come out on top."

Lt. Cmdr. James Storm (left) presents Mineman 1st Class (SW) Samuel Dorbandt with the Mineman of the Year award. (Photo by PELICAN Crew)

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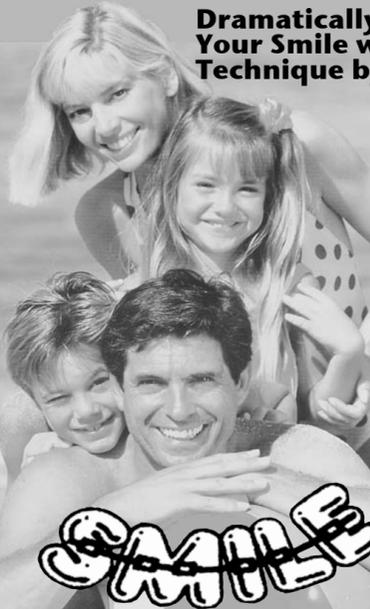
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Captain continued from page 2

Speaking of history, February was Black History Month and we've had a couple of lunch meetings here on base to honor those who have served and are currently serving. There are many African-American members in the military who have served honorably. Many of these men and women have made the ultimate sacrifice for our Country. All of them have made a difference and are considered heroes!

Take Master Chief Boatswain's Mate Carl M. Brashear, an African-American diver from which the movie "Men of Honor" was made starring Cuba Gooding, Jr., who portrayed Brashear. Regarding his accident in 1966 when Brashear lost his leg, he said, "Just as I started to leave, the boat pulled on the pipe that had the mooring line tied to it. That pipe came loose, flew across the deck, and it struck my leg below the knee. They said that I was up in the air just turning flips. I landed about two feet inside of that freeboard. They said if I'd been two feet further, I'd have gone over the side. I jumped up and started to run and fell over. That's when I knew how bad my leg was."

The Corpsmen on the ship emplaced two tourniquets to try to quell the blood pumping out of his leg. Later, it was ampu-

tated, but they had to go at it again and re-amputate higher to ensure they removed all the gangrene. I've heard that after he received a prosthetic leg, when he'd go running, blood would trickle down, welling from his amputation. But Brashear didn't tell people about that. He'd soak his amputated leg in brine water to suppress the bleeding.

BMCM Brashear wouldn't quit. When the Tribunal forced him to show that he was physically able to perform the rigors as a Navy diver, through mostly a force of will alone, he completed the assigned task. The Navy awarded him the title of "Master Diver."

There are so many stories of African-American service members and what they've contributed to our Nation and to our military that many books could, and should, be written about them. The point here is that there are many people who have served and are legitimate heroes but are rarely acknowledged. Take the time to study our history, and then you judge who deserves to be called a hero. We have our share walking the same sidewalks in our town, here today.

See ya on the beach!

Le Gaux continued from page 5

Most of what was being investigated was the damage caused by incoming rounds, damages to homes, that kind of thing. Because it was pretty large place, part of the daily routine was getting clean.

"The heads and showers were like a mile walk to get there," Le Gaux recalled with a smile. "Then you had to go up 10 flights of stairs, things like that. Once everything was ready we'd get into the convoy—we would convoy to and from Firm Base Kilo Co., with about six or seven vehicles. I had a 9mm pistol. It was enough to duck and get out of the way," he laughed. "I was surprised I wasn't issued an M-16."

"Downtown Haditha was like an urban strip mall looking area," he said. "We'd go to the firm base, and interview people that were there that day. They were mainly military, but we did talk to some of the relatives of the people who were killed to get an idea of what they knew, versus what we were being told. At one point we talked to the coroner down there, and the next day insurgents took over the hospital. It was pretty wild!"

Lieutenant Junior Grade Le Gaux, promoted since his return, does not elaborate on what he learned. Trials have not yet been held and he won't say anything that could prejudice the cases.

"It was definitely a different experience," Le Gaux mused. "There are things you learn about the culture. The greetings there were a lot different with formalities. There are things that could be taken the wrong way very easily."

"I think the low point was when we were on a convoy on 'Route Irish' which was the road between Camp Victory and the 'Green Zone' where the Embassy and other residences were. It's about a 15-minute drive by Humvee. We had an RPG hit under my Hummer. The law of probabilities is not a matter of if you're going to get hit, it's when. The more you go out, the probabilities of getting hit go up."

Fortunately, no one was hurt.

"We didn't see where it came from, but the angle—it hit under the rear bumper and shot out away from the Humvee," Le Gaux said. "What we got were some carbon deposits. The driver had inched forward a little bit and I think that kept us from getting a direct hit."

According to Le Gaux, just driving on the freeway, you expect to take incoming rounds. And believe it or not, you can't always stay alert, and it becomes routine, until something happens.

