

ALL HANDS

MAGAZINE OF THE U.S. NAVY

DECEMBER 2023



A NOTE FROM THE EDITOR AND STAFF

Every month, we focus on the Navy's mission-focused people and technologies. As we survey how our naval forces continue to train, fight and equip the world's toughest Sailors, we look at our advantage at sea and the capabilities of Sailors deployed around the world.

It is our mission to reach Sailors, so please share this issue, scan the QR codes, and follow our social media channels for the latest information for Sailors by Sailors.

This month, we look back at some of the stories and events that happened in the past year. We hope that this issue brings back joyful memories and, from everyone at All Hands, we wish you all a happy new year!

ALL HANDS MAGAZINE

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JANUARY

In January, The U.S. Navy Surgeon General released Navy Medicine's 2023 campaign order. The order stated how Navy medical forces must be ready to project medical power in support of the warfighter across the full range of military operations. The world of virtual reality makes it's way into naval firefighting when ATGPAC demonstrated a new virtual reality training system that allows Sailors to fight simulated fires in a safe and cost-efficient way. Later, the USS Abraham Lincoln (CVN 72) hosted a Friends and Family Day Cruise where more than 850 family members and friends joined Sailors to experience a day on a ship. Commander, Navy Region Southeast announced Electronics Technician 1st Class Erik Outlaw, from NAS Meridian, and Air Traffic Controller 1st Class Marquise Price, from NAS Corpus Christi, as the top Air Traffic Control Technician and Air Traffic Controller in the region for the year of 2022. Towards the end of the month, the exercise Obangame Express (OE23), the largest multinational maritime exercise in Western and Central Africa, kicked off its 12th year with 33 participating nations. Additionally, the "Red Lancers" of Patrol Squadron (VP) 10 successfully concluded an 8-day joint exercise. Cooperation Afloat Readiness and Training (CARAT)/Marine Exercise (MAREX) Sri Lanka, showcasing the proficiency and readiness of the naval forces involved in this collaborative training endeavor.



Photo by MC2 Class Matthew Cavenaile



Photos by MC2 James S. Hong

SEABEES HELP SPANISH MONASTERY

Story by MC3 Samuel Wagner

U.S. Navy Seabees deployed to Naval Station Rota volunteered at a historic Carthusian Monastery in Jerez de la Frontera, Spain, for a community service opportunity, Jan. 22.

More than 20 Sailors from Naval Mobile Construction Battalion (NMCB) 11, stationed at nearby Naval Station Rota, volunteered at the Charterhouse of Santa María de la Defensa in Jerez de La Frontera, where they assisted local nuns in the upkeep of the 16th-century Spanish historical monument.

“The Seabee ‘Can Do’ spirit was evident as our volunteers pulled weeds and hauled debris... just for the satisfaction of helping others,” said Lt. Ken Slaughter, NMCB 11’s chaplain. “Their selfless service is truly inspiring.” The volunteers transported and chopped large quantities of firewood for burning in the monastery’s furnace. Additionally, they cleared debris and dug ditches for planting trees.

“Every American that has come here, especially the military personnel, has been a great help to us because they are strong, they have energy and they know how to work and they finish what they start,” said Sister Crist-Hallel, a nun at the Charterhouse. “The monastery is a beautiful place and you can work outdoors, enjoying the sun, enjoying each other’s company. All this makes this a good volunteer opportunity.”

The Charterhouse of Santa María de la Defensa began construction in the 16th century, and since then had been worked on by Spanish Baroque architects, woodworkers and painters until its establishment as one a Spanish National Monument in 1856.

NMCB 11 operates as a part of Navy Expeditionary Combat Command and is assigned to Commander, Task Force (CTF) 68 for deployment across the U.S. Naval Forces Europe-Africa area of operations to defend U.S., allied, and partner interests. NMCB 11 is currently deployed to Naval Station (NAVSTA) Rota in support of CTF 68.

NAVSTA Rota sustains the fleet, enables the fighter operations, port operations, ensuring security and safety, assuring quality of life and providing the core services of power, fuel and information technology.



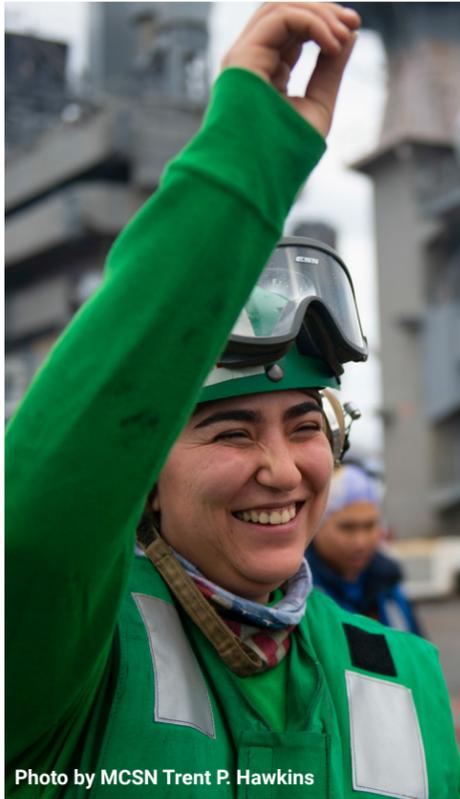


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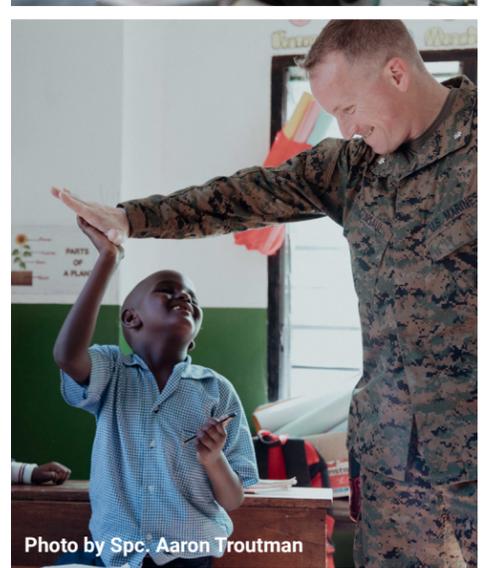


Photo by Spc. Aaron Troutman



Photo by MC2 Joshua M. Tolbert

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FEBRUARY

In February 2023 the Navy Supply Corps celebrated its 228th birthday. A historic milestone in the U.S. Navy unfolded during the Super Bowl as an all-female Navy flyover took center stage for the first time, and Sailors on the USS Gerald R. Ford (CVN 78) gathered in the ship's hangar bay to watch the super bowl while underway. The USS Milwaukee (LCS 5) played a pivotal role in intercepting and preventing the flow of illicit drugs from reaching the United States. The US Naval Community College commenced the acceptance of applications for aviation maintenance programs, offering aspiring individuals the opportunity to contribute to the Navy's aviation capabilities through comprehensive education and training. The Navy celebrated black history month by showcasing stories from throughout the fleet such as, Hospital Corpsman 3rd Class Ciara Famer and Logistics Specialist 1st Class Jessica Ivory. USS The Sullivans (DDG 68) returned to Naval Station Mayport concluding a four-month deployment to the U.S. 5th Fleet area of operations and Sailors onboard the USS Boxer (LHD 4) lined up to support their ships blood drive, collectively donating 30 pints.



Photo by BM1 Scott Graham

GUN BOSS, DEPARTING

Story by MC3 Samuel Wagner

The Nimitz-class aircraft carrier USS George H.W. Bush (CVN 77) is saying farewell this week to its first female head of its weapons department, Cmdr. Alexa Sandifer, the ship's "Gun Boss", as she prepares to take command. Capt. Dave Pollard, commanding officer of George H.W. Bush, praised Sandifer's leadership and commitment to Sailors.

"Gun Boss demonstrates every day what it means to be a leader. The values she embodies and her natural ability to be an encourager and champion of Sailors across George H.W. Bush have been a huge benefit from the most junior Sailors aboard our ship to the most senior," said Pollard.

"It is because of leaders like her who put in the effort each day to make a difference in the lives of those around her – setting the example for those they serve – that we are the deterrent force we are today. Much like our namesake, she lives a life of 'ceiling and visibility unlimited.'"

As a young woman, Sandifer worked tirelessly to escape what she describes as the "slums." Trying to avoid what she knew was likely to be a dead end, she relied on the discipline instilled in her by her mother and grandmother and enlisted in the U.S. Navy.

"I knew my family couldn't afford for me to go to college, but I knew I wanted to get out there and make a difference," said Sandifer. "I'm the first one in my family to ever join the military. I figured why not get out there and see what happens." Sandifer, a New York native, enlisted the U.S. Navy in August 1991 as an aviation ordnanceman airman.

When Sandifer graduated "A" school, women were not yet allowed to serve aboard aircraft carriers so her first command was a P-3 squadron. As the first woman in the P-3 shop, it was there she learned she would need to establish herself in a field dominated by men. "I worked hard to show I was just as capable as the men I worked with," said Sandifer. "I competed to defy my leaders' expectations and once my shipmates realized I was every bit as dedicated and capable as them, I earned their respect."

After working to advance, and picking up a knack for leading Sailors along the way, Sandifer began to look to her future. It wasn't long before she learned about the opportunities of earning a commission, and set her sights on accomplishing that goal.

Her path to commissioning was full of challenges and required perseverance. She applied for the Limited Duty Officer (LDO) program multiple times before finally earning her commission on May 1, 2006.

As a newly minted naval officer, Sandifer absorbed all the guidance she could from mentors and role models. One bit of advice she still carries with her today - and tries to instill in her Sailors - is from retired Capt. Michael Price. "He used to tell me 'if it doesn't challenge you, it doesn't change you,'" said Sandifer. "I've tried to face every challenge head on and to encourage my Sailors to do the same."

Sandifer will complete her 10th deployment when she departs George H.W. Bush this week, and in all her experiences at sea, there's one thing she cherishes above all else.

"The greatest achievement of my career is being able to help my Sailors," said Sandifer. "Nothing compares to knowing your team is achieving the unachievable."

And in living out her values and principles each day, she provides inspiration for young Sailors to achieve their goals and highest aspirations.

"As a young female Sailor, seeing a leader such as her inspires me to be strong and to shine a brighter path for the future of women in the Navy," said Aviation Ordnanceman Airman Lily Cook. "That's what she has done for us."

Sandifer's deployment aboard with the Nimitz-class aircraft carrier USS Harry S. Truman (CVN 75) earned her a place in naval history as the first woman deployed as the ordnance handling officer (OHO) on the East Coast.

