



Jax Air News

A CHINFO AWARD-WINNING NEWSPAPER

TOUCHING BASE

Jax Air News Holiday Schedule

The last issue of the *Jax Air News* for 2003 will be published Dec. 18. The next edition will be published Jan. 8, 2004. Due to the holidays, the office will have limited staff available. Articles and ads will be accepted during this time for the January issue. For more information during the holiday season, call 542-1533.

Holiday events planned

Jolly Holiday with Santa and Mrs. Claus is Dec. 12 from 6:30-8:30 p.m. at Yellow Water Housing. The event is open to all ages and offers free photos with Santa.

NAS Jax MWR is hosting the Tropical Freeze event Dec. 20 from noon to 4 p.m. at the Mulberry Cove Marina. Enjoy a snow sled run, free cookies and sodas. Call 542-3577 for more information on these events.

Gator Bowl tickets available

The USO has tickets to the 59th annual Toyota Gator Bowl which will be held Jan. 1 at Alltel Stadium. Tickets are \$25 each while they last. For more information, call 542-3028.

Wrestlers to visit NAS Jax

Three wrestlers, Torrie Wilson, A-Train and Rhyno from World Wrestling Entertainment will visit the Navy Exchange Food Court Dec. 16 from 10 a.m. to noon to sign autographs for fans. For more information, call NAS Jax Public Affairs at 542-4032.

Special celebration planned

If you are grieving over the death of a loved one, come find healing for today and hope for tomorrow by attending "A Celebration In Memory Of..." Dec. 19 at 7 p.m. at the Naval Hospital Jax Chapel.

There will be music to comfort, words to encourage, and a candle lighting ceremony to honor their memory.

Families and children are welcome. For more information please call 542-7531/2.

Military families enjoy free day in oldest city

By JO2 Mike England
Staff Writer

The USO Council of St. Augustine and many of the city's tourist attractions hosted Pal Day in downtown St. Augustine last Saturday. Pal Day is a special day set aside the first Saturday in December specifically for First Coast military members and their families to enjoy the city's attractions free of charge.

Hundreds of people, many proudly wearing military uniforms, turned out Saturday in the nation's oldest city to spend a few hours visiting the sights watching the annual Christmas parade.

"Today is USO Pal Day so we came to celebrate and enjoy the parade. I brought the kids down so they could enjoy some Christmas cheer and we're visiting some of the sights here. We just toured the fort and plan to go have a free lunch at the Elks Lodge. Then we plan to go to Marineland. We've been coming for Pal Day for the past two years. Last year we visited Ripley's and the Alligator Farm," said Lt. Cmdr. Brent George of NADEP, who brought along his three sons, Emmett, Keirnan and Brennan.

"It's really nice for the city of St. Augustine to do this for us. We really appreciate it," added ATC Steven Damit of the NAS Jax AIMD Department, who was with his two daughters, Sara and Christine.

The first Pal Day was held in 1957 during the Korean War Era when the USO Council in St. Augustine wanted to recognize military members and their families and provide them with something a little special. The event



Photo by Kaylee LaRocque
Lt. Cmdr. Brent George of NADEP and his three sons (left to right) Keirnan, Brennan and Emmett, read some information at a stand in front of the Spanish Museum in downtown St. Augustine during Pal Day last Saturday.

proved so successful, that it has continued since then every first Saturday in December. By opening their doors for free, the city's businesses get a chance to show their appreciation to those service members who serve our country and defend our freedom.

"We really enjoyed visiting the fort and old town. Pal Day is a great time," said HM2 Enrique Berrios of the NAS Jax Naval Hospital, who brought his two sons Robert and Louis along.

Military families enjoyed favorite attractions such as Ripley's Believe It or Not, 3D World, The Fountain of Youth, Alligator Farm, trolley rides,

Potter's Wax Museum, Castillo de San Marcos, and numerous other attractions.

"This is the fourth time I've visited St. Augustine during Pal Day. It's really a great event," explained AE1 Frank Primm of VS-24. "I really enjoyed Ripley's Believe It or Not."

Although the city was bustling with tourists and locals who came out for the parade, Pal Day gave military members a nice way to spend some quality time away from work and with their families.

For more photos, see Page 12



Photo Courtesy of NAS Jax Fleet and Family Support Center

Dianne E. Parker, during the 1999 Salvation Army Holiday Bell Ringing Project.

Parker awarded Medal of Honor

By Miriam S. Gallet
Editor

Dianne E. Parker, Education and Training/Navy Community Service Program Coordinator for the NAS Jacksonville Fleet and Family Support Center (FFSC) will be awarded the 2003 National Society Daughter of the American Revolution (DAR) Medal of Honor at a ceremony today at the Selva Marina Country Club in Atlantic Beach.

Praised by one of her nominators as a "the epitome of a person who places service above self," Parker has developed a reputation as an inquisitorial social activists, authoritative community coordinator and powerful mentor during her more-than-30-year career. She lives her life purposeful, nurturing and comforting others including service members and their families, children and senior citizens through out the First Coast.

"I've known her for over 13 years and her relentless dedication to helping those less fortunate in our community is remarkable. She constantly seeks ways to improve social conditions and give individuals and families a hand up. What I've admired about her most is her tireless energy. Diane is most deserving of this prestigious award," said Florida State Representative Jennifer Carroll, one of three nominators.

Just like Eleanor Roosevelt, Parker believes that people can enhance the quality of their lives through purposeful action based on sensitive discourse among people of diverse perspective, focusing on the varied needs of society.

According to DAR Jean Ribault Chapter of Florida Regent Alice

See DAR, Page 11

Christmas mailing rush begins



Photo by Miriam S. Gallet
NAS Jax Post Office Postal Clerk Janet Pierotti accepts payment for postage on a parcel from Maggie English-Flanagan last week. "I like coming to this post office. The postal employees are very nice and the line is not too bad," said English-Flanagan. According to Pierotti, the Monday after Thanksgiving is one of the busiest days for the U.S. Postal Office. "I'm expecting between 250 and 300 parcels to be mailed today," she said.

Supporting the mission

NAS Jax Strategic Business Plan update

By Cmdr. Matthew Early
NAS Jax Public Works Officer

Today we'll discuss Goal 3 of the NAS Jax Business Plan. NAS Jacksonville's Facilities and Environmental Department (FED) is committed to the their customers. As part of the station's overall mission "We Exist to Enable Warfighter Readiness," FED has developed several strategic objectives in order to achieve the Stations mission.

As stipulated in Goal 3, first and foremost, FED will evaluate the base operating support and sustainment and replacement (SRM) programs each year for completeness, consistency with station mission and future vision, compatibility with current Regional Shore Installation Plans (RSIPs), within each functional area, Installation Restoration Readiness System (IRRS) and customers requirements.

Along with evaluation, FED will execute these programs by utilizing the highest quality products, materials and services while achieving cost effectiveness and timeliness and most importantly customer satisfaction. FED is committed to coordinating with the customer(s) throughout the project life cycle (planning, design, construction, turnover, warranty period, and preventive maintenance plan).

FED will coordinate with Commander, Navy Region Southeast for funding and support of current and future SRM and military construction (MILCON) projects that support the stations mission and future vision.

SRM and MILCON projects will be developed and implemented for current and future fiscal years utilizing annual inspection summary, projected future growth and new requirements, including weapons platforms, and training ranges.

FED is currently implementing a Geospatial Information System-based system (GIS) to utilize as a planning tool for current and future base development, along with the ability to maintain all design documents, studies, as-built drawings and other key documents (flood zones, ACUIZ, encroachment, explosive arcs, etc) in electronic format. GIS will allow environmental and professional engineers to manipulate data to effectively shape the base for the future, depending on the needs and requirements of any potential mission.

FED will implement an environmental management system within the Facilities Department that documents the procedures used by every environmental media manager to perform his/her job in support of the department.

This includes coordination with

department public works officer, division directors, building managers, planners, First Lieutenant and Self-Help personnel. This model will be expanded to include all station departments and tenant commands.

FED is gearing up to establish a station-wide energy management plan, with base-wide accountability for energy management and compliance with DoD directives and develop a matrix of all facilities, detailing what energy upgrades have been made and when and what other energy enhancements can be performed at the facility.

New technology will be pursued to reduce energy consumption and cost (i.e. solar panels, central plants and advanced lighting systems). HVAC controls will be replaced with direct digital controls (DDC) and to pursue station wide HVAC monitoring by the regional base operating support RBOS contractor and facilities manager via browser support/connectivity to the DDC systems. This will pertain to all large HVAC systems, 25 tons and up.

FED is committed to their customers and to "enabling warfighter readiness."

The objectives of Goal 3 will keep us moving in the right direction and allow us to adapt and overcome current and future obstacles. We are here to serve!



Meet A Sailor...

DCFN MICHAEL GEORGE

Job title/command:
NAS Jax Quarterdeck

Hometown: Flint, Mich.

Family Life: Single

Past Duty Stations: USS Robert G. Bradley

Career Plans: To continue expanding my knowledge in my field. I also plan to continue being dedicated to the fire service because I worked in the field for four years.

Most Interesting Experience: Attending Damage Controlman "A" School and getting a second dose of gas in the "confidence chamber."

Words of Wisdom: Life is short. Live life to its fullest and always ahead plan for rainy days.



Meet A Civilian...