"I saw some weird things like cars that seemed to charge us, and then move away," he continued. "There was a major 'pucker factor' for a while, but then you see so much that it almost becomes routine. You know you still have to be on the alert, but I figured that if we got hit, there was nothing I could do until afterwards."

However, that doesn't mean security procedures weren't in place.

"Generally on the convoy, the gunner would do his 'escalation of forces' procedures," informed Le Gaux. "He'd wave an approaching vehicle off. Then he would have red-smoke canisters that he could shoot out towards the threat. He also had paddles that he'd wave at them, and if they kept coming, then he'd shoulder his weapon. If needed, they would fire one round into the ground, then one into the engine, and then one at the driver."

"It never got that far with us. Generally by the time he shouldered the weapon and pointed it at them, they stopped," said Le Gaux. "Most of that took a matter of seconds."

The worst time for Le Gaux was about a week before he returned.

"By then, physically I was still there. Mentally, I was on a plane flying home," said Le Gaux. "It was hard to stay focused, keep motivated and keep doing my job. The hardest point was that I wasn't sure if I was going back, because the general wanted me to stay an extra six months."

"I really couldn't, because my wife's in school, we have kids, and I needed to be home," said Le Gaux. "There's a lot of juggling, having a family. They had not signed my 'release from theatre,' letter and technically, they could have kept me. It's called 'TOA plus 14.' Until I actually got on the plane, I wasn't sure when I'd get back!"

When asked to describe one of the greatest highlights, Le Gaux answered with a huge smile, uncharacteristic to his quiet façade. "When you have a three-star general saying 'Ensign Le Gaux, what do YOU think?' That's definitely a highlight."



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AROUND THE BASE IN 2007



Major Edward "Two Dog" Vicknair is joined by his wife, Kelly, and his two daughters, Heather and Christine, during his retirement ceremony, held Friday, Feb. 16. (Photo by George Alexander, CTW-4)



Jaydin, Christian, Memphis, and Paris dance in a Valentine's Day celebration. The children attend Mrs. Bridgette's Day Care, an on-base certified Child Development Home, and enjoyed handing out Valentine's gifts and goodies to each other. (Photo by Anne Booher, Editor)



A HELMINERON 15 MH-53E Sea Stallion helicopter departs with a MK-105 in tow for mine sweeping training during training operations at Panama City, FL. (Photo by MC2 Ruben Perez, HM-15 PAO)



On Feb. 22, the CCAD Black Employment Program Committee hosted a Black History Month luncheon at the Bay Club. This year's theme was "From Slavery to Freedom: The Story of Africans in the Americas." From left to right, Clifford Solomon, Joe Taylor, Sandra Jackson & Lawrence Stoney lead the group in song. (Photo by Gus Gonzalez)

AWARDS AND ACHIEVEMENTS

Winging Ceremony • Feb. 16



Guest Speaker, Commander, North American Aerospace Defense Command and Commander, U.S. Northern Command, Adm. Timothy Keating accompanied by (L to R) VT-35 XO Cmdr Mark Springer, VT-35 CO Lt. Col. Jon Ullman, CNATRA Rear Adm. Donald Quinn, TRAWING-4 Commodore Capt. David Maynard, VT-31 CO Cmdr. Charles Cassidy, VT-31 XO Cmdr. Joe Shipley. Wingees listed alphabetically: Larry R. Belcher III, Jeremiah L. Brewer, Jeffrey K. Cummings, Adam C. Darrow, Justin J. Hinrichs, Chad W. Hall, Thomas R. Key, Richard T. Kuehner, Donald A. Lauderdale, Joseph R. Lennox, Brian R. Long, Matthew S. Mayo, Danielle C. Parton, John F. Patton, Taylor S. Sculli, Stephen P. Sweet II, Travis H. Walters, Kelly R. Weber, Regina K. Zeleski. (Photo by Richard Stewart, Base Photographer)

Military of the Year • Feb. 15



Military of the Year for their respective commands (Front L to R): YN1 Caryn Dejong, AT2 Dusty Riley, HM2 Jami Skornia, Cpl. Herber Perez, AC1 Kristen Walker, AC3 Jamie Wright, YN1 Tanya Wise (Back): AE2 David Thurnvalsassina, AT1 Jeremy Most, PS1 Kenneth Holifield, PS3 Adam Mustain, TSGT Joey Williams, HM1 Edwin Guingab, AE2 Thomas Jones (Photo by Richard Stewart, Base Photographer)

Commadore's List • VT-27



Cmdr. Eric Hendrickson, Commanding Officer of Training Squadron 27, congratulates Ens. Devin Holmes (right) for his accomplishment. Ens. Holmes is the latest Boomer to make the Commadore's List, receiving the award for sustained superior performance in ground academics and flight performance above that of his peers. (Photo by Kelly Flynn)