She also served as the first female force OHO, and is the third woman aviation ordnance LDO to achieve the rank of commander.

Her career impact has been so widespread that her colleagues, peers, and mentors serving in the ordnance community at Naval Air Force Atlantic even put together a framed photo of her featuring her accomplishments that they hang proudly in their office.

"The picture we did is heartfelt from the entire staff and really shows the respect we have for her," said Bill Glenn, Aerial & Seaborne Targets Manager at Naval Air Force Atlantic. "She's a rock star in the ordnance community."

And even as Sandifer prepared to depart George H.W. Bush, she urged all Sailors to continue being humble, but hungry.

"Remain who you are," said Sandifer. "Don't be someone you're not. Learn from bad experiences, and turn them around. Most of all, do whatever you need to do in order to make a difference."

After completing her assignment aboard George H.W. Bush, she will move on to become the first woman to command Center for Naval Aviation Technical Training Unit Oceana where she will continue to inspire Sailors both old and new.



Courtesy photo



Photo by MC3 Leon Vonguyen



Photo by MC3 Mykala Keckeisen

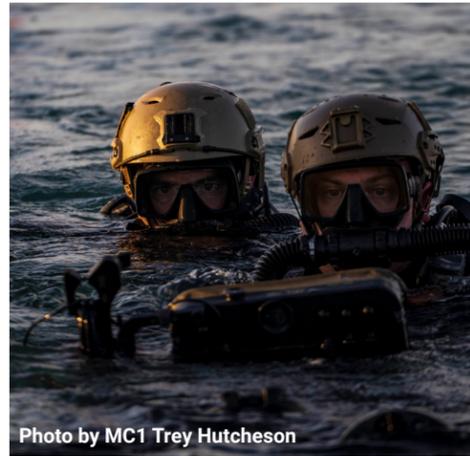


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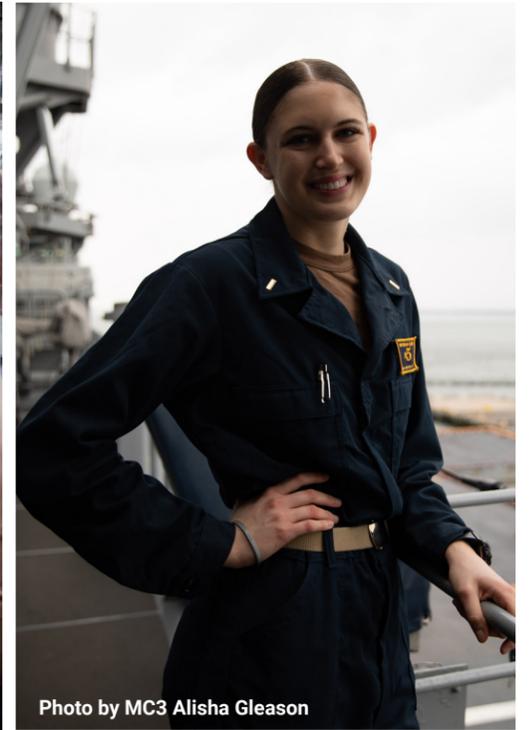


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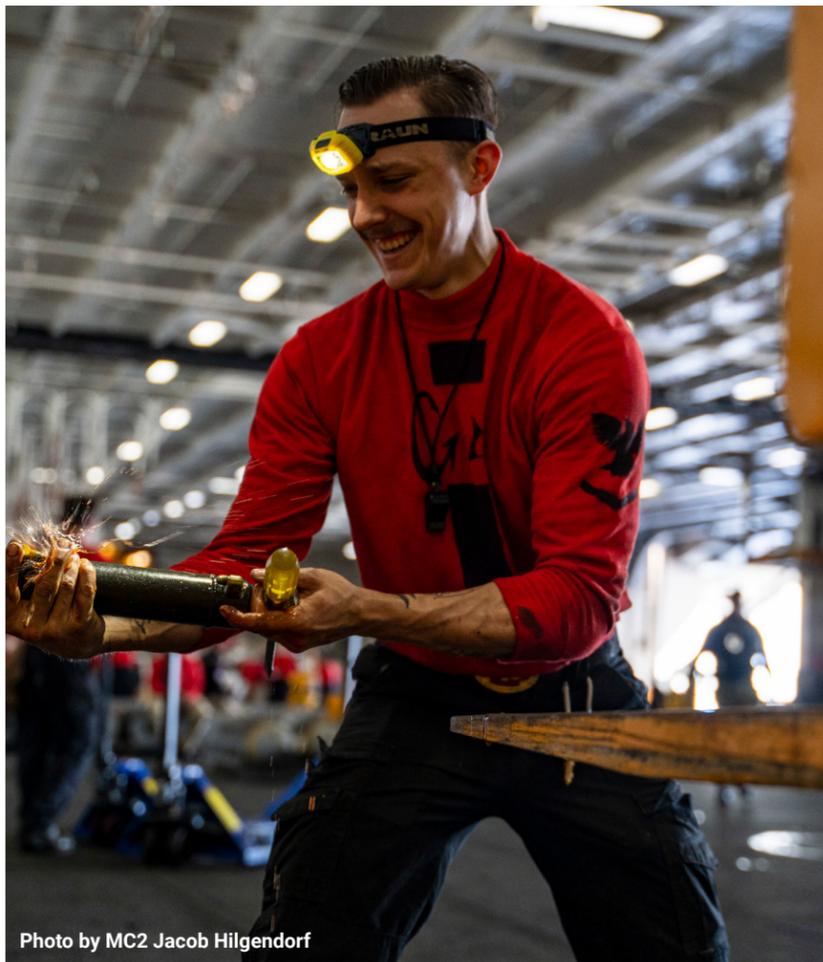


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Photo by MCC Brian Brooks



Photo by MC3 Loui J. Aguinaldo



Photo by MC1 Randi Brown



Photo by MC3 Samuel Wagner

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MARCH

While the winter season dies down, 27 master chiefs were selected for advancement to the esteemed rank of Command Master Chief Petty Officer. A group of female scientists from the Department of Defense (DoD) Chemical and Biological defense laboratories participated in a "Scientists in Action" program, observing Navy Forward Deployable Preventive Medicine Unit (FDPMU) Operation Readiness Evaluation (ORE) Exercise at Marine Corps Base Camp Pendleton. Meanwhile, Naval Support Activity Hampton Roads Chief Petty Officers demonstrated their commitment to community service by giving back to homeless veterans. Across the Atlantic, U.S. Sailors stationed in Bahrain, representing various ships including USS Sentry (MCM 3), USS Devastator (MCM 6), USS Dextrous (MCM 13), USS Gladiator (MCM 11), and recently decommissioned vessels like USS Hurricane (PC 3), participated in a waterfront competition. This event, held on March 29-30, served as a platform for Sailors to showcase their naval knowledge and damage control skills. At the end of the month, USS Little Rock (LCS 9) departed from Naval Station Mayport to support U.S. 4th Fleet area of operations along with the "berzerkers" of Helicopter Sea Combat Squadron (HSC) 28 Detachment 5 and U.S. Coast Guard Law Enforcement Detachment (LEDET) 106.

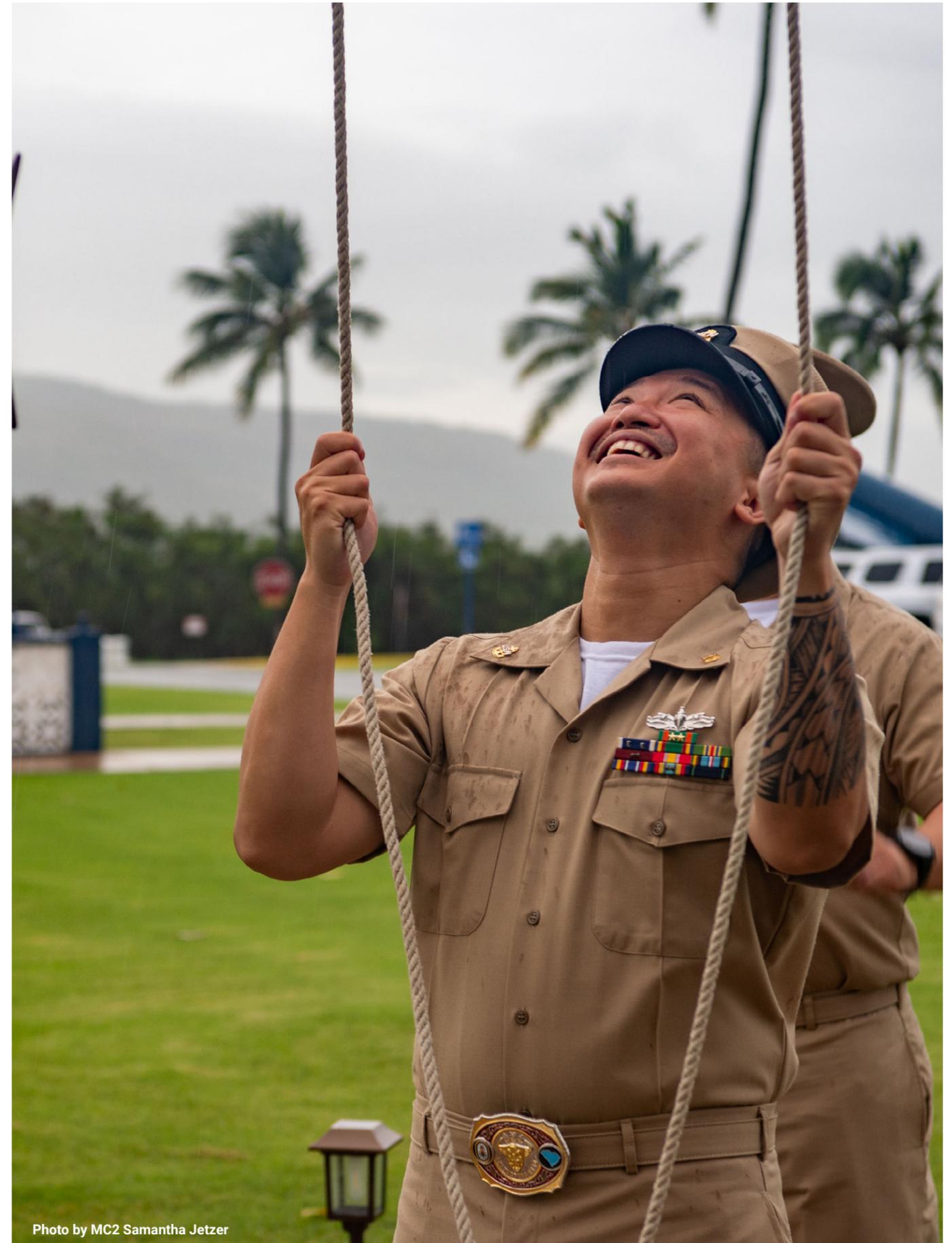


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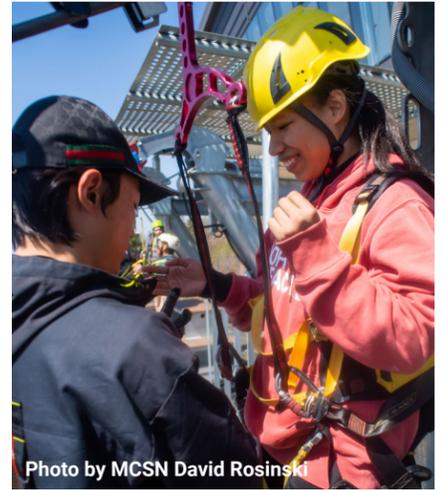