DAVID CANGEMI

Job title/command:
Engineering Technician, ROICC

Hometown: South Boston, Mass.

Family Life: Single

Past Duty Stations: NS Mayport, NAS North Island, Calif., PWC Jax

Career Plans: To advance to retirement.

Most Interesting Experience: Flying the Navy T-34.

Words of Wisdom: Patience, one hour is only 60 minutes long.

ON THE HOMEFRONT

Christmas is a time to remember those deployed

By Sarah Smiley
Special Contributor

Last week, I decorated for Christmas, which is my favorite thing to do all year - even better than eating the candy leftover from Halloween.

Nothing brings out the child in me more than tying a red bow on a wreath and singing "Holly, Jolly Christmas." Just give me a sugar cookie cut in the shape of Rudolph and I'm a happy girl.

Ironically, however, besides being giddy over twinkling lights and dancing Santa Clauses, I'm also quite meticulous when it comes to holiday decorations. Call me crazy, but when I'm stringing 300 lights across the bushes of our lawn, I like to do it with some sort of strategy.

This goes against every disorganized fiber of my husband's being, and therefore, I am the designated light decorator in our home.

As part of my plan for organized, happy decorating, I put a great deal of thought into how I disassemble and store our trimmings the year before. With patience and care I put away the strands of lights each January.

Last Christmas, however, I made the mistake of

allowing my husband to take down the electric décor in our yard. Yes, he was doing me a favor and I shouldn't complain, but when he dumped on the floor four strands of miniature white lights (wound tightly into a ball), I couldn't help but be upset.

For the sake of harmony, I tried to undo the mess of chords in silence. Eventually though I gave up, shoved the lights into their box and said to my husband, "Oh forget it, I'll just pack them away and save that argument for next year!"

Which brings us to last week.

My festive jingle-bell-mood couldn't easily be sabotaged... until I went outside to dangle lights from the trees.

My first clue should have been the way the box of lights was bulging suspiciously and looked so unlike my usual careful packing. But no, whistling and happy, I was totally unprepared for what I'd see when I opened the lid. When I saw it... a giant wad of twisted, tangled white lights... I shrieked in horror.

Not to spoil the Christmas festivities, however, I attempted to untie the lights myself. With each

knot I became more frustrated and angry. Finally I threw the mess onto the pavement, ran inside and yelled to my husband, "OK Dustin, I'm ready for that argument now!"

The cheerful mood of the Smiley house that day quickly dissolved into a battle of, "If you hadn't been so rushed last year putting these away, we wouldn't be untangling them now," and "If you don't like the way I do it, Sarah, why don't you do them yourself next time!"

That night, my husband and I retreated to our own separate corners of the house to pout about the day's activities.

Then, alone in my room, I saw a news clip about the helicopter crash in Iraq that killed six Marines Nov. 7, and my heart began to change. One year ago, my husband was gearing up to leave for Operation Enduring Freedom. His squadron left nearly four months earlier than planned, and we had no idea when they'd be back.

For many reasons, it was one of the worst deployments I've ever endured. Last Christmas, I didn't know what the year would hold for my family or if we'd all be together for the 2004 holiday season.

What was an unrealized potential for me, however, is a reality for thousands of families who are missing servicemember loved ones this Christmas.

Last year I didn't know if my husband would be here; this year, I'm yelling at him for his light-winding abilities. How could I be so ungrateful?

This month, thousands of military families will bear the pain of a holiday spent apart. Some will be missing soldiers and sailors deployed overseas. Many will be missing those who have died. And still others will be celebrating under the impending gloom of an upcoming deployment.

For those of us who will have our families together this season, we should remember to be grateful. But we must also never forget our fellow military friends and family who will be celebrating alone or across the miles.

When you picture a soldier spending Christmas Day in a tent in the desert so that we can have our freedom, it makes tangled lights seem a little trivial, doesn't it?

You may send comments or a response to Sarah at <http://sarahsmiley.homestead.com>.

HEY, MONEYMAN!

Hey, MoneyMan!

Every year at Christmas, my wife wants to buy lots of presents for her family back home. Since we moved to Florida, we only get to see our families about once a year and she feels this is one way she can make up for living away from home.

It seems that every Christmas we overspend and spend the rest of the year paying for our gifts. Got any good ideas?

MoneyMan Sez:

It is hard to be away from family members, particularly during this time of year. However, I am not sure that overspending helps and most of the time it only increases the stress.

There are a number of things you can do like sending family photos, hand-made gifts or handwritten letters. (Yes, some people still know how to do this.)

If you must go into debt to purchase Christmas presents, there are a few things you can do to minimize the pain. If you can control your spending, and you can pay off the balance each month, using credit cards to buy your gifts is a



good idea.

It is easier for record-keeping purposes and you may get additional perks such as insurance coverage on your purchases. Try to choose a card that gives you something for nothing.

Look for no-fee or low-fee cards that give you bonus points or discounts for purchases. Even with these cards, if you can not pay off the balance every month, particularly after a Christmas shopping spree, pay them off as quickly as you can.

If you pay off the balance in two to three months, you will not pay an excessive amount in interest fees. If you know you will not be able to pay off your charges in three months then cut back on your spending.

Often times, it really is the thought that counts!

More questions? Call Hey, MoneyMan! at 778-0353.



Sunday Services

You are invited to the following Base Chapel Worship Services this Saturday and Sunday:

- Saturday** - 5 p.m. - Catholic Mass
- Sunday** - 8:30 a.m. - Holy Eucharist Episcopal
- 9:30 a.m. - Catholic Mass
- 11 a.m. - Protestant Worship
- 6:30 p.m. - Contemporary Service

"The Leading Edge," Hangar 749 at the Base Chapel Center.

Children's Sunday Class - Protestant Sunday School program is at 9:45-10:45 a.m., and Catholic CCD is 10:45 a.m.-12:15 p.m.

Jax Air News

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Deadline for all routine copy is close of business the Friday before publication. Deadline for Classified submission is noon Monday. Questions or comments can be directed to the editor. The Jax Air News can be reached at (904) 542-8053 or by fax at (904) 542-1534 or write the Jax Air News, Box 2, NAS Jacksonville, Fla., 32212-5000. All news releases should be sent to this address.

The Jax Air News is published by The Florida Times-Union, a private firm in no way connected with the U. S. Navy under exclusive written agreement with the U. S. Naval Air Station, Jacksonville, Florida. It is published every Thursday by The Florida Times-Union, whose offices are at 1 Riverside Ave., Jacksonville, FL 32202. Estimated readership over 32,000. Distribution by The Florida Times-Union.

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HM2 Maria Herrera, a preventative medicine technician at the Branch Medical Center, administers a flu shot to RPCS(SW) Victor Koon.

Photo by JO2(SCW) Eric Clay

Naval Hospital Jax's 2003 flu shot plan

Naval Hospital Jacksonville is offering flu shots to all active duty, family members and retirees during the following times:

- TRICARE Prime patients**
Family Practice Clinic (FPC)
Monday - Friday 8:30-11:30 a.m., 1-3 p.m.
- Pediatric Clinic**
Monday - Friday 9-11 a.m., 1-3 p.m.
- Internal Medicine/PCG**
Tuesday 8-11 a.m. and 1-3 p.m. (December only)
Friday 8-11 a.m. and 1-3 p.m. (IMC/Primary Care Group patients go to FPC starting in January 2004)

Non TRICARE Prime patients (including Medicare-eligible retirees)

Family Practice Clinic
Monday - Thursday 1 - 3 p.m.

Pediatric Clinic
Monday - Thursday 3 - 4 p.m.

NAS active duty personnel should check with their command preventive medicine representative for specific dates and times.

For updates, active duty family members and retirees should call 542-4677 and press 1.

Toys for Tots Campaign under way

The Toys for Tots Campaign sponsored by the United States Marine Corps Reserve is currently under way.

The primary goal of Toys for Tots is to deliver, through a new shiny toy at Christmas, a message of hope to needy youngsters to help motivate them to grow up to be responsible, productive, patriotic citizens and community leaders.

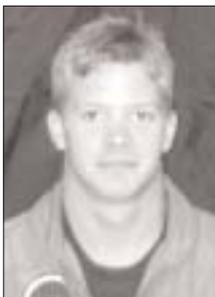
Anyone who would like to donate a new toy can drop it off at the USO, located at the NAS Jax Main Gate. For more information, call 542-3028.

HS-3 loses one of their own

By Lt. j.g. Michael Keaveny
HS-3 PAO

A memorial service was held Dec. 4 at the NAS Jax All Saints Chapel, in memory of AW2(AW/NAC) Jon Arras of HS-3. Arras passed away unexpectedly last month and will be missed greatly by his family, friends and shipmates.

Arras grew up in Duluth, Minn. and enlisted in the Navy in May of 1999. Upon completion of Recruit Training, he reported to Pensacola for Naval Aircrew Candidate School, Rescue Swimmer School and AW "A" School. He then transferred to San



AW2(AW/NAC) Jon Arras

Diego for Fleet Replacement Aircrew training at HS-10, where he earned his gold Naval Aircrew wings.

He reported to HS-3 in October 2000 as a naval aircrewman.

During his tour with HS-3, Arras deployed on board USS Enterprise (CVN 65) during Operation Enduring Freedom and USS Theodore Roosevelt (CVN 71) in support of Operation Iraqi Freedom, where he was awarded the Navy and Marine Corps Achievement Medal for professional performance as a naval aircrewman.