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Photo by MC2 Dakota Rayburn



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Photo by MCC Paul Archer



Photo by MCSN August Clawson



Photo by MC3 Ryan Colosanti



Photo by MC3 Dylan Lavin



Photo by MC2 Christopher O'Grady



Photo by MC2 Delaney Jensen



Photo by MC2 Justin McTaggart



Photo by MC2 Hannah Fry

MAN'S BEST FRIEND

Story by MC2 Hannah Fry

They say a dog is man's best friend, but sometimes they can be so much more. They can become your family, your teammate, or your partner. For men and women assigned to security forces in the U.S. military, they can become all these things at once when assigned to work with Military Working Dogs (MWD).

Dogs supporting military forces can be traced far through history with some of the first circumstances being ancient Egyptians taking their dogs into battle with them. For the U.S. though, the program has much more recent roots. The U.S. Army was the first branch to train dogs to support soldiers and the mission when it opened its "K-9 Corps" program on March 13, 1942. In World War 1, more than 1 million dogs served by carrying messages through the trenches and bringing psychological support to soldiers.

During World War 2, the Quartermaster Corps of the U.S. Army (QMC) was given the task of training dogs for not only the Army, but the Navy, Marines and Coast Guard. They trained in four specialties: sentry, patrol, messenger, and mine detection.

When it comes to training, methods have improved, commands and expectations have changed, but those specialties still encompass most of what they do. Here at Naval Station (NAVSTA) Rota, the kennel has dogs that focus on explosive and drug detection and patrol missions.

NAVSTA Rota's kennel has been around for many years and continues to be one of the most important in the region. Apart from simply the size, Sailors assigned to work with these MWD's hold the important role of working through deployments to ensure the safety of dignitaries during diplomatic visits and offer training all around Europe and Africa. Because of the mission's they support, Master-at-Arms 2nd Class (MA2) Charlsie Maddox said they train regularly with the MWDs they are assigned as handlers.

"We train them daily," said Maddox. "We're required to train each dog for 10 to 15 hours per week. That can include utilization, our training minutes, and the patrol dogs doing bite work."

From Helen, Georgia, Maddox joined the Navy as an undesignated Sailor to find travel opportunities. When given the opportunity she selected to become a MA but didn't originally plan on being a dog handler.

She originally selected MA to be able to work in harbor but during her time in "A" school an instructor pulled her aside to tell her she should try for K-9.

"I already thought it was way too late," she said. "I had received orders to my next command at that point, but I went ahead and had some conversations with the K-9 MAs. Maybe a week later, I was at the K-9 'C' school."

Now assigned to work with MWD Rosco, a six-and-a-half year old Belgian Malinois, Maddox said the last minute switch was the best decision she could have made.

"Coming from a ship and being [undesignated], this job is hands down the greatest thing that could have happened to me," said Maddox. "Having that perspective helps keep me motivated. A lot of people don't realize what they have when it comes to being a dog handler, or just being in Spain in general."

Handlers and K-9s have a unique relationship that borders on partner and pet. The dogs have distinct personalities that are often only seen by their handlers.

"I would describe my relationship with Rosco as me being the mature older sister and him being the annoying little brother who makes me angry, but I still love him," said Maddox.

MA2 Caitlyn Honeycutt, another dog handler at the NAVSTA Rota kennels, has a similar view of her K-9. "We're supposed to look at them more like a work relationship," said Honeycutt, "but most of us do get that emotional connection with our dogs. So, I look at my dog more as a pet, but we understand that when it's time to work, she's a work asset. It is difficult to change it up though because all you want to do is love them."

Honeycutt is currently certified on MWD Gina, a Belgian Malinois nearing retirement. She spends her days like with the rest of the kennel, working and training, but will soon earn her place among the proud, highly trained K-9s that have completed their mission.

Although in the military these dogs are referred to as Military Working Dogs, a K-9 unit, or canine unit is simply a dog trained to support law enforcement. These K-9s are celebrated yearly on March 13, National K-9 Veteran Appreciation Day. This day is set aside to recognize the invaluable support these dogs offer the U.S. military members and police force.

"We couldn't do our job without them," said Maddox. "We've lost two of our K9s since I've been in Rota, MWD Blek and MWD Zico. At the end of the day, we keep each other alive. We couldn't do our jobs without each other. I think a dog serving life dedicated to our mission deserves to be recognized, just like a veteran would be. They are veterans. They deserve to be recognized for everything they do."

In celebration of National K-9 Veteran Appreciation Day, NAVSTA Rota will be posting pet profiles on Naval Station Rota, Spain Facebook featuring Rota's MWD's starting on March 24.

.04

APRIL

In April, four Sailors from the USS Boxer (LHD 4) medical department were honored with the American Red Cross National Lifesaving Award at the American Red Cross Regional Headquarters in San Diego. USS John Finn (DDG 113) engaged in a series of exercises with the Republic of Korea's (ROK) Navy from April 24 to 27, aimed at bolstering interoperability and fostering stronger ties between the naval forces of the two nations. Loan Depot Park in Miami, Florida witnessed an enthusiastic gathering of over 500 Sailors, Marines, and Coast Guardsmen who "invaded" the venue to partake in Military Night with the Marlins. Additionally, a celebration marked "Women in Naval Aviation: Celebrating 50 Years of Flying," highlighted the significant contributions and achievements of women in the field of naval aviation. The USS George H.W. Bush (CVN 77) returned from a historic deployment, marking the successful completion of its mission, and Navy Fleet week Everglades saw many entertaining events to showcase our Sailors.



Photo by MC1 Cody Deccio



Photo by MC2 Zachary Behrend



Photo by MC2 Ian Zagrocki



Photo by MC1 Jeanette Mullinax



Photo by MCSN Luke Wilson



Photo by MCSA Pierce Luck



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Photo by MC2 Rafael Avelar



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Photo by MC2 Nadia James



Photo by MC2 Elliot Schaudt



Photo by MC2 Zachary Behrend



Photo by MC2 Andrew Waters

A RARE ACHIEVEMENT, A UNIQUE CAREER

Story by MC2 Andrew Waters

On March 15, 2023, Lt. Cmdr. Briana Platukis became one of the first women to earn a warfare pin in four of the Naval warfare areas that supply officers serve in.

Platukis is currently serving as the supply officer for Naval Construction Battalion 133 (NMCB 133), where she earned her Seabee Combat Warfare Specialist (SCWS) pin and her Navy Expeditionary Supply Warfare Officer pin, two of her five overall warfare qualifications.

Platukis is a native of Sonoma, Calif. and enlisted in the Navy as an Aviation Maintenance Administrationman in 2006 after obtaining two bachelor's degrees in journalism and anthropology from the University of Hawaii at Manoa. While she was completing her first tour on the aircraft carrier USS Abraham Lincoln (CVN 72), her leadership approached her about putting in a package to commission.

"I got there and was working in [Aircraft Intermediate Maintenance Department]," said Platukis. "My maintenance officer was like, 'Hi, welcome aboard,' he looked at my record and said, 'You have two bachelor's degrees. Why are you not an officer?'" said Platukis.

After a year and a half on the Lincoln and earning her Enlisted Air Warfare Specialist pin, she was enrolled in Officer Candidate School (OCS), training to become a supply officer. After going through OCS and supply corps school, she eventually arrived at her first assignment as the disbursing officer on the Oliver Hazard Perry-class frigate USS Boone (FFG 28) where she earned her Surface Warfare Supply Corps Officer (SWSCO) pin.

"I had a unique experience there as well; I've not had a common career," said Platukis with a laugh. "I actually had a surprise pregnancy a year and a half into the tour and got sent to staff duty at Fleet Logistics Center, Jacksonville. After I finished maternity leave, I called my commanding officer to ask if I could finish my SWSCO."

Platukis went back to USS Boone with six weeks left before the ship would be decommissioned to finish her qualification. After lots of studying, Platukis was able to earn her pin.

"I did my final board as they were berth-shifting to the pier where they were going to decommission," said Platukis. "I stood on the bridge with the CO, we did the board, and I walked off the brow and was pinned on the pier."

Platukis finished her time at Fleet Logistics Center, Jacksonville and transferred to Defense Contract Management Agency, Minneapolis, Minnesota for shore duty. After completing her time on shore duty, her next operational tour would be on the Ohio-class submarine USS Ohio (SSGN 726).

While aboard the Ohio, Platukis had the opportunity to earn her Submarine Supply Corps insignia; however, this would be met with its own challenges. The Ohio began a deployment shortly after Platukis arrived during which time she started working on her qualification. Not long after the deployment was over, the boat went into dry-dock in the shipyards. "I had to go ride other boats to finish because the Dolphins -a name for submarine warfare devices-process is qualifications based," stated Platukis. "I went to the USS Nevada twice and spent a total of about six weeks with them to finish up my practical factors."

After this process, Platukis was able to complete her boards on the Ohio, earning her a third warfare pin. Shortly thereafter, she attended the U.S. Naval War College and was redesignated as a full-time support supply officer, essentially making her a reservist filling active-duty orders.

"Our specialty is the administration of the reserves and expeditionary," said Platukis. "We have a big foothold in cargo handling, Seabees and other things like that."

After a 15-month stint at the Defense Logistics Agency in Fort Belvoir, Virginia managing reserve units, she got a call that someone was needed to fill a billet with the Seabees at NMCB 133.

While working at NMCB 133, Platukis was able to earn both her Seabee Combat Warfare Specialist pin and her Navy Expeditionary Supply Corps Officer pin.

"The advice I got was to work SCWS first because it's the only chance I would ever have to get the pin," said Platukis. "They were so similar I was able to work on them simultaneously though. I was also able to get help from a couple of expeditionary supply officers on the stuff that didn't overlap with the Seabees."

Spending time in each of these warfare areas has given Platukis a wide variety of experience within the supply officer community, and it has served her well throughout her career. During her time with NMCB 133, this experience helped her lead her team to earn the Blue "E" Award for Supply Excellence. "It's all very different," said Platukis. "Every time I go to a new community, I'm always the guy who doesn't know anything about the community. I just have to build on my general supply and logistics knowledge to figure out how to do the job."

Platukis is excited for her future assignments and the possibility of promoting to commander. She has already set herself apart by being one of the first women to earn a pin in each supply warfare area, and even though her "wings" are from her time as an enlisted Sailor, she says that to her they are just as good as any golden pair for officers.

.05 MAY

During the month of May, as summer starts up for many of us, Sailors from the Explosive Ordnance Disposal Group 1 undertook advanced training in San Diego, immersing themselves in cutting-edge satellite and mesh network systems. On the international front, the U.S. Sixth Fleet, alongside Naval Striking and Support Forces NATO, launched BALTOPS 2023. As the nation commemorates Asian American Pacific Islander Heritage Month, the U.S. Navy proudly recognizes and celebrates the rich contributions of its Asian American and Pacific Islander Sailors. In honor of Mental Health Awareness Day, Norfolk Naval Shipyard (NNSY) Fleet Maintenance Submarines (FMB) hosted Mutts with a Mission at their facility onboard Naval Station Norfolk to show support and resources to Sailors and Veterans. Down at Naval Air Station Pensacola, The first four air vehicle pilots (AVP) completed flight training and earned their "Wings of Gold."



Photo by MC2 Sawyer Connally

ALL IN THE FAMILY

A MOTHER AND HER SON ATTEND THE SAME AERR 20 YEARS APART

Story by Cheryl Dengler

Chief Navy Counselor Cameron Pritchett found himself sitting in the same seat his mother sat almost 20 years earlier while attending the Navy Counselor (Counselor) (NCC) Advancement Examination Readiness Review (AERR) in Pensacola, Florida, in May 2023.

Pritchett, a command career counselor for U.S. Pacific Fleet, traveled to Pensacola to take part in an AERR—a panel which brings together fleet subject matter experts for one to two weeks to review and develop material for enlisted advancement exams.

Pritchett's mother, retired Command Master Chief Cynthia Patterson, attended the NCC AERR in 2004 and remembers being thrilled to find out she would attend.

"I was so very excited when I heard the news I was selected to assist in writing the NCC exam," said Patterson. "I learned how to write a question, learned how every question written had to have the reference and page number associated with it, and how important the bibliography is."

Patterson relived those feelings when she found out her son would write exam questions as well.

"I've always encouraged Cam to take every opportunity to contribute to his rating and the Navy," said Patterson. "I definitely wanted him to feel the joy (and pain) that goes into creating a Navy exam. I love that he is working with Marsha, who taught me so much about exam writing."

Marsha Parnell, a team leader with the Navy Advancement Center (NAC), worked with both mother and son in their respective AERRs twenty years apart.

"It was so rewarding but also humbling to work with both Cyndi and Cam and see the commitment to excellence that she passed on to him," said Parnell. "Working with a mother and son almost 20 years apart is not something I'll see repeated during my career, so that made the moment very special to me."

Pritchett echoed his mother's beliefs about augmenting the future of his rating when he found out he would attend the AERR.

"I feel extremely lucky and blessed to have the opportunity to not only give back to my rate but the Sailors in the fleet as well," said Pritchett.

"Being able to do something she did and carry on that legacy is truly inspiring for me and I just hope I can have the same impact in the rate she had."

Pritchett stated his mother had a great impact on his career and inspired him to always strive for success.

"My mom is my hero and my star chaser," said Pritchett. "She set the path for me to follow and provided a pathway for me to be successful. She's so inspirational from what she did in her career and was able to accomplish."

Though this was Pritchett's first experience attending an AERR, having a mother who previously attended offered its advantages.

"My mother told me to have fun and enjoy the experience as not everyone is able to have this amazing opportunity," said Pritchett. "She also told me to soak in the moments like this and to take advantage of this opportunity to give back to my

community, and to go back and recommend to everyone possible to sign up for the AERR as well."

Though Patterson enjoyed attending, she acknowledged the hard work put in by the attendees.

"It was tough, long hours, but it was great knowing you had a hand in the future success of those in your rating," said Patterson. "I learned so much from the professionals who led our team—how to write a question as well as tying each question to the regulations, instructions, and rate training manuals."

Though many things have changed in the 20 years since Patterson attended, when it comes to the AERR, there are some things that remained the same.

"The Navy has grown and changed so much, yet some things remain intact," said Patterson. "I love that Cam got to meet Marsha, who was the same team leader I had. I'm sure I was a pain to her with my million questions and I don't doubt he asked a million as well."

Parnell also reflected on the similarities and differences of the process over the years.

"Due to technological advances, we're able to do more things electronically now than 20 years ago," said Parnell.

"This has helped us to streamline our processes and accomplish more during an AERR by working efficiently. But our emphasis on validating each item and tying it to a page in a reference continues to be of utmost importance."

One common belief upon which Patterson, Pritchett, and Parnell all agree – the Sailor is the most important part of the AERR process.

"My mother said to make sure to do right by the Sailors and to do the hard work," said Pritchett.

Parnell agreed. "I tell every group that the work is hard and the days are long, but to always remember the Sailors who are taking our exams," said Parnell. "They deserve our best!" Both gratitude and pride fill mother and son due to each other's successful naval careers.

"I am proud of Cam and the opportunities he continues to enjoy in his Navy career," said Patterson. "His father was also in the Navy and we live vicariously through him and his sea stories. NCC Pritchett, keep your head on a swivel and make a difference each day. Your mom and dad are so proud of you."

Pritchett echoed that sentiment when expressing gratitude for the example his mother set.

"I never intended to follow her exact footsteps as an NC, but amazingly enough it just worked out that way," said Pritchett. "I just hope my career is able to be half as good as hers, and I hope I can help others the way she did. If I'm able to do that then I know I did her proud!"

As part of the MyNavy HR Force Development team, NETPDC provided products and services that enable and enhance education, training, career development, and personnel development throughout the Navy. Primary elements of the command include the Voluntary Education Department, the NAC, and the Resources Management Department.



Photos by Cheryl Dengler





Photo by MC2 Sawyer Connally



Photo by MC2 Emilee McMahon



Photo by MC1 Justin Wolpert



Photo by MC2 Sawyer Connally



Photo by MC1 Paul Cox



Photo by MC3 Shelby Robinson



Photo by MC2 Sawyer Connally



Photo by MC3 Michael Ciprion



Photo by MC1 Ryre Arciaga



Photo by MC3 Shelby Robinson



Photo by MC2 Juel Foster



Photo by MC1 Greg Johnson

.06

JUNE

As the nation celebrates Pride Month, commands across the Navy recognize and honor the contributions of its LGBTQ+ members who serve with pride and dedication. On the USS Gerald R. Ford (CVN 78), the bonds of brotherhood are exemplified by Aviation Boatswain's Mate (Equipment) 3rd Class Thorton and Intelligence Specialist 1st Class Thorton, two siblings serving with dedication and valor. Meanwhile, aboard the USS Wasp (LHD 1), a familial connection extends across generations as Lt. Cmdr. Chris Coates and his daughter, Midshipman 1st Class Emily Coates, share a commitment to the Navy's mission. Sailors from the USS Emory S. Land (AS 39) volunteer to aid in typhoon recovery efforts helping the locals in... . These diverse narratives weave together, illustrating the rich tapestry of the Navy and the shared spirit of service that unites its Sailors across different ships and missions. A group of Reserve-duty Seabees helped to build a home for a family in need in partnership with Southwest Indian Foundation (SWIF)



Photo by MCC Chad Butler



Photo by MC1 Jamaal Liddell



Photo by MC1 Luke McCall



Photo by MC3 Simon Pike



Photo by Jerron Barnett



Photo by MC2 Matthew Dickinson



Photo by MC1 Cody Deccio



Photo by Lisa Ferdinando



Photo by Lt. Nathan Henderson

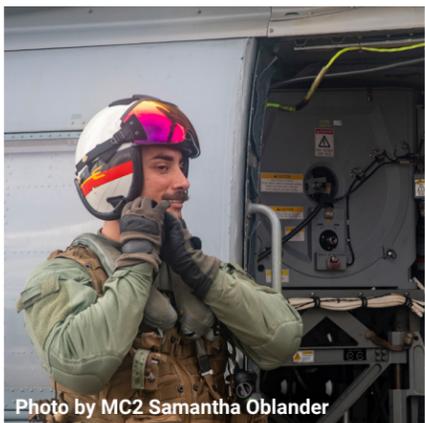


Photo by MC2 Samantha Oblander



Photo by MC2 Colby A. Mothershead

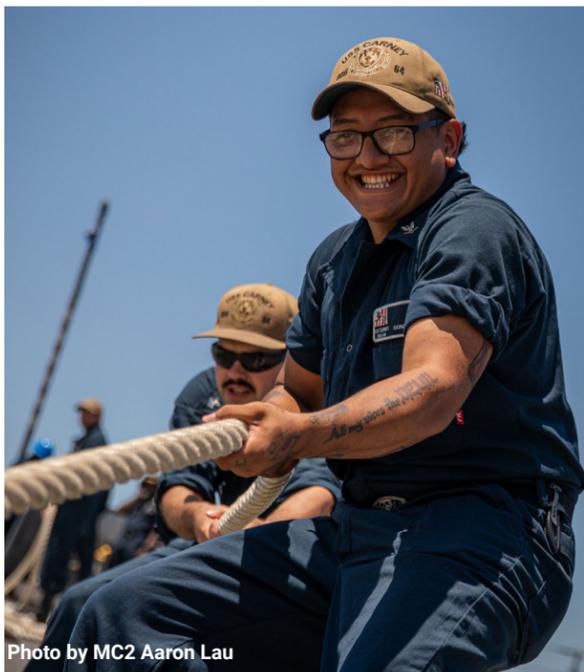


Photo by MC2 Aaron Lau



Photo by MC2 Haydn Smith



Photo by MC2 Colby Mothershead



Photo by MCC Paul Archer



OH BROTHER!