Arras is survived by his parents Dennis and Kay Arras; brother, Philip Arras; sister, Dany Phillippe; and many other loving relatives and friends.

Navy Exchange announces holiday hours

NEX and Convenience Store
Dec. 21 from 9 a.m. to 7 p.m.
Monday to Saturday, until Dec. 23 from 8 a.m. to 9 p.m.
Dec. 24 from 8 a.m. to 5 p.m.
Dec. 25 - Closed
Dec. 31 from 8 a.m. to 5 p.m.

Jan. 1 from 10 a.m. to 5 p.m.
Auto and Garden Shop
Hours are extended to 7 p.m. Monday to Saturday for Christmas tree sales. Christmas Eve, New Year's Eve and New Year's Day hours are the same as the NEX. All other facilities are on regular hours.

Target practice



Photo courtesy of VP-5

Members of VP-5's Combat Aircrew Seven gather in front of an AGM-84D Harpoon missile shortly before launching a successful shot on USNS Yosemite, a decommissioned ship now used for target practice by the U.S. Atlantic Fleet. VP-5 was participating in an exercise with VP-26 as part of their interdeployment readiness cycle. The two VP-5 aircrews both successfully hit their target.



Don't end up like this! Please remember to drive safely and responsibly during the holiday season.

Photo by JO2(SCW) Eric Clay

December is National Drunk and Drugged Driving Prevention Month

From Chief of Naval Operations

December is National Drunk and Drugged Driving (3D) Prevention Month. It is a terrific opportunity to re-examine the importance of responsible behavior behind the wheel and the need to look after

our shipmates, particularly as we prepare for the holiday season.

About a third of all highway deaths involve drunken driving. Alcohol and drugs impair one's judgment, slow down reaction time, and destroy lives on the road and off. Do not let you or

your people become statistics. Get involved, demand compliance, and raise awareness of the dangers. We owe it to our Sailors and to their families.

A good way to raise awareness is to highlight the Navy's "Right Spirit" alcohol prevention and de-

glamorization campaign. Launched by the Secretary of the Navy to reduce alcohol abuse and related incidents, "Right Spirit" has helped demonstrate both the health risks and the legal ramifications of excessive alcohol consumption. It is an essential ele-

ment of our efforts to ensure readiness and an integral part of covenant leadership.

For more information on the "Right Spirit" campaign, 3D prevention month, and best practices working in the fleet, log on to: navdweb.spawar.navy.mil.

NAS Jax Chapel holiday religious services

The NAS Jax Chapel is offering several religious services over the holiday season.

The following is the schedule of events:

<i>Catholic</i>	<i>Dec. 25, 9:30 a.m. – Christmas Day Mass</i>	<i>Dec. 21, 11 a.m. – Combined Christmas Cantata/Potluck</i>
<i>Dec. 21, 11 a.m. – Combined Christmas Cantata/Potluck (CCD cancelled)</i>	<i>Dec. 14, noon – Greening of the Chapel/Light Lunch</i>	<i>Dec. 21, 11 a.m. – Combined Christmas Cantata/Potluck</i>
<i>Dec. 24, 4 p.m. – Christmas Eve Mass</i>		<i>Dec. 24, 7 p.m. – Candlelight Service</i>

For more information, call 542-3440.

USO Offers NoHoHo program

The USO is sponsoring its annual NoHoHo Holiday program, offering nice hotels rooms to active duty service members living in the barracks or on ships for only \$10 per night. The offer is good for up to four people in a room.

If you are unable to go home for the holidays, would like to have your family or friends visit you, or just want to get out of the barracks during this special time of year, make reservation now by calling 778-2821. The rooms are available Dec.18-28.

Sharing Thanksgiving Bounty



Photo by HM2 Michael Morgan

Navy Drug Screening Laboratory (NDSL) aboard NAS Jax participated in Naval Hospital Jacksonville's 2003 Food Drive last week. NDSL personnel contributed four baskets of foodstuffs to provide holiday meals for Naval Hospital Jacksonville family members in need of a little extra help during the Thanksgiving holiday. Displaying the holiday baskets, left to right, are NDSL Members Diane Tisdale; Lt. Russell Wiegand; Conrad Mangune; RP1 Vanessa Brewer, Food Drive representative; Jerry McFarlin; Lt. Cmdr. Paul Kaiser, NDSL executive officer; and Deborah Taylor.

Keeping NAS Jax history protected

By JO2(SCW) Eric Clay
Assistant Editor

NAS Jacksonville Base Historian and Commander Navy Region Southeast/NAS Jax Safety Manager Ron Williamson's passion for the history of the base started in 1987, when Base Safety held a safety stand down with former Commanding Officer Capt. Norman Ray as a speaker.

When Ray entered the building, he noticed that only one of the nine interior lights was working. He then asked Williamson, "Who is in charge of the theatre?" Williamson replied: "Morale, Welfare and Recreation (MWR) is responsible for the theatre's maintenance, but since they are no longer showing movies, they do not want to put unneeded funds into the building."

According to Williamson the only people using the building at the time were squadrons and base safety.

According to Williamson, Ray informed him that the safety office was now in charge of the theatre's maintenance and Williamson needed to fix it up.

"I thought about putting some old base pictures in the lobby, and as I found some, the more interested I became in learning about the history here," explained Williamson.

As he looked for information to read about NAS Jacksonville, he discovered there wasn't any written history. "I was amazed a place with so much history, had no written history; so I made the decision to write one," continued Williamson.

While researching information for the book, he quickly discovered the station's 50th anniversary was fast approaching, and the base had no real plans to celebrate.

"We were able to convince Ray that we needed to start planning, and have an air show with the Blue Angels to celebrate the place where they were born," he explained. Williamson's first book was published for the station's 50th anniversary.

Ten years later, he updated the book per a request from NAS Jacksonville Commanding Officer Capt. Steve Turcotte for the sta-



Ron Williamson holds a NAS Jax matchbook from his collection of NAS Jax artifacts that he has collected over the years.

tion's 60th anniversary.

Over the years, Williamson has collected many interesting items and artifacts dealing with the history of NAS Jacksonville.

"Probably one of the most interesting finds was the base's second insignia, the Walt Disney duck now on the side of the fuel tank along Yorktown Avenue and on the official NAS Jax coin," explained Williamson.

When he showed that early insignia to Turcotte, he loved it. He re-adopted it, and it is once again being used by the station as of this day. Another great find, was a complete set of the first base newspaper, *The Jax Flyer*. It pre-dated the *Jax Air News*, and no one even knew about the earlier paper until Williamson brought the paper in to work.

Williamson feels that it is crucial to save the station's history. "I think it is extremely important. By having old station maps and charts even when this site was an Army base in WWI, we have, for example, been able to identify areas of concern for the Environmental Department," he added.

The Army Corps of Engineers has used the records he has collected to identify old bombing sites in Northeast Florida. He

usually gets at least two questions each week from people who are looking for historical information.

"Just this week, someone was looking for crash data from 1961 to help them file a claim with the Veterans Administration," he said.

Williamson has talked with many people who are now researching the histories of their parents, who once worked here. Some he can help, some he can't because the records are just not here.

"Working with Bill Dougherty of the NAS Jax Public Affairs Office, we have included the most extensive collection of historical material available on our station Web site," he explained.

New items are added to the site all the time. "I also think we have been able to correct and add to Jacksonville's place in naval aviation history, including things that have been neglected in the past.

Very little was seen or mentioned in naval avia-

sary in 1996, and again for the station's 60th anniversary in 2000.

It was the first time Voris had been back here since 1946. In 2000, Williamson gave him a tour of the station. "Voris has a biography that will be finished in about three weeks. It will detail his time at NAS Jax and it should be printed by June 2004," said Williamson.

"Unfortunately, I am thinking I really only know about one percent or so, of the history of NAS Jax. Tens of thousands of service members and civilian personnel have gone through this station, all with stories and history," he explained.

There have been many tenant commands that have come and gone, and there is little known about their time aboard NAS Jax. Many may think it is an easy task, but trying to compile a complete listing of all the squadrons that have operated from this station is difficult.

"The Navy stopped squadrons from submitting historical reports for a period of time to reduce paperwork, so there are gaps in critical dates in the 1950s," he said. Most people don't realize this was a fighter base in the late 1940s and early 1950s. Over 115 squadrons have been based here that Williamson knows of, with some being

the most famous fighter squadrons in naval aviation history. Some of today's FA-18 squadrons can trace their formations back here.

"Fortunately for me, I have been at the station for 22 years, and have numerous contacts that keep me informed about what is going on," he remarked.

Being part of the base safety office also gives him a unique opportunity most personnel working at the base don't have.

"Safety visits to the various commands and departments allow for me to collect a lot of base information for historical purposes probably unavailable to most folks who work here," he said.

In his tenure as base historian, he has heard a lot of stories about NAS Jax. One that came to mind was of former President John F. Kennedy.

"Supposedly he was on his way here in a PT boat, when it's rudder fouled. He dove in to cut it free, but the water was cold and he got sick. He received medical attention from the Naval Hospital Jacksonville.