FORD SIBLINGS SHARE THE SAILOR'S LIFE

Story by Courtesy Story

"The worst part about being on a ship with my older brother is that I have to see a shiny head going through the p-ways, it's not hard to miss, it's like a bullseye," said Aviation Boatswain's Mate (Equipment) 3rd Class Darion Thornton, assigned to the world's largest aircraft carrier USS Gerald R. Ford's air department. At 20 years old, Darion is the youngest of his three brothers from Charleston, South Carolina.

His oldest brother, the one with the shiny head, is 29-year-old Intelligence Specialist 1st Class Jered Thornton, assigned to the USS Gerald R. Ford's intelligence department. Jered and Darion Thornton have been serving at the same command since March 2022.

According to Darion, the inspiration to join the United States Navy came to him while in high school after seeing Jered achieve his independence through enlistment.

"It was my senior year and I was trying to figure out if I wanted to go to college," said Darion. "My brother came down for Christmas leave that year and sat down and talked to me. The next morning, I told him to take me to the recruiting station to start the process."

Jered is Gerald R. Ford's intelligence division leading petty officer acting as an operational intelligence analyst. This July,

he will have reached 10 years of service in the Navy. He explains he recommended his younger brother consider the military because of what it did for him as a young man.

"The thing that it gave to me, that I really needed, was standardization and a firm direction," said Jered. "That really helped me to get on track when I was 18."

In February of 2021, while stationed at the Naval Aviation Warfighting Development Center in Fallon, Nevada, Jered found a billet that would place him aboard Gerald R. Ford. After already serving a tour on the West Coast, the job would bring him closer to his hometown, and at the same command as Darion. According to Jered, it was a good career move and a unique chance to serve alongside Darion and impart upon his brother his life lessons.

"When I first left the nest, I was striking out on my own and I didn't have anyone to reach out to that could relate to what I was going through," said Jered. "When the opportunity came along for me to apply for these orders, it was a no brainer. I would be able to be there in person to see what my brother was going through and to share those experiences with him and be able to provide guidance."

Darion says the advice is the best thing about having his brother



Photos by MC3 Aaron Arroyo

on the same ship, and that his presence helps strengthen his resolve to complete his mission while deployed.

"I am able to go to him and ask for advice, de-stress from work and joke on him a little bit," said Darion. "It helps when I can pick his brain about certain things about my job and Navy career, and just to have him here."

The Thornton brothers agree that serving at the same command with a family member has its benefits. For them, it has also come with its share of fond memories. On June 2, 2023, Darion was promoted to the rank of third class petty officer. He chose his older brother to pin his collar device on his uniform.

"When my older brother pinned me, it was a surreal experience due to the fact that not many people get to serve at the same command with their family members or loved ones," said Darion. "I was very overjoyed to have my older brother pin me, to have somebody who I looked up to as a kid growing up, who helped take care of me, it brought tears to my eyes." Darion says his goal is to be able to be there, like Jered was there for him, to pin the anchors on his brother when he makes the rank of chief petty officer.

The Gerald R. Ford Carrier Strike Group (GRFCSG) is conducting a scheduled deployment in the Atlantic Ocean in support of

interoperability and maritime security. The GRFCSG provides an inherently flexible naval force capable of deploying across combatant commands to meet emerging missions, deter potential adversaries, reassure allies and partners, enhance security and guarantee the free flow of global commerce. In total, the GRFCSG is deployed with more than 6,000 Sailors across all platforms ready to respond globally to combatant commander tasking.

Gerald R. Ford is the U.S. Navy's newest and most advanced aircraft carrier. As the first-in-class ship of Ford-class aircraft carriers, CVN 78 represents a generational leap in the U.S. Navy's capacity to project power on a global scale. Ford-class aircraft carriers introduce 23 new technologies, including Electromagnetic Aircraft Launching System, Advanced Arresting Gear and Advanced Weapons Elevators. The new systems incorporated onto Ford-class ships are designed to deliver greater lethality, survivability and joint interoperability with a 20% smaller crew than a Nimitz-class carrier, paving the way forward for naval aviation.

.07

JULY

During July, the Morale, Welfare and Recreation Department (MWR) hosted annual command picnics all across the Navy, allowing Sailors and their families time to relax and have fun. Kiali Cunningham, a competitive swimmer hailing from Texas State, anticipates a new challenge as she eagerly sets her sights on becoming an Aviation Rescue Swimmer. As part of the Navy's global readiness efforts, the Naval Mobile Construction Battalion (NMCB) one participated in Exercise Saber Guardian 2023. The Naval Academy Midshipmen embarked on a unique learning experience during their summer cruise, visiting the Information Warfare Schoolhouse. The Los Angeles-class fast attack submarine USS Chicago (SSN 721) held a decommissioning ceremony at the U.S Naval Undersea Museum at Keyport, Washington. The U.S. Naval Research Laboratory's Very Large Array (VLA) Low-band Ionosphere and Transient Experiment (VLITE) telescope made a ground breaking discovery that has helped astronomers confirm findings of a new stellar phenomenon that challenges current scientific understanding of the physics of neutron stars.



Photo by MC1 Chris Williamson

STUDENT, TEACHER, ARTIST, MINEMAN

MEET USS MANCHESTER SAILOR

Story by MC2 Christopher Thomas

A Helena, Montana, native. A student. A teacher. An artist. A Sailor. Mineman 2nd Class Devan McNatt is an operator for all deck equipment on the littoral combat ship USS Manchester (LCS 14) and is a key member of every boat deck evolution. She's crucial to USS Manchester's primary mission areas – mine warfare, seamanship, and beyond. A learner and a leader, she commits herself to expanding her skill sets beyond her assigned rate, progresses quickly in qualifications, and pays it forward through training and mentoring her shipmates.

McNatt joined the U.S. Navy in 2020. Before the Navy, she was a logistics manager at a competitive company warehouse in Helena, Montana. She enjoys fishing, four-wheeling, and hunting. Her mother and brother are Bering Sea fishermen working off the Bering Strait in Alaska. Inspired by their work at sea and with a desire to travel and explore the world, McNatt joined the U.S. Navy. After completing Mineman Class "A" Technical School in Point Loma, California, she was selected for the LCS program.

"Minemen are everywhere on the ship," said McNatt. "Being a mineman gives the flexibility to do multiple jobs on the ship if you wish, if you take the time to become qualified for it."

Assignment to an optimally-manned LCS allows Sailors an opportunity to have cross-departmental qualifications and participation in many shipboard evolutions and many Sailors on LCS platforms have two or three different collateral duties or areas of responsibility assigned to them. For example, McNatt is a part of every boat deck evolution, visual information collection exercises, manages logistics and maintenance of all deck department equipment, and is an assistant to the ship's safety officer.

"McNatt is a necessity for my department," said Chief Boatswain's Mate Jacob Harkness, the leading chief petty officer of the ship's deck department. "She is a jack of all trades. She is always learning something, teaching something, accomplishing something significant. She is the glue that keeps deck department together." McNatt describes her time on the optimally-manned crew as challenging yet rewarding.

"It is tough being on an LCS; you are expected to do more than you usually would at [a given] rate and rank," said McNatt. "Everyone has to be ready to help anyone on the entire ship. If you do not know what you're doing, it is okay to ask. Everybody is so willing to help."

The tight-knit crew shared an enthusiasm not only for McNatt's professional and operational performance, but also her impressive artwork that boosts morale and brings about camaraderie.

"She designed our beloved crew mascot," said Deck Department Head Lt. Cmdr. Christina Danai. "No matter where you look throughout the ship, you are guaranteed to see a sticker on a water bottle or a Sailor wearing a t-shirt with one of Petty Officer McNatt's drawings – she has positively impacted our crew with not only her diligence, hard work, and attention to detail, but also through her artwork."

McNatt is presently serving on her first deployment in the Indo-Pacific region with the USS Manchester Gold Crew. Manchester is supporting the Oceania Maritime Security Initiative, a Secretary of Defense program that leverages Department of Defense assets to increase U.S. Coast Guard maritime security and maritime domain awareness support in Oceania through operations in remote U.S. exclusive economic zones and bilateral ship rider agreements with Pacific Island nations.



Photo by MC2 Christopher Thomas



Photo by MCC Shannon E. Renfroë



Photo by MC1 Chris Williamson



Photo by MC2 Elliot Schaudt



Photo by MC2 Joshua Samoluk



Photo by MC2 Luke Cunningham



Photo by MC3 Christopher O'Brien



Photo by MCSN William Bennett



Photo by MC2 Erica Higa



Photo by MCSN Ikia Walker



Photo by MC2 James Finney



Photo by UT2 Nettie Mae Manfull



Photo by MC1 Cody Deccio

.08

AUGUST

A testament to a lifetime of dedication was seen as an employee at Fleet Readiness Center East (FRCE) retired after 70 years of combined military and civil service. At the start of the month, The Navy's newest Arleigh Burke-class guided-missile destroyer, USS Carl M. Levin (DDG 120), and its crew arrived at the ship's new home port of Pearl Harbor, Hawaii. At the same time, more than 3,000 U.S. Sailors and Marines of the Bataan Amphibious Ready Group (ARG) and 26th Marine Expeditionary Unit (MEU) arrived in the Middle East as part of a previously announced Department of Defense deployment. In a collaborative effort, the Hawaii National Guard joined forces with the Philippine Armed Forces for an Urban Search and Rescue Exchange, enhancing disaster response capabilities as part of Pacific Partnership 2023. The Navy introduced new capabilities under Navy Medicine, reinforcing its commitment to maintaining health and readiness in the region. More than 25,000 Sailors and Marines across the globe participated in the U.S. Navy and U.S. Marine Corps-led Large Scale Exercise (LSE) 2023, Aug. 9-18, one of the largest exercises for the maritime services. Supporting their community, the U.S. Pacific Fleet Band "Harbor Brass" quintet performed at the Boys and Girls Club of Hawaii in Nanakuli as part of their music education outreach program. A dynamic era in naval oceanography recently ended as the iconic Floating Instrument Platform – popularly known as FLIP – was officially retired from service.



Photo by MC2 Connor Burns

RETIRING AFTER 70 YEARS OF MILITARY, CIVIL SERVICE

Story by Josph Andes

Freddie Dawkins, a pneudraulics systems mechanic at Fleet Readiness Center East (FRCE), celebrated his retirement from federal service after 70 years of combined military and civilian service.

FRCE Commanding Officer Capt. James M. Belmont recognized Dawkins' accomplishments during a ceremony at the depot July 27.

"Mr. Dawkins has had an extraordinary career," Belmont said. "For seventy years, he has dedicated himself to serving our nation. It's remarkable when you think about it. He has served under every U.S. president since Eisenhower. He exemplifies commitment and faithful service."