After he left here, he was assigned to PT-109 and the rest as they say is history," he stated. Another person based here for a short time was Lee Harvey Oswald, who would later be accused

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Happy Holidays 2003



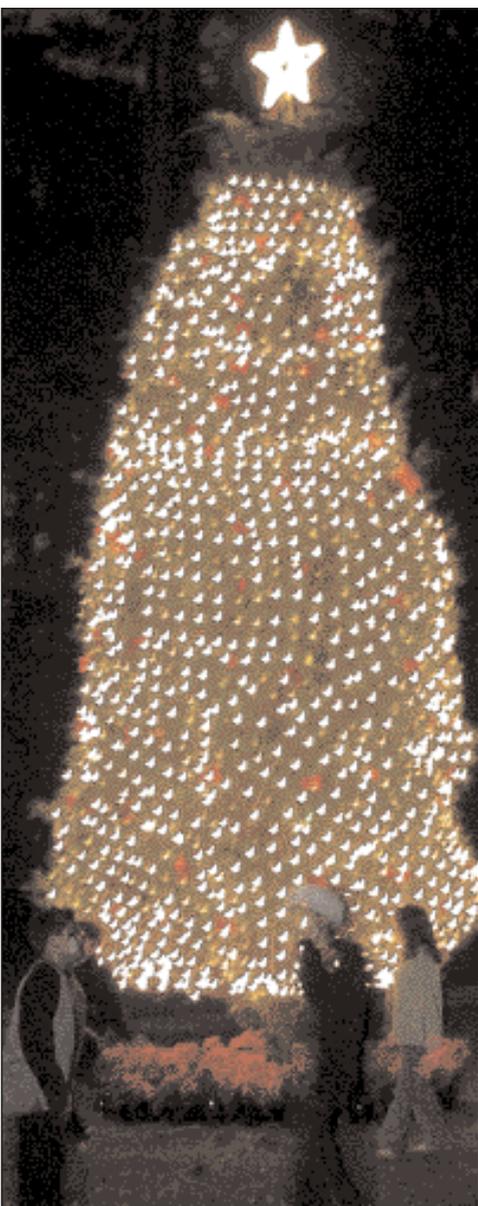
Members of the Orange Park Junior High School Band play Christmas music to entertain the hundreds of people who turned out for the annual Christmas tree lighting event last Friday night.



Five-year-old Dennis Nash, 11-month-old Shyanne Nash and seven-year-old Michelle Nash enjoy a moment with Santa at the event.



Seven-year-old Katie Shaneyfelt gets her face painted by Cuddles the Clown as part of the activities for the children at the annual tree lighting event last Friday.



The 15-foot Christmas tree at Patriot's Grove shimmers brightly after the being lit during the annual tree-lighting event.

NAS Jax families enjoy tree lighting festivities

By Kaylee LaRocque
Staff Writer

Hundreds of active-duty members, their families and friends spent last Friday evening enjoying the ninth annual Christmas tree-lighting ceremonies and festivities at Patriot's Grove on base. The NAS Jax Morale, Welfare and Recreation (MWR) Department sponsors the event each year.

As the anxious children shivered in the cool weather, they were filled with excitement as Santa Claus and his Merry Elves arrived in a fire truck, courtesy of the NAS Jax Fire Department. As Santa made the rounds greeting the crowd, the children and their parents lined up to spend a few quality moments telling him what they would like for Christmas and to have their pictures taken. Free photos were provided by MWR.

Clowns provided entertainment, keeping children busy by creating balloon characters, performing magic tricks and painting young faces with holiday designs. Free hot dogs, cookies, chips and sodas were also provided.

"I think it is really neat to be able bring my daughter to the base to see Santa for free. I really appreciate all the family activities that MWR sponsors, especially during the holiday season," exclaimed ET2(SW/AW) Seann McKenna of Air Operations, who brought his four-year-old daughter Mallory.

"I asked Santa for a Barbie house, more Barbie dolls and new carpet for my room," added Mallory.

The ceremony was kicked off by Capt. Mark Boensel, NAS Jax commanding officer, who also presented several awards to the winners of the



Santa and his elves arrive at the annual tree lighting last Friday night at Patriot's Grove. Santa arrived via a fire truck, courtesy of the NAS Jax Fire Department.

Christmas Card Contest, an event sponsored each year by MWR. To enter the contest, commands or departments must create an original holiday card on a piece of plywood. The most creative top three commands win money for their MWR funds. The cards are currently displayed along Yorktown Boulevard. Seventeen command's participated in this year's contest.

Winning first place and a \$500 prize was NAMTRAU. Second place, with a prize of \$300, went to the Veterinary Clinic. A third-place \$200 award was presented to the NAS Jax Chapel.

Following the presentation, NAS Jax Chaplain Lt. Kurt Michaelis gave a short blessing and the entire audience joined the NAS Jacksonville Child Development Center Children's Choir in singing Silent Night.

Then, it was finally time for that special moment when the 15-foot Christmas tree would come alive. As

Boensel signaled for all the area lights to be turned off, the countdown began. With the flip of a switch and cheers from the crowd, the tree glowed with a brilliant array of lights and decorations.

The Navy Band Southeast Wind Ensemble who played a variety of traditional Christmas songs provided music for the event. The NAS Jax Chapel Youth and Adult Choirs and Orange Park Junior High School Choir and Band also entertained the crowd with other holiday tunes.

A special thanks goes out to all the people behind the scenes including the NAS Jax Fire Department, Security, AIMD, Chapel, Facilities Department, Navy Exchange, Commissary and MWR who help make this annual event such a huge success.

"There are a lot of behind the scene things that go on to make this such a huge success each year. Everyone working together makes this happen. What a better season than now to give, and everyone involved in this is giving their time. It's really a great event especially for the children. Their faces just light up," said Barbara Millhollan, who along with many helpers coordinated the MWR event.

"We are also on our third year with the Christmas Card Contest. The first year we had 10 entries, last year we had 14 and this year's it's even more. It just keeps growing. It's a great way for commands to win money, but what's really fun is the competition between the different commands. We hope this event is even bigger and better next year," stated Millhollan.

Happy Holidays 2003



Capt. Mark Boensel, NAS Jax commanding officer (left), presented a \$500 check to AT1 Sheila Martin, AT1 Joleen Hansen and Cmdr. LeLand Taylor of NAMTRAU for creating the best Christmas card. The Christmas Card Contest is open each year to commands here and sponsored by MWR.



Members of the South Atlantic District Veterinary Command at NAS Jax accept the second-place award of \$300 for their Christmas card. From left, Sgt. Joseph Samuel, Capt. Mark Boensel, NAS Jax commanding officer, Pfc. Lavelle Watkins, Sgt. Nikki Boynton, Sgt. 1st Class Kenneth Dorenkott and Spc. Robert Bergeron.



The NAS Jax Chapel placed third, winning \$200 in the Christmas Card Contest. From left, Capt. Mark Boensel, NAS Jax commanding officer, RPCS(SW) Victor Koon, Chaplain Lt. Douglas Bryan and Zachary Koon.

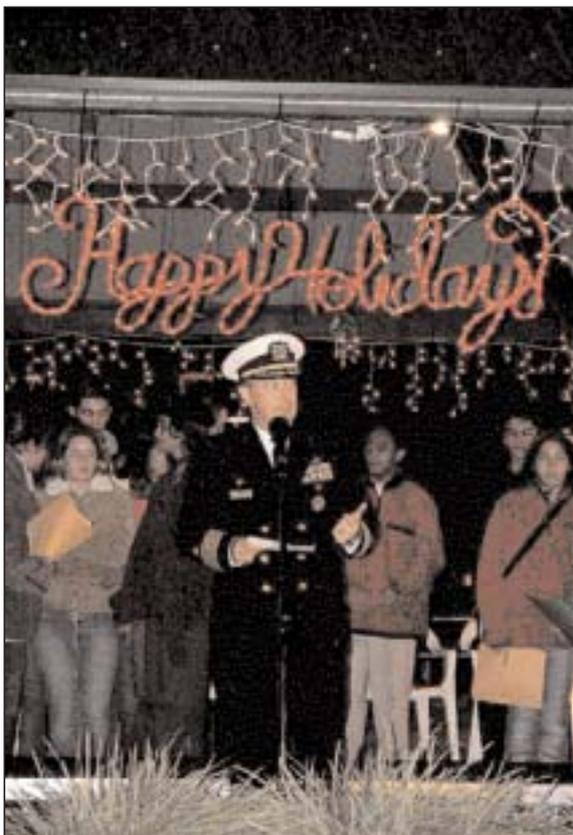


Photo by PH2(AW) Stephanie Bergman

The NAS Jacksonville Child Development Center Choir performs for family and friends at the tree-lighting ceremony last Friday night.

Photos by Photo by
JO2 Mike England and
PH3(AW) Stephanie Bergman

NAS Jacksonville Commanding Officer Capt. Mark Boensel gives an emotional holiday speech to service members and their families.

The McKenna family watches as a clown makes a balloon animal for 4-year-old Mallory.



KUDO KORNER

Naval Hospital Jacksonville congratulates the following Department of Defense civilians who have reached significant length of service milestones in their careers:

- 40 Years**
Patricia Przygoda
- 30 Years**
Claudia Hitechew
Coralie Hutchison
- 20 Years**
Cathy Bianchi
Kathryn Fields
Millard Padgett
Yang Stewart
Maritza Crespo
- 10 Years**
Brenda Hicks

NavHosp Jax Pastoral Care offers new program

“Divorce Care” is a ministry program offered by Naval Hospital Jacksonville Pastoral Care to help people recover from separation and divorce. The program begins Dec. 15 at 3 p.m. Issues addressed include:

- What’s happening to me?*
- The Road to Healing/finding Help*
- Facing Your Anger*
- Facing Your Depres-*

sion
Facing Your Loneliness
What Does The Owner’s Manual Say?
New Relationships
Financial Survival
Kid Care
Forgiveness
Reconciliation
Moving On, Growing Closer to God

The ministry is offered in the second deck conference room (by the hospital snack bar). For more information call 542-7531/2.

Blue Angels accepting enlisted applications

From Blue Angels Public Affairs

The Navy Flight Demonstration Squadron (Blue Angels) is currently accepting applications for the 2005 season.

The application deadline is April 1, 2004, and selection results will be available no later than June 1, 2004.

All Navy personnel with projected rotation dates in July 2004 through February 2005 are being considered, but others may apply, pending Blue Angels and detailee approval.

Personnel selected will normally detach from their present command October 2004 and report in mid-November 2004.

There are open billets at the E-5 and E-6 levels in virtually all aviation ratings. A normal tour of duty is three years and is considered Type 2 sea duty for

rotational purposes. Outstanding E-4 performers will be considered.

There are also three E-5 or E-6 yeoman (YN) billets available. YN billets are Type 1 shore duty and only YNs completing a sea duty tour may apply.

Application details are outlined in NavAdmin 298/03. Additional information and applications are available at www.blueangels.navy.mil or by contacting AEC(AW) L. Arrazola from January to March 2004 at DSN 658-2551/2505 or commercial (760) 339-2551/2505.

After March 2004, contact him at DSN 922-2583, Ext. 152 or commercial (850) 452-2583, Ext. 152 or by e-mail at louis.arrazola@navy.mil.



Photo by HM2 Michael Morgan
Capt. John Sentell, Naval Hospital Jacksonville commanding officer, congratulates 64 petty officers as he bestows the privilege of wearing a new stripe on their uniforms during a Nov. 21 frocking ceremony at Naval Hospital Jacksonville.

Naval Hospital Jax frocks 64

From Naval Hospital Jacksonville Public Affairs

The following personnel from Naval Hospital Jacksonville were recently frocked to their present rates:

- Petty Officer First Class**
HM1 Robert Lummus
HM1 Shawreno Ricks
MS1 Eric Combs
HM1 Terrance Rudden
HM1 Roberto Karam
HM1 William Zack
HM1 Shannon Paul
HM1 Jason Williams
HM1 Daniel Manning
HM1 Debra Hatley
HM1 Martin Brown

- HM1 William Larson
FC1 Christopher Anderson
Petty Officer Second Class
IT2 Michelle Goodman
SH2 Theresa Jeune
PC2 Marina Wallace
HM2 Marcus Quinn
HM2 Ramon Lyn
HM2 Douglas McLaughlin
HM2 Darrell Hudspeth
HM2 Veron Kemp
HM2 Christian Betancourt
HM2 Jason Brobesong
HM2 Marc Leathers
HM2 Monique Rodriguez
HM2 Nicholas Zane
Petty Officer Third Class
HM3 Dixianne Alleyne
HM3 Marlena Cox

- HM3 Emmanuel Hernandez-Canizales
HM3 Nicole Nahal
HM3 Aaron Souders
HM3 Christopher Udorn
HM3 James Derisse
HM3 Alicia Washington
HM3 Wesley Barker
HM3 Trent Ficklin
HM3 Christopher Hogans
HM3 Brent Keating
HM3 Caleb Medders
HM3 Jamie Pryor
MS3 Crystal Marcarelli
HM3 Shameem Salaam
HM3 Lynn Dearmon
HM3 Demetric Dixon
HM3 Jillian Lesko
HM3 Michael Lewis
HM3 Taurus Parker
HM3 Robert Auckland

- HM3 Adam Lobrutto
HM3 Joseph Sadley
HM3 Chris Barnes
HM3 Scott Barry
HM3 Christopher Smith
HM3 Nelson Carmona
HM3 Kristilynn Dowell
HM3 Autumn Grabo
HM3 Christopher Shields
HM1 Tina Shields
HM3 Tricia Skerritte
HM3 Deborah Ware
HM2 Alicia Wechsler
HM3 Lanita Williams
HM3 Janice Wilson
YN3 Charles Harmon

HELPING HANDS

Chefs and cooks needed

We are looking for 15-20 volunteers with cooking and catering skills to help prepare an elegant meal for the Holiday in The Hamptons Gala charity event sponsored by the Monique Burr Foundation for Children, Inc. on Saturday. This is a great opportunity for Navy chefs and cooks to show off their skills. Contact Jimmie Mc Knight at 542-8191, Ext. 8195 for information and to sign up.

Volunteers needed

Volunteers are needed to help children in our local community by donating a few hours per month to supervise visits between children and the parents that they have been separated from due to divorce, neg-

ligence, or abuse. If you would like more information on helping, please call Anita Sullivan, volunteer coordinator at Family Nurturing Center of Florida, at 389-4244 or e-mail at anita@fnclorida.org.

Salvation Army Center

Help ensure everyone has a happy holiday. Help set-up, prepare, distribute and/or cleanup at the Toy Shop Distribution Center now through Saturday. Call Christi

at 366-9230 for details.

HabiJax opportunities
HabiJax is always looking for volunteers for various construction projects. For more information, call Bonnie Golden at 798-4529, Ext. 253.

NAS FREEDOM LANES
BOWLING CENTER
OPEN CHRISTMAS DAY
7:30 - 6:10 PM
\$1.75 / GAME
542-3493 FOR MORE INFO

Third-party billing a financial plus for all

By IC2(SW) Melissa Ljongquist
Naval Hospital Jacksonville
Public Affairs

Making sure you update your insurance information, every year benefits you the beneficiary and Naval Hospital Jacksonville. The Third Party Collection (TPC) program directs military hospitals to bill private insurance companies for the cost of care provided at a military facility.

In order to expedite this process it is important that you provide the hospital with up to date healthcare insurance information. There are several advantages for you in this program.

First, and most importantly, it saves you money. This program will help you meet your commercial insurance carrier's deductible. You cannot be charged a deductible or co-payment for care received through the military facility.

The government will cover these costs. Therefore, claims filed by the government for care you received may count towards meeting your deductible. This may result in significant savings to you if you later seek civilian medical care. This will not affect the amount of your premiums, as your insurance is being used exactly as it is intended.

Second, it creates additional funds for local use at Naval Hospital Jacksonville and branch clinics. These funds are used to enhance the total healthcare services offered to you. For example TPC funds were used to buy the hospital new medical equipment in fiscal year 2003.

And finally, it helps the hospital increase the availability of healthcare services, like new training programs for doctors and nurses. This helps the hospital keep up with all the newest and best procedures and techniques.

"Naval Hospital Jacksonville provides quality health care regardless of

whether a patient has commercial health insurance," says Delores Oliver Uniform Business Office manager for Naval Hospital Jacksonville.

"Still, keeping your health insurance information up to date is important because the dollars recouped in the third party billing process helps ensure funding for valuable services at the Naval Hospital while providing you private insurance deductible advantages," she said.

All you have to do is bring your insurance ID card with you each visit, and update your information annually. For more information, call 542-7844.

Detailers visit



Photo by JO2(SCW) Eric Clay

Supply Enlisted Community Managers, MSCS Joe Donellan and CNOCM Dan Warner, spoke to members of the different supply rates at NAS Jax Dec. 2 about the many changes that will be taking place in the near future.

New findings show female smokers should beware

Compiled by Danny Woodward
Health Educator and
Tobacco Cessation Program Coordinator
Naval Hospital Jacksonville Wellness Center

New research shows women have double the risk of developing lung cancer from smoking than do men. Results of the study were presented this week at the 89th Scientific Assembly and Annual Meeting of the Radiological Society of North America in Chicago.

Researchers from New York Hospital, Cornell Medical Center in New York, studied nearly 3,000 men and women ages 40 and older with some history of smoking to determine what factors — such as age, gender and number of years smoking — impacted the probability of developing lung cancer.

Seventy-seven lung cancers were

diagnosed in the men and women screened. Claudia I. Henschke, M.D., Ph.D., from New York Hospital, Cornell Medical Center, says: "We found that women had twice the risk of developing lung cancers as men, independent of how much they smoked, their age, or the size and textures of nodules found in their lungs. There is, as of yet, no clear consensus why women are at increased risk."

Researchers also found the more people smoke and as they age, the greater their risk of developing lung cancer. Currently, lung cancer is the leading cause of cancer death among men and women in the United States. In 2003, the American Cancer Society figures about 171,900 new cases of lung cancer will be diagnosed and that 157,200 people will die from it. The NAS Jacksonville Wellness Center is concerned about these lat-

est statistics and urge all women smokers to "Kick It Up A Notch" this New Year by attending our smoking cessation Kick Butts Program. We offer Free Nicotine Replacement and Zyban consults when you attend starting week two (week one for Zyban). Sessions are held Mondays and Tuesdays, 9 a.m. and 1 p.m. No appointment is necessary, come by and see us.

If you have a conflicting schedule or are in a deployed status, we will work with you as best we can. For more information, call us at 542-5292, Ext. 18 or send me an email at D.M.Woodard@sar.med.navy.mil.