Dawkins' lengthy federal service career began January 1, 1953, when he enlisted in the U.S. Air Force in the aircraft and engine mechanic career field. Dawkins was 17 years old at the time.

"Once I got in and got over being nervous, it was the best thing that happened to me," said Dawkins. "It was strict but it taught us discipline. It taught us to be men, because when we came in, we were just teenagers. I grew up in the Air Force."

In the early part of his military career, Dawkins served in the distinguished Strategic Air Command, as well as the 31st Fighter Wing at Turner Field, Ga., where he worked with the legendary Tuskegee Airmen.

Dawkins served tours in the Republic of Vietnam between 1966 and 1969. He received the Air Medal — with five oak leaf clusters, representing 125 combat missions flown — and the Distinguished Flying Cross.

After 26 years of military service, Dawkins retired from the Air Force January 31, 1979. It wouldn't be long however, before he was once again serving his country.

Dawkins used the Montgomery GI Bill to study aircraft and engine maintenance. He then worked with a military contractor, working on C-5 Galaxy aircraft, for a short while before taking a federal service position at Naval Air Station Alameda in California. This marked the start of Dawkins' 44 years of civilian federal service.

Dawkins worked as a pneudraulics systems mechanic — disassembling, assembling, repairing and overhauling various turbine compressor assemblies daily — with Naval Air Systems Command since January 1981.

He received orders to relocate to the Naval Aviation Depot, now known as Fleet Readiness Center East, at Marine Corps Air Station Cherry

Point in January 1995.

"I was happy here," said Dawkins. "When we transferred here, my family and I came to a new area and a new job. We were accepted and blended in. I've had a good time. I was able to do what I needed to do and do what I loved to do." Known to all at the depot as "Mr. Fred," Dawkins was well known at FRCE for his work ethic and extensive expertise.

"He shows up to work early and is ready to go when the bell rings," said Michael VanWolput, the supervisor for FRCE's Starters and Turbines shop and Auxiliary Power Unit and Fuel Controls shop. "He doesn't mess around. He is one of the best workers I've ever had the pleasure of working with."

VanWolput said Dawkins' brought a wealth of expertise to the depot, gained through seven decades of experience working in aviation maintenance.

"He's brought so much to the shop, especially about disassembly and assembly of the older-style units," said VanWolput. "These are units that aren't very common anymore because those particular aircraft are going away. He knows all those units."

Dawkins was generous in sharing his expertise. He credited the mentorship he received throughout his career as a crucial element to his success.

"Come in with a positive attitude and be willing to learn and take the advice from the senior people," said Dawkins. "Don't sit still. Get in, do your job, and pay attention. You do those things and should be able to advance, no matter what your career field is."

According to VanWolput, Dawkins did more than pay attention and do his job, he personified commitment and dedication during his 70 years of service.

"Seeing how long he's been doing this — and he loves it — you realize just how completely dedicated he is to supporting the war fighter and America," said VanWolput. "He will be missed." FRCE is North Carolina's largest maintenance, repair, overhaul and technical services provider, with more than 4,000 civilian, military and contract workers. Its annual revenue exceeds \$1 billion. The depot provides service to the fleet while functioning as an integral part of the greater U.S. Navy; Naval Air Systems Command; and Commander, Fleet Readiness Centers.





Photo by MC1 Brandon Vinson



Photo by MC3 Natasha ChevalierLosada

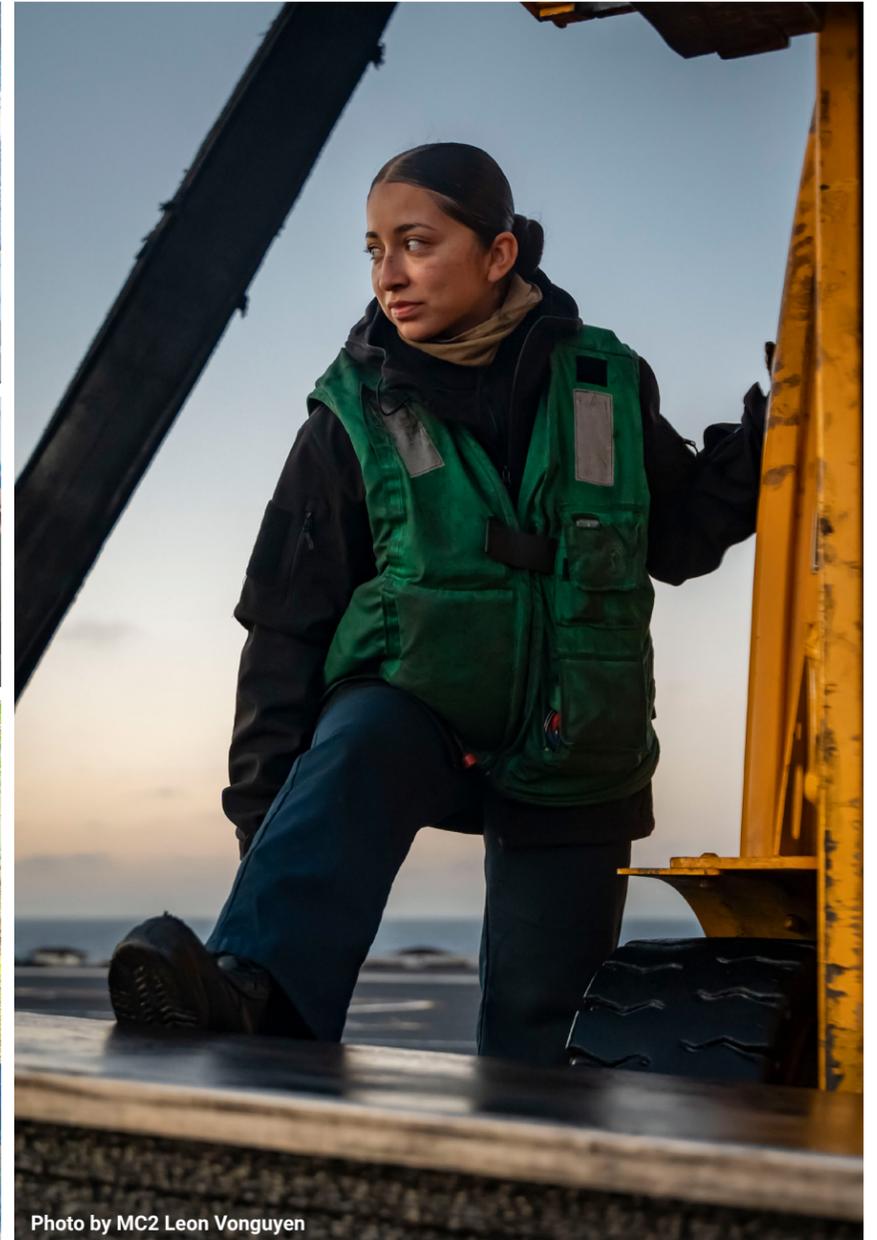


Photo by MC2 Leon Vonguyen



Photo by Katie Cadiao



Photo by MC2 Bodie Estep



Photo by MCT1 Haydn Smith



Photo by MCSA Christian Kibler



Photo by MC2 Andrew Waters



Photo by Valerie Maigue



Photo by MC1 Fred Gray IV



Photo by Lt. Jessica Wentlent



Photo by MC1 Joseph Montemarano



Photo by MC2 Brett Walker

.09

SEPTEMBER

In the month of September as we continue to remember the lives lost in the attack on 9/11, we also celebrate the future to come as new chiefs are promoted throughout the fleet. The USS Augusta (LCS 34) achieved a pivotal milestone as it was commissioned and is now ready for service. The third iteration of the Multinational Underwater Repair Engagement (MURENG) took place from September 11-22 at Naval Base Guam consisting of four nations, six units, and eighty-six divers in total. Two pilots with Marine Fighter Attack Squadron 112 (VMFA-112) successfully located a downed aircraft that led emergency response personnel to provide medical assistance to the injured. The U.S. Naval Research Laboratory (NRL) completed its contribution to the Moisture and Aerosol Gradients/Physics of Inversion Evolution (MAGPIE) program, aiming to study the exchange processes of heat, moisture, African dust, and sea spray between the atmosphere and ocean over the Subtropical Atlantic Ocean. Pittsburgh Steelers fans rave over the hometown flyover Strike Fighter Squadron (VFA) 103 "Jolly Rogers" performed over Acrisure stadium on Sept. 10 for the Pittsburgh Steelers home opener against the San Francisco 49ers.



Photo by MC2 Levi Decker



Photo by Anna Jefferson



Photo by MC2 Adora Okafor

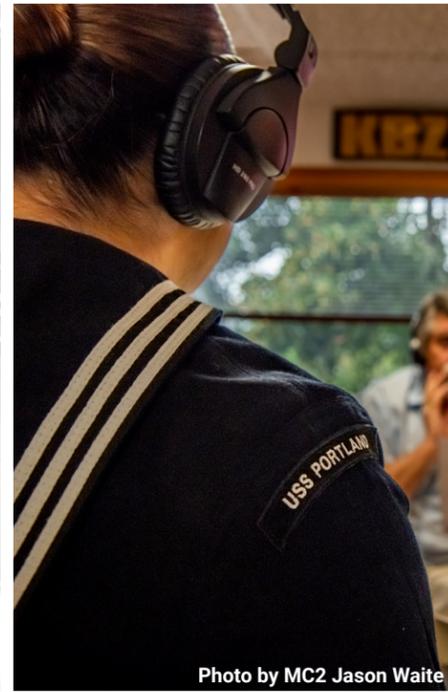


Photo by MC2 Jason Waite



Photo by MCC Kegan E. Kay



Photo by MC2 Sawyer Connally



Photo by MC1 Brandon J. Vinson



Photo by MC3 Kaleb Shultz



Photo by MC2 Jason Waite



Photo by Tech. Sgt. Garrett Cole



Photo by MC2 Rion Codrington



Photo by MC2 Jacob Mattingly



Photo by Ensign Rory Cox

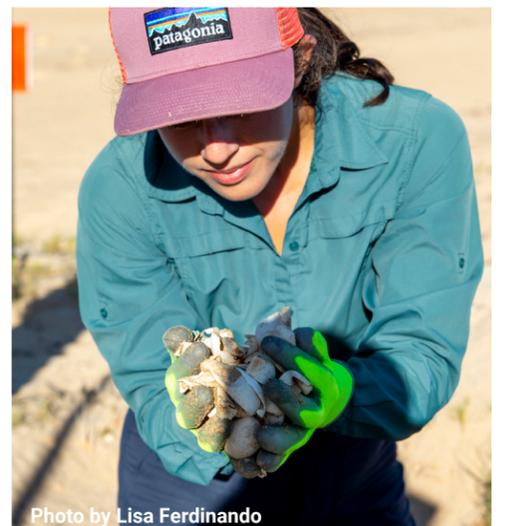


Photo by Lisa Ferdinando



Photo by Allen Cordova

A JOURNEY OF LOVE AND SERVICE

SAN ANTONIO COUPLE ENLISTS TOGETHER

Story by Joseph Andes

Embarking on both a journey of love and service to their country, Tony Botello and Angelique Gomez set sail into the uncharted waters of married life and military duty as they embrace the call of the Navy.