SOURCE: 89th Scientific Assembly and Annual Meeting of the Radiological Society of North America, Chicago, Ill., Nov. 30-Dec. 5, 2003 and Ivanhoe.com Dec. 2, 2003.



Light Up Your Boat Contest

Mulberry Cove Marina, NAS Jacksonville
Friday, December 12, 2003

The festivities will commence at 5:30pm with
judging by the Marina Team as follows:

Slip Boats.....5:45pm	✿
Trailer Boats..... 6:15pm	✿
Mooring Field Boats..... 6:45pm	✿

**Valuable prizes (+150 value!) Trophy, food
and beverages around a fire!**

All NASJAX boat owners are welcome to enter.
Call 542-3260 to enter your boat TODAY

Holidays can be hard when a parent is deployed

From the Fleet and Family Support Center

It happens each year. Temperatures drop and winter coats are reluctantly pulled from hall closets. Seasonal decorations emerge in neighbors' yards and alluring displays beckon us from store windows. School plays need costumes, holiday greetings need to be penned, and carefully contemplated wish lists are made and fulfilled.

Ah, the holidays! A time of joy and merriment sometimes coupled with holiday stress and strong black coffee. It's giving and receiving and most importantly, it's a time set aside annually to enjoy family togetherness. But what happens when the family can't be together? What happens when mom or dad is deployed for the holidays?



Although being a single parent during the holidays is one of the most challenging situations you will face as a military spouse, it is not insurmountable. It won't be easy, but with realistic expectations and a positive attitude, it is possible to make this a memorable and worthwhile experience for you and your children. How?

Take note of the following tips provided by other military spouses who have been there:

Avoid Overspending

The temptation to compensate for an

absent parent may be to overindulge your children. Don't! A reasonable number of gifts and a special letter from the absent parent are worth so much more.

Avoid Over-Scheduling

Plan activities at home that are simple and fun, i.e., making ornaments, cookies or cards together. Play festive music, cuddle together in front of a favorite holiday video and take time to reminisce about holiday traditions when you were your children's ages.

Avoid Isolation

It's important to remember that you're not alone. You may be lucky enough to have extended family nearby, but it's more likely that you don't. Reach out to other families in your situation. Invite them to join you for a holiday meal and make it potluck, so you don't feel pressured to do it all.

Stay In Touch with the Deployed Parent

Encourage your children and spouse to send letters, photos, and audio or video messages to one another. If you have frequent access to computers, get e-mail addresses free of charge at www.hotmail.com and correspond regularly on-line.

Take Care of You!

Eat well and get plenty of rest. Recognize that your children will respond to this experience as you do. Most importantly, choose to approach this season with a positive attitude and focus on making special holiday memories together.

For more information, call NAS Jacksonville Fleet and Family Support Center at 542-2766, Ext. 127

Southern Illinois University offers workforce education degree

From the Navy College Office

Southern Illinois University (SIU) offers a Bachelor's Degree in Workforce Education and Development. It is an accelerated, flexible program designed for working adults. SIU has been offering this program in Jacksonville since 1979.

Many students finish the program in 12-18 months. Even those students without prior college coursework, can finish the degree in about 24 months. This is half the time it normally takes to complete a bachelor's degree in a traditional format.

The program is flexible enough for deployed Sailors to attend classes as well as shore duty Sailors. Six credit hours of coursework each semester are independent study courses and can be done around a ship or squadron's schedule, since there's no classroom attendance required.

The classroom courses are taught one at a time. Each classroom course last only eight weeks, so even deployed Sailors can make it to class since the classes repeat every four months. Classroom courses are offered every other weekend, both at Naval Station Mayport and Naval Air Station Jacksonville.

Transfer credit is accepted from other accredited colleges and universities, as well as, CLEP and DANTES test results, applied to the general education requirements. SIU also awards up to 44 semester hours of college credit for work and training experience.

Illinois residents have extra education benefits

From the Navy College Office

Southern Illinois University at Carbondale offers a unique opportunity for military members from the State of Illinois who meet certain qualifications. The State provides assistance to Illinois residents to complete the Bachelor of Science degree in Workforce Education and Development at the program at NS Mayport and NAS Jacksonville.

The program known as the Illinois Veteran Grant Program provides the qualified veteran with education benefits for a period equivalent to four academic years of full-time-time enrollment, including summer terms, for either undergraduate or graduate study. There are no-minimum credit hour enrollment requirements and benefits are applicable for non-credit courses.

The program is open to active and retired military along with their adult family members, civil service employees and their adult family members, and civilians. The program is also available to all prior service military personnel, especially those with G.I. Bill benefits.

Seating is limited to 30 students each semester, at each location. Priority seating is given to active duty military. SIU offers continuing enrollment for each semester.

The program for Sailors presently serves as a supplement to either the Tuition Assistance program or Veteran's Assistance (GI Bill or Vocational Rehab).

As in most instances, certain requirements do apply. The veteran, or person presently serving in the U.S. Armed Services must meet Illinois residency requirements. This means that any student enlisted in the service from Illinois or was a student at a state-controlled college, university, or community college at the time of entering the U.S. Armed Forces is eligible. Proof of Illinois residence is required if the veteran's address of record prior to entry is other than the State of Illinois.

Military members from Illinois who are interested in program application should contact Southern Illinois University at 771-4258.

Semesters start each January, May, and August. The next semester starts on Jan. 5.

SIU accepts military tuition assistance (TA), VA educational benefits, as well as other financial aid programs. SIU is licensed by the State of Florida and accredited by the North Central Association of Colleges and Schools.

Call Pat Perkins at 542-5414 (NAS Jax) for more information.

Nas Jax Golf Club
Christmas Eve Scramble

Wednesday, December 24th
1200 Shotgun
Entry Fee \$35.00

Entry fee includes golf, range balls, prize purse, free round of golf as a gift, and appetizers following play. Form your own team. Teams will be flighted or handicapped.

Entry forms available in pro shop
542-3249

NAS Jacksonville
Golf Club
est. 1962

Booksigning at NEX



Photo by JO2(SCW) Eric Clay

While signing copies of his two recent publications "Sub Chaser" and "Operation Poppy" Author and Retired Capt. Edward Brittington reunites with his former crewmember Retired YNC Walter Hoffer. The two served together while in Naples, Italy between 1975 and 1977.

FFSC offers educational and support programs

The NAS Jacksonville Fleet and Family Support Center (FFSC) Life Skills Education and Support Program is the foremost preventive measure for the avoidance of personal and family problems.

All FFSC workshops and classes are free and available to service members and their families, and civilian personnel aboard the base.

Pre-registration is required. If special accommodations or handicapped access is required, please notify FFSC upon registration. To register, call 542-2766, Ext. 127.

Current workshops

- Dec. 11, 6:30-8:30 p.m. - Ombudsman Assembly Meeting
- Dec. 16, 8 a.m.-4 p.m. - Stress Management Workshop
- Dec. 16, 2-4 p.m. - Career Exploration (for spouses)

DAR: FFSC program coordinator awarded Medal of Honor

From Page 1

Stratton, the DAR Medal of Honor selection process is a lengthy and challenging journey.

"Recipients of the DAR Medal of Honor are chosen for their contribution to society in such fields as leadership, trustworthiness, patriotism and service," she explained. "Past recipients include Charlton Heston, actor and activist; Former Senator Robert Dole, and the Honorable Jeanne Kirkpatrick, U.S. ambassador to the United Nations."

"Dianne's service as evidenced by her involvement in the coordination of volunteer support; the NAS Jacksonville's Community Service Program; Vice-President of the Monique Burr Foundation; Chairman, Children Crisis Center Board of Directors; member of the WJCT Community Advisory Board, and member of Gamma Omega Chapter of Alpha Kappa Alpha Sorority, Inc., puts her in a league of her own. She is one of the most dynamic women I have had the pleasure of knowing," added Stratton.

Parker, a once shy young girl from the Durkeville area in Jacksonville, was born on January 12, 1950 to the late Reverend Joseph P. Taylor and Doris Taylor Norris. Along with four brothers and one sister, she was raised on the northside of Jacksonville. "There were only two private homes in the entire block were I lived, ours and that of Bishop Grant, the head of the AME church at that time," recalled Parker. "Our house was surrounded by the old Durkeville Housing Project. Even though we were not wealthy, we were taught to share what we had with our friends in need. I remember one occasion when my sister and I saved up our allowance to buy shoes for one of our friends because she had holes in hers and was always being teased by the other kids."

Parker attended the Susie E. Tolbert Elementary School, where Ms. Morrison, her first grade teacher, was very influential in her life. "She cared for all of her students. At a very tender age, she instilled in me pride and patriotism, and taught me that I could become and accomplish anything I set my mind to. Her words are deeply imprinted in my heart," said Parker with a warm smile.

It was during her junior high school years at James Weldon Johnson Middle School, that Parker developed an interest in music and joined the band. She began playing the flute, which she plays to this date. "I love music and always wanted to learn how to play the flute, so I joined the school band and began playing the flute. The 1812 Overture is my favorite piece. You know, I can still blow a couple of tunes," she



Photo courtesy of Dianne Parker
Dianne Parker in 1971 after receiving her bachelor's degree in social services from Edward Waters College in Jacksonville.

said with a big smile. At New Stanton Senior High School, Parker continued playing the flute in the school band, which gave her an opportunity to travel. "Our symphonic and marching bands, of which I was a member, won all sorts of first places and we were constantly invited to perform through the region. It was a fun time for me," said Parker. It was during this time that the shy young girl from the north side of town began to flourish. She credits her band teacher, Kerna MacFarlin, with opening up her heart and mind and encouraging her to play the flute with passion, "like there was no tomorrow."