Newlyweds Tony and Angelique, who hail from San Antonio, Texas, will both serve as a Personnel Specialist in the Navy's Administrative Field.

"I joined the Navy to learn discipline, travel, and be able to better myself and my future family," said Tony, who after high school was working and paying for college. "I was talking with my dad and decided that the military was the obvious way to go."

According to Angelique, she is a little reserved and is joining the Navy to become more sociable, explore new places, and work on self-improvement.

"When we first met, we were interested in the military, but I was working toward my bachelor's degree and he [Tony] was working toward his associates," said Angelique, who was working toward her degree in criminology at the University of Texas San Antonio (UTSA). "We both decided to join the military and finish our degree's in the Navy."

Tony completed his high school education at South San Antonio High School, while Angelique graduated from John Jay High School, both are part of the Class of 2019.

They will commence their basic training on the same day and subsequently attend the same technical school.

"I was thinking about joining the military since high school," said Angelique who has two brothers serving in the military. "My little brother is in the Navy and serving as a Hospital Corpsman. He is the one who inspired me, when he got home from boot camp and "A" school he was telling me how he enjoyed it."

Tony's grandfather, who also served in the Navy would tell him stories about his time in the service.

After finishing their recruit training, commonly referred to as boot camp, the couple will be relocated to Meridian, Mississippi. There, they will undergo training to become Personnel Specialists. This five-week course will cover various administrative procedures, including managing military pay, maintaining military personnel records, and providing Navy personnel with information about general education and advancement opportunities.

The couple was recruited by Operations Specialist 2nd Class Aaron Castilleja assigned to Navy Recruiting Station (NRS) Ingram.

"I had a conversation with an Air Force recruiter, while Tony had a discussion with the Navy," said Angelique. "My husband praised Petty Officer Castilleja for being pleasant and supportive, and that's when I made up my mind and chose the Navy."

Navy Talent Acquisition Group (NTAG) San Antonio's area of responsibility includes more than 30 Navy Recruiting Stations and Navy Officer Recruiting Stations spread throughout 144,000 square miles of Central and South Texas territory.

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OCTOBER

As fall draws near and Halloween decorations go up, Sailors across the fleet celebrate the 248th Navy Birthday and Hispanic Heritage month. On October 15th, the U.S Navy commands across the Pacific and local Japanese communities pushed past inclement weather to celebrate the 45th Yokosuka Friendship Day, symbolizing unity and partnership between the two nations. More than 40 Sailors from the Ronald Reagan Carrier Strike Group participated in a volunteer event at a local orphanage during a scheduled port visit to Commander, Fleet Activities Chinhae. Sailors serving aboard the Arleigh Burke-class guided-missile destroyer USS Shoup (DDG 86) celebrated Halloween while conducting routine operations in the Philippine Sea, complete with costumes, decorations, and of course candy, making an otherwise normal day at sea a little sweeter.



Photo by MC2 Erica Higa



Photo by MC2 Dylan Lavin



Photo by Daniel DeAngelis



Photo by Tetsuya Morita



Photo by MC2 Victoria Armstrong



Photo by MC2 Mailani Jones



Photo by MC1 Jacob Allison



Photo by MC2 Jason Waite



Photo by MC1 Matthew Fink



Photo by MC3 Christopher O'Brien

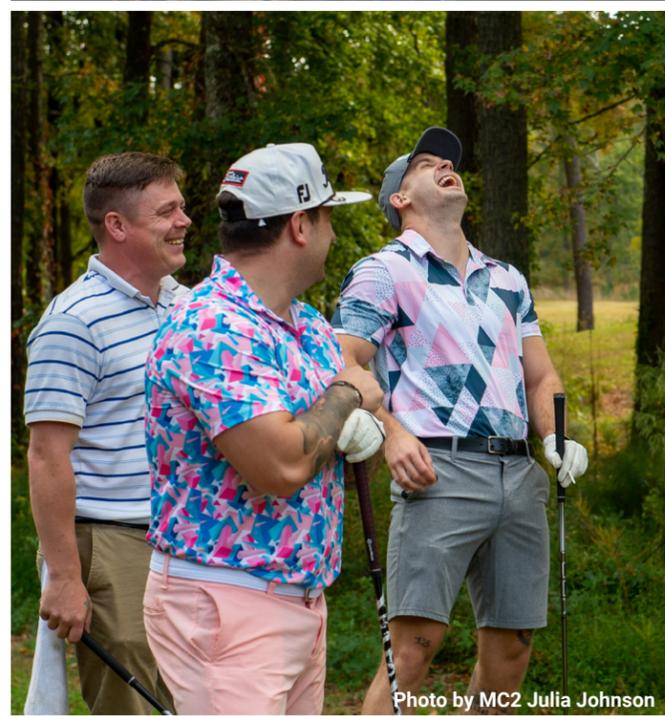


Photo by MC2 Julia Johnson



Photo by MCSN Kyree Rogers



Photo by MCSN Luke Cunningham

HEAR-YE, HEAR-YE! NAVY AUDIOLOGISTS MAKE A DIFFERENCE

Story by MC2 Travis Decker

Click. Eyes close to focus in on the sounds beeping from the uncomfortable red and blue headphones the person is wearing as silence permeates the small, cramped booth. With each 'click,' the cues grow fainter. Fingers grip the clicker, ears straining to hear the faintest 'beep' of the machine. Click. What feels like an eternity goes by with no perceived sound. Was that a real 'beep' or just the imagination, a phantasm created by the worry that one may be missed? Click. Minutes pass and eventually a voice comes across the headphones stating that the hearing test is completed.

"Hearing is essential to quality of life," began Cmdr. Amy McArthur, a native of Tucson, Arizona, and the regional hearing conservation program manager assigned to public health and safety at Naval Medical Forces Atlantic (NMFL). "What separates humans from other mammals is the intricate ways in which we communicate and losing hearing means losing that ability to communicate. There is no end to the pride I take in the knowledge that what I do as a Navy audiologist helps prevent that loss of hearing and communication."

With the general loud nature of the military lifestyle and workforce, many are at risk of hearing loss annually. Preventing hearing loss is important not only to quality of life to the service member, but to their families as well.

"I remember a patient that had been deployed and was exposed to explosions and gunfire. When he returned from deployment, he had significant problems with balance and hearing, among other things. One of the biggest complaints he had was that he had difficulties hearing his little girl, which was the one that was affecting him the most," explained Lt. Cmdr. Rob Summers, a native of Ririe, Idaho, and audiologist assigned to Navy Medicine Readiness and Training Center (NMRTC) Jacksonville. "Luckily, I was able to treat his hearing loss with hearing aids. He brought his daughter to the appointment where we put them in and programmed them. Once that was done, he could hear his daughter easier and clearer, which resulted in tears of gratitude. It was a very emotional moment for him and his family and one I remember with pride."

Sound is measured in A-weighted decibels (dBA). A-weighted decibels are what is used when human hearing is affected. Normal conversations tend to range from 60-70 dBA. Long or repeated exposure at or above 85 dBA can cause hearing loss. Wearing hearing protection consistently can be the difference in keeping hearing or losing it.

"We recommend using the 'Three Foot Rule,'" said McArthur. "Simply put, if you are trying to talk to someone standing an arms-length away, or about three feet, and you have to raise your voice to be heard, the environment or activity is too loud. You have two choices at that point – either move away from the noise source to some place quieter or use properly fitting hearing protection."

The promotion of hearing health starts at the top and leaders should model ways in which hearing loss can be

prevented, such as ensuring proper wear of hearing safety gear and provide loss prevention training.

"It's a common misconception that hearing loss is an inevitable consequence of military service. Only the noise is inevitable; hearing loss is not," advised McArthur. "Eventually, we all take off the cloth of the nation or retire our civil service uniforms. How much hearing each of us retains at the end of our careers is dependent upon the actions we take now both on and off duty."

October is National Audiology Awareness Month, which is dedicated to sharing information about conditions that affect the ability to hear and the experts who work on treating those conditions. In the Navy, audiology can be a rewarding career since audiologists offer hearing loss prevention and provide education, training and monitoring to ensure the auditory combat readiness of Navy and Marine personnel.

"My first introduction to the world of audiology was a childhood friend that was deaf," reminisced Summers. "Communication with him was always challenging. Later, while I was pursuing my college degree in Communication Disorders, my desire to help those with hearing problems was reignited and I determined to pursue audiology as a career. Healthy hearing equates to a better quality of life, which hopefully in some fashion I can be part of by making a difference in people's lives by doing what I'm doing as a naval audiologist."

There are many steps on the road to becoming an audiologist, but the Navy offers two main routes. The first is direct accession, which is designated for fully licensed and practicing audiologists. Once selected, newly commissioned officers will attend Officer Development School (ODS) at Naval Station Newport in Rhode Island for a comprehensive introduction to the responsibilities as naval officers. The second path is through the Navy Health Services Collegiate Program (HSCP), which is a scholarship that allows students to complete their externship year at one of two naval medical enters before receiving commission as a naval officer and attending ODS.

NMFL, headquartered in Portsmouth, Virginia, delivers operationally focused medical expertise and capabilities to meet Fleet, Marine and Joint Force requirements by providing equipment, sustainment and maintenance of medical forces during combat operations and public health crises. NMFL provides oversight for 21 NMRTCs, logistics, and public health and dental services throughout the U.S. East Coast, U.S. Gulf Coast, Cuba, Europe, and the Middle East. Navy Medicine – represented by more than 44,000 highly-trained military and civilian health care professionals – provides enduring expeditionary medical support to the warfighter on, below, and above the sea, and ashore.