"Mr. Kerna MacFarlin, took me under his wing and taught me how to fly," said Parker with unquestionable gratitude. "Kerna and his wife Tomacina brought out the best in me. They 'adopted' me and taught me to open up and let the world see the light that was burning deep in my heart. I attended church services and went on picnics with them. They are the reason why I'm an Episcopalian today."

Throughout her early years, Parker had several influential role models including her godmother, Inez B. Walden. "My godmother taught me about integrity and values and instilled in me many of the ethical principles that I cherish to this day," said Parker. "She also taught me at an early age the importance of helping others in need. As manager of the Blodgett Homes Project for 35 plus years she worked in middle of poverty. Her work greatly influenced my interest in social causes and working in my community to help individuals in need."

After graduating from high school, Parker went on to pursue her baccalaureate degree at Edward Waters College. While at Edwards Waters College, she credits the late Mary Singleton, with inspiring her to get involved in the community. "Ms. Singleton was my government teacher in college and the mother of one of

dear friends, Carol. She was also the first African-American female city councilwoman in Jacksonville, said Parker. "While in her class, as part of an assignment she had us observe Jacksonville City council meetings. I would sit and pay attention to every word that was spoken. I learned from this experience that in order to make a difference, you have to get involved."

The thirst for knowledge kept Parker going. After earning her bachelor's degree in social services in 1971, Parker moved to Tallahassee and earned her master's degree in counseling education from Florida A&M University in 1974. While attending Florida A&M, Parker's enthusiasm, her humanitarian convictions and her faith in human dignity were contagious, landing her a job offer as Assistant Professor and Director of the Cooperative Education Department at Florida State University helping students to obtain work experience in their field of study and find meaningful employment. "During this time, I placed so many people with the Internal Revenue Service (IRS) that they offered me a position in the Jacksonville office as their district recruitment program coordinator," said Parker.

Parker's life and career have been paved with bold career moves and creative achievements. After spending three years with IRS, she accepted a job at the Civilian Personnel Office, joining the ranks of Navy civil servants first at Cecil Field as a Personnel Staffing Specialist in 1982 and then at NAS Jacksonville in 1983. Within a few years, she was back in "her community service environment." In 1988, Parker moved to the FFSC.

"When the Navy launched the Navy Community Service Program (NCSP) in 1991, I was asked to take this on as a collateral duty. Without any hesitation, I accepted this new challenge because I knew that I would be able to bring volunteer resources to my community. Just the thought and possibilities of this new project was exciting," explained Parker.

Parker has dedicated her life to helping others in the Jacksonville community. What she does, she does from her heart. Her integrity, her kindness and her sincerity have endeared her personally to many. She claims there is nothing special about her and the work she has done for the past 30 years. However, others think differently. In 2002, during Volunteer Jacksonville's Annual Awards Celebration of Service, at The Florida Theatre, Parker received Volunteer Jacksonville's Good Neighbor - Heart of Gold Award.

According to FFSC Director David Dunnewold, Parker's efforts and commitment are the heart beat of this program. The first



Photo by Miriam S. Gallett/file
Dianne Parker, Education and Training/Volunteer Program coordinator for the NAS Jacksonville Fleet and Family Support Center welcomes more than 100 local students during a recent Junior Achievement Job Shadow Day aboard the base.

year the program started, Navy volunteers donated 50,000 hours of their time to helping out the community. Today, thanks to her devotion and hard work, NAS Jax volunteers have donated 376,185 hours in community service to the First Coast. "In May 2001 NAS Jacksonville's NCSP was recognized on the floor of the U.S. House of Representatives by Congressman Ander Crenshaw for the community service support it provides to Jacksonville and its surrounding communities," said Dunnewold.

"In my capacity as the NAS Jax Navy Community Service Program Coordinator organizations call me everyday looking for volunteers. Of course, it would be impossible for us to participate in every volunteer project going on throughout the city, so the NAS Volunteer Council sets goals each year on what we can and can't do. We try to do several big projects each year such as Special Olympics, Paint the Town, the Salvation Army Bell Ringing Project, Habijax

and Stand for Children Day, which is an educational event for children at The Jacksonville Landing," Parker explained. "Our community involvement is a two-way street. We use it to help motivate and foster a foundation for self-development, leadership, pride and achievement in our service members. Our program helps young Sailors adopt healthy values and understand and appreciate Navy's core values and support the CNO's initiatives."

When she's not at work, Parker spends her time working with children, senior citizens and spending time with her family. "I give a lot of time to the community," exclaimed Parker. "But I also love my quality time with my family. We are a tight-knit bunch. We are there for each other around the clock."

According to Parker, during her long time, she relaxes by listening to classical music.

Parker is married to Walden Cunningham Parker, Sr. They have four children, Walden, Jr., Kimberly, Benita, and Bishop. "All my children are grown-up now. My son, the youngest, Bishop, received his Doctorate of Pharmacy degree a few years ago," said the proud mother.

In the future, Parker says she plans to continue what she is doing because she loves her job. "I really admire and respect my colleagues and what Navy FFSC programs do to help Sailors and families adjust and cope with the military

lifestyle. As for her involvement in the Navy Community Service Program, "I would like to thank Capt. Boensel, Capt. King and Master Chief Lawson for their support. They, along with God, are my daily inspiration. Also, I thank all of the Sailors and civilians who have helped people in need. I encourage them to make the most of their days on this earthly journey. They are truly my heroes," she exclaimed.

In 1988 and 1999, Parker received Alpha Kappa Alpha Sorority, Inc. South Atlantic Region, Freddie Lang Groomes Caring Award and the Navy Meritorious Civilian Service Medal for her long-term service to her community. In 2001, the City of Jacksonville honored Parker for her dedicated leadership, guidance and support of the Foster Grandparent Program. In 2002, The First Coast Pan-Hellenic Council of Greek Letter African-American organizations honored her as 2002 Greek of the Year. With characteristic modesty, Parker considers her selection of this year's DAR Medal of Honor recipient a humbling experience.

After spending several hours with Parker, it was easy to see why this 5-foot-7-inch tall woman, exuding a down-to-earth Southern charm, minus the accent, is known as one of the nicest woman around and, why she was chosen to be this year's recipient of the DAR Medal of Honor. She is a woman of substance.

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NAS Jacksonville Base Historian Ron Williamson searches for an aircraft reference book in his library located in Building 1.

HISTORY: From theatre lights to compiling a history of NAS Jax

From Page 5

Kennedy's assassin. Lots of the Navy Mercury and Apollo astronauts were also based here at some point in their careers.

One way that Williamson believes NAS Jax's Navy history can be remembered is through our static aircraft displays at Patriot's Grove. "This allows visitors to see and touch our aviation history," he said.

He has many items displayed at the Air Mobile Command (AMC) Terminal for travelers to view. NAS Jax also has historical items on display at the Museum of Science and History (MOSH) in their Currents of Time exhibition and other items displayed through the Jacksonville Historical Society.

Williamson also has a historical display in his office located in Room 125C of Building 1. "There is a lot of interest in our station's history here. Just two weeks ago, we loaned MOSH a complete aerial of Duval County made by Photographic Squadron VAP-62 in 1962, while based here. The aerial was about 8-feet high and was discovered behind a wall when the VIP area in the Air Operations Building was being renovated. It had been hidden since 1967. It

should be on display at the MOSH next year," he commented.

Williamson has also put together a slide show on the base history and is willing to speak to groups interested on the history of NAS Jax.

If anyone has old base pictures, historical stories or items they wish to donate, contact Ron Williamson at 542-4029 or WilliamsonRO@nasjax.navy.mil.



Photo by JO2 Mike England

Pal Day in St. Augustine

(Above) AE1 Frank Primm of VS-24 checks out some the crafts in a St. Augustine shop.

(At right) DCCS(SW) Paul Drummond of Afloat Training Group Mayport, his wife, Vanessa, and daughter, Tonya, read a plaque about the history of Castillo de San Marco during Pal Day last Saturday in St. Augustine.



Photo by Kaylee LaRocque

myPay now open for tax information

From DFAS

The end of the calendar year is quickly approaching and that means only one thing in the tax world, tax statements (W-2, 1099R, 1042S). The Defense Finance and Accounting Service (DFAS) has compiled a schedule of dates when service members, military

retirees and annuitants and defense civilian employees can access their tax statements through myPay.

myPay provides a secure method for users to manage their pay account information. Available around the clock, customers can conveniently make changes online, avoiding the hassles of an office visit.

Military members and Department of Defense civilian employees will once again have access to view, save and print their tax statements from myPay at <https://mypay.dfas.mil>.

"During 2003, more than 1.2 million users viewed their tax statements on myPay, and we continue to encourage users to view and print their statements online," said Pat Shine, director of DFAS' Military and Civilian Pay Services business line.

"Timely access to W-2s and other tax statements is another way myPay gives users control of their pay information," she added.

For more about myPay, visit DFAS at <http://www.dfas.mil/>.