.11

NOVEMBER

With the holidays around the corner for many Sailors and their families, the month of November saw Sailors recongnized by the annual Broncos' Military Appreciation game represented by Navy Talent Acquisition Group Rocky Mountain & Navy Information Operational Command (NIOC) Colorado. Native American heritage was celebrated throughout the fleet, recognizing our sailors and their culture. Holy Joe's Café made sure to continue to uphold its mission since 2006 by donating a staggering 22 pallets of coffee to Naval Base Point Loma through the command Chaplain James "Jiho" Kim. A historic mark was made when the crew of Military Sealift Command's fast combat support ship USNS Supply (T-AOE 6) held a promotion ceremony for Civil Service Mariner (CIVMAR) Eliza Pingree, who was advanced as MSC's first female Chief Engineer.



Photo by MC3 Joshua Sapien



Photo by MC2 Conner Houghtaling



Photo by MC2 Caroline Lui



Photo by MC2 Deirdre Marsac



Photo by MC2 Christopher M O'Grady



Photo by MC2 Celia Martin



Photo by Melvin J. Gonzalvo



Photo by Cpl. Nathaniel C. Mansfield



Photo by MC2 Connor Burns



Photo by MC2 Bodie Estep



Photo by MC1 Brandon Vinson

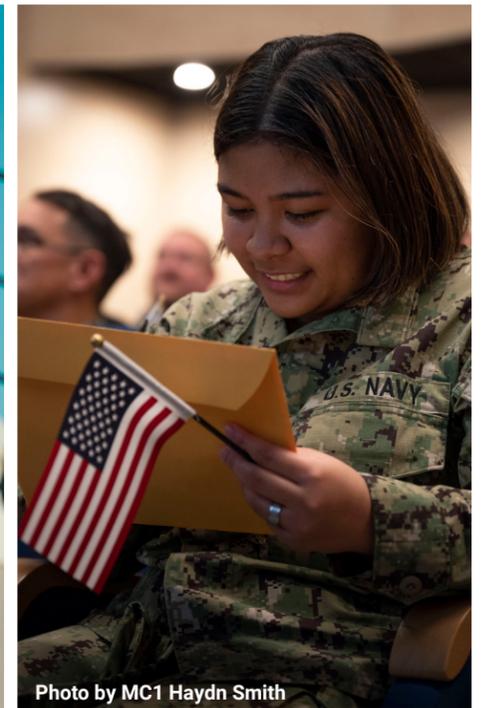


Photo by MC1 Haydn Smith



Photo by MC1 Donovan K. Patubo



Photo by MC2 Christopher O'Grady



Photo by MC3 Luke Wilson



Photo by MC2 Dylan Lavin



GUNNERS IN THE MAKING

Photo by MC2 Nolan Pennington

Courtesy story

Earning the title 'Mustang' in the United States Navy is a sought-out and hard-earned title. A Mustang is someone who went from an enlisted service member to an officer.

In the weapons department aboard the world's largest aircraft carrier USS Gerald R. Ford (CVN 78), there are two aviation ordnancemen (AO) who are excited to soon be commissioned as Aviation Ordnance Officers and earn the moniker "Gunnery" in the Navy. Not all Mustangs are Gunnery, but all Gunnery are Mustangs.

Gunnery are officers in the weapons department who are in charge of all things ordnance and weapons. Depending on their department and role, they are involved in bomb builds, ordnance on the flight deck, movement of weapons, and gun shoots. Senior Chief Aviation Ordnanceman Kirk Godair, leading chief petty officer for G-5 division in weapons department, from Wichita Falls, Texas, shared his excitement to commission as a chief warrant officer (CWO) and become a Gunner. Godair said he is excited to see the officer side of the Navy and be part of shaping the future of the Navy in a new role.

Since joining the Navy in 2004, becoming a Gunner was always

Godair's goal. He saw the impact he could make in that role and had wonderful mentors who showed him the path to achieve his goals.

"The Navy taught me to control the things I can control and to have patience," said Godair. "My advice to a new Sailor joining the Navy is to take pride in what you do and your job. Learn everything you can and find a good mentor."

Chief Aviation Ordnanceman Jose Vargas, part of G-3 division in weapons department, from Yonkers, New York, is also transitioning from Chief to Gunner through the limited duty officer (LDO) program and will commission as an Ensign in the Navy in 2024.

"What drew me to wanting to be a Gunner was that our rate had a direct designator. I could be an aviation ordnanceman and then transition into a Gunner and stay a subject matter expert in my field," said Vargas. "I'm excited and eager for the new challenge. Looking forward to everything my Sailors will achieve and giving back to the 'Ordie' community."

Both men spoke about the importance of learning and how being stationed on an aircraft carrier during the application process to

commission provides endless opportunities to expand knowledge in the ordnance field. Being on the new first-in-class aircraft carrier allows for them to stay up to date on the new technologies and better assist the future weapons departments on the other Ford-class aircraft carriers.

Between Gerald R. Ford and Carrier Air Wing 8, there are 14 Gunnery and 440 aviation ordnancemen aboard. Across 5 divisions and 7 squadrons, they are in charge of all weapons aboard the ship and aircraft, all gun shoots, and protecting the ship while anchored during port.

Godair explained it is important to be open to constructive criticism when it comes to applying to the LDO/CWO program in order to become a Gunner and the way to get better is to let people help you. He credits the Weapons Officer, Cmdr. Jim Fish, and Ordnance Handling Officer (OHO), Lt. Cmdr. Sampson Keaton, the squadron Gunnery, and all of weapons department for helping him reach this goal.

Vargas expressed the importance of always learning. "Never get too high up that you can't crack open a book or a publication and read up," said Vargas. "My advice to new Sailors is to be the best at

your rate and educate yourself. The Navy's biggest weapon is its people, never forget that as you move up in the ranks."

When asked about what the Navy has taught him, Vargas explained his ability to adapt and stay flexible because of the dynamic, ever-changing situation happening in the Navy.

"I want to shout-out the 'mag rats,' team leaders, QA/SO's, G-3 and la familia for always helping and supporting me," said Vargas. He credits his technical expertise to the last three years working on Gerald R. Ford, stating the experience gained at the command greatly helped his commissioning package.

Both men are excited to finish deployment strong and start a new chapter in their lives in San Diego. Godair is going to the USS Essex (LHD 2) as the OHO and Vargas will be the Gunner at Helicopter Maritime Strike Squadron 71. They are ready and proud to commission and continue serving as Mustangs in the United States Navy.

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DECEMBER

As the calendar year concluded, the Navy-Army game a tight race with the Army reluctantly taking the win 17-11. Above the University of Guam, the festive spectacle of "Santa Claus" waving from an MH-60S Sea Hawk. The holiday season was further embraced through events like Naval Weapons Station Yorktown's Annual Winter Wonderland Holiday event and Yokosuka Naval Base's Festival of Trees. A sign of true community and kindness, Fleet Readiness Center East (FRCE) employees have reached out to help a coworker whose daughter is facing a medical emergency, donating hundreds of hours of annual leave through the Federal Voluntary Leave Transfer Program (VLTP) so the employee can be with his family over the holidays. Bases across the Nation hosted annual Trees for Troops events to help ensure the holiday spirit reaches all Sailors. From everyone at All Hands, we hopes you all have a safe and joyous holiday season.







PROFILES IN PROFESSIONALISM:

LOGISTICS SPECIALIST 1ST CLASS BOBBY VELIZ

Story by Joseph Andes

McAllen, Texas native Logistics Specialist 1st Class Bobby Veliz has served as a Training and Administration of the Reserve (TAR) Sailor in the Navy since July of 2002, currently assigned as supply department leading petty officer at Tactical Support Wing (TSW).

Veliz said he joined the Navy to support his family, and he's always thought of them to help him with motivation through difficult times.

"My family has always been my biggest motivator," said Veliz. "My oldest is 21, and I'm 38. I was 17 when I joined the Navy. I did it for my oldest. Then I had my second and third children. They're what keep me going, along with the friends that I made."

Veliz began his career in New Orleans shortly after Hurricane Katrina.

"I was at my first command, what they used to call base supply, at Naval Air Station Joint Reserve Base New Orleans, Louisiana from December of 2002 to December of 2005," said Veliz. "I was sent there because of Hurricane Katrina as a seaman. From there, I transferred to [the 'Capital Express' of Fleet Logistics Support Squadron (VR) 53], a C-130 squadron, from 2006 to 2010."

Veliz said he thinks of VR-53 as one of his favorite commands he's served at throughout his career as it was during his time at that command that he got to travel around the globe and experience new places and cultures.

"When I was there, I got to go to Bahrain, Japan and Sigonella, Italy," said Veliz. "It was great." He said that while his IA could be stressful with the dangers of being on the ground in Kabul, Afghanistan, it stands in his memory as one of his best experiences.

"The people that I was deployed with were great people," said Veliz. "I got to know them very well. We had 250 Navy and Air Force personnel deployed IA in Afghanistan with the Army. The camaraderie was really great."

After leaving VR-53, Veliz served at Navy Reserve Center Madison, Wisconsin, then with the "Totems" of Patrol Squadron (VP) 69, and at ASD Fort Worth before his final transfer to his current position at TSW.

"My job here at TSW is to provide customer

support for the squadron," said Veliz. "For me, that's primarily checking calibration on torque wrenches and things like that, making sure that the squadrons are following the proper HAZMAT procedures, and that they have everything they're authorized to have. I also help my chief with anything that's material control or supply related. We make sure that the squadrons are able to get what they need."

Veliz said that working at TSW supporting the wing's squadrons has been a learning opportunity for him, both in solving problems at a higher level than he has in the past and getting to work more closely with the senior personnel on the staff, benefitting from their expertise.

"TSW is a great command," said Veliz. "We are a senior command, but it gives us the opportunity to work with leadership here who are incredibly knowledgeable. Every day, I get a new question I haven't been asked that leads to me researching and learning more. I enjoy every minute of it."

As Veliz approaches retirement, he said he considers having learned to take a step back and take a breath when overwhelmed the most important lesson he's learned while serving. "In our world in supply, you have multiple things coming at you," said Veliz. "You sometimes have to take a breath and decide the best way forward. It's important to take the time to pause and be open minded about a solution. I'm sure that's something I'll carry with me outside the Navy."

Looking back on his career, Veliz said he cherishes the experiences he's had.

"Honestly, I can say that yeah, my career's been tough, but it's been enjoyable," said Veliz. "There have been some hard points in life while I've been in the Navy, but I learned a lot. If I had the choice to do it again, I would in a heartbeat. I wouldn't trade it for the world."

Commander, Tactical Support Wing mans, trains, and equips Tactical Support Wing units to consistently provide the highest quality global force management deployers, deployment enablers who provide airborne training and intelligence support, and squadron augment units to Navy forces that win in combat.