MWR NOTES

Jingle Bell Jog 5K Run/Walk

Runners and walkers put your best to the test and join us for our annual Jingle Bell Jog fun run Dec. 18 at 11:30 a.m. The first 100 to register will receive a free T-shirt. Holiday hams and turkeys will be raffled off. For more information and to register, call 542-3518.

Budweiser Brew

House events

Every Wednesday is Wacky Wednesday starting at 7 p.m. Enjoy Karaoke and a DJ party with wacky specials. Call 542-3521 for more info.

Escape the ordinary on an I.T.T. trip

Have some fun with I.T.T. - take a trip or treat yourself to a show! Stop by our office located adjacent to the NEX, and sign up for a great trip. Our trips are open to all hands, so bring a friend! For more information call the office at 542-3318.

The following are upcoming I.T.T. trips:

Sunday - Okefenokee Swamp - No is the time to see the migratory birds. This trip includes transportation and a guided boat tour for \$21.

I.T.T. also has tickets for

these upcoming events:

Nutcracker Community and National Ballet Dec. 12-14. Great lower level seats towards the front for \$37.50, or lower level towards the back for \$29.

All Jacksonville Barracuda's hockey games. Tickets are \$10 or \$12.

The new Entertainment books are in for \$20. Get yours now and use your coupons for over one year.

Bingo Palace

Get your favorite daubers, come and pick your lucky seat and let the games begin. The night Bingo schedule is Sunday, Monday, Tuesday and Thursday. Cards go on sale at 5:30 p.m. and warm-ups start at 6:30 p.m. Doors open for lunchtime Bingo at 10 a.m. and games start at 11:30 a.m.

Swimming activities

The indoor pool is available for family recreation and lap swimming Monday through Friday evenings from 4:30- 8 p.m. and Saturdays and Sundays from noon - 4 p.m.

Parents can work out with the Aqua Aerobics class from 5 - 6 p.m. on Monday, Wednesday, and Friday while the kids play.

The Adult Fitness Swim Club is a coached program for novice to advanced swimmers wishing

to improve their PRT time, swimming skills, and technique. The emphasis is on stroke mechanics. Interval training is introduced. Workouts are designed to improve technique and to develop both speed and endurance. Workouts are scheduled on Tuesdays and Thursdays from 4:30-5:30 p.m. at the indoor pool. The sessions are free for active duty and reservist personnel. Retired military, DoD and dependents will be charged \$20 for eight workout sessions.

Mulberry Cove Marina news

The marina offers free kayak and canoe rentals for active duty Sailors on Thursdays. It's a great way to get acquainted with some of the equipment on hand and have some fun too. For more information on marina events, call 542-3260.

Auto Skills Center

Visit the Auto Skills Center for your professional or hobby car care needs. The center offers an array of services for the novice or professional auto enthusiast. There is an ASE qualified mechanic on hand to assist with questions and tips on servicing your vehicle. The center is open Monday,

Thursday and Friday from noon to 8 p.m., Saturday and Sunday from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. and all holidays from 9 a.m. to 3 p.m. except Thanksgiving, Christmas and New Year's Day.

The Auto Skills Center offers a shop orientation class on the third Thursday and Friday of each month. Reservations are required for the orientation. Call 542-3227 for information.

O'Club happenings

An all hands Reef & Beef Buffet Dinner is held the first Friday of each month from 6:30-9 p.m. at the O'Club. The buffet is only \$17 per person. Reservations are encouraged by calling 542-3041.

Liberty happenings

The Liberty Cove Recreation Center is the place to go, if you want to know ... where all the fun and excitement is found. Catch a great line up of fun events for the month of December at the Liberty Rec Center. Stop by and meet the staff. Pick up a calendar of events and see what's going on around the area and the station. Call 542-1335 for more details.

YAC happenings

Take advantage of the fun events at the Youth Activities Center. Tae Kwon Do classes are available at NAS Jax Youth Gym and Yellow Water Youth

Activities.

If you are interested in registering your child stop by either center or give us a call at 778-9772 (NAS Jax) or 777-8247 (Yellow Water).

Free movies offered

Enjoy free movies at the base theater each Friday evening starting at 7 p.m. and every other Saturday at 5 p.m. and 7 p.m. Bring your own popcorn, soda and snacks. Sit back and enjoy some of Hollywood's premier blockbuster hits. There are no alcoholic beverages allowed in the theater and persons under 17 are not permitted without adult supervision.

Friday, 7 p.m. - Open Range (R)

Dec. 19, 7 p.m. - Alex and Emma (PG13)

Dec. 20, 5 p.m. - Uptown Girls (PG13)

Dec. 20, 7 p.m. - 8 Crazy Nights (PG13)

Dec. 26, 7 p.m. - Second Hand Lions (PG)

Visit MWR online at www.nasjax.navy.mil and look for the tab marked MWR this is your tab to unlimited fun. For questions or comments e-mail us at mwrmtkg@nasjax.navy.mil.

On The Go With USO

The USO has tickets on sale now for the Jacksonville Jaguars vs. New Orleans Saints game on Sunday.

Military members wishing to purchase tickets to the World Wrestling Entertainment Smackdown will be given a \$5 discount when they show their military I.D. Anyone who shows up in uniform for the event will get in free. Tickets for this event are not available at the USO.

For more information, call 542-3028.

Out in town, need a ride? Club 2000 can help

NAS Jacksonville has a program called Club 2000.

Anyone who is impaired and in a bar, club, lounge, or private residence within St. Johns, Baker, Nassau, Clay or Duval counties can call the NAS Jacksonville OOD office at 542-2338.

You will be provided a taxi ride, paid for by the station, to your home within the same five counties.

Anyone (including civilians) in an on-base facility can have the club bartender assist in contacting the OOD.

Club 2000 cards with this phone number can be obtained from MWR in Building 584.

Searching for Rudolph



Photos courtesy of MWR

(Above) AE3 Anthony Shaw and AW3 Shaun Clement of VP-30 try to figure out the clues as to where Rudolph might be hiding on base. (At right) QM3 Phillip Vagnoni of NAS Jax Recycling searches for Rudolph the Rednose Reindeer on the base as part of the annual Liberty Program Christmas Scavenger Hunt. You may have seen Sailors lurking in strange places, asking questions about a reindeer, or even stealing reindeer off of base decorations. They are all on the hunt for Rudolph the Rednose Reindeer who has a \$250 cash prize on his head. Many are looking but no one has turned up the reindeer yet. Sponsored by Geico Direct, the game began Nov. 28 and is open to active duty E1-E5. It will continue until the reindeer is found. Clues can be picked up at the Liberty Cove Recreation Center daily.



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SPORTS & STANDINGS

Golf league starting

Anyone interested in participating in an upcoming 9-hole intramural golf league should stop by the base gym to pick up forms for rosters. For more information, call Craig at 542-2930/3239.

Flag Football League begins in January

The 4-on-4 Flag Football League begins Jan. 26. All rosters are due by Jan. 22. Entry forms are available at the base gym. For more information, call Craig at 542-2930/3239.

Navy Southeast Regional Running and Triathlon Team

Represent the United States Navy in 5K, 10K, marathons, and/or triathlons. The Navy will showcase elite active duty men and women in regional races. Uniforms are provided as well as transportation, entry fees, and lodging costs.

Interested runners must compete in sanctioned (USA Track and Field, USA Triathlon Association, or Roadrunners Clubs of America) races and your time must be one of top 10 regional qualifying times. If you have run in sanctioned race and your time meets regional qualifying time, contact the NS Mayport athletic director at 270-5451.

Southeast Regional qualifying times:

5K -	Men 19:00
	Women 24:00
10K -	Men 34:00
	Women 46:00
Marathon -	Men 3 Hrs. 30 Min.
	Women 4 Hrs.
Triathlon -	Men 2 Hrs. 30 Min.
	Women 3 Hrs.
	Triathlon time based on 1.5k swim, 10k run, 40k bike

For more information about any of the sports articles, call 542-2930/3239.

Intramural Basketball Standings

Team	As of Dec. 4	
	Wins	Losses
BMC/NAR	5	0
MWR	5	0
VS-22	5	1
VP-30	3	1
AIMD	3	2
VS-30	3	2
Scouts	3	3
Mad Foxes	2	4
Air Ops	1	4
FACSFAC Jax	1	4

NADEP Basketball Standings

Team	As of Dec. 5	
	Wins	Losses
NCTS	0	4
Eagles	0	6
Prowlers	7	1
Hornets	6	2
Engine World	4	3
P-3 Hurricane	4	3
Shockers	4	4
TC'S Sonic Boom	2	6
Bad Boys	0	8

COMMUNITY CALENDAR

The **Navy Wives Clubs of America, NWCA Jax No. 86** meets the first Wednesday of each month. Meetings are held in Building 612 on Jason Street at NAS Jacksonville at 7:30 p.m. The Thrift Shop is open Tuesdays and Thursdays and every other Saturday from 9 a.m. - 1 p.m. For more information, call the Thrift Shop at 772-0242 or Pearl Aran at 777-8032.

The **Navy Wives Club's DID No. 300** meetings are held the second Thursday of each month at 7 p.m. at the Oak Crest United Methodist Church Education Building at 5900 Ricker Road. For more information, call 387-4332 or 272-9489.

Clay County Chapter 1414, National Association of Retired Federal Employees, (NARFE) invites all retired and currently employed federal employees to their regular monthly meeting the second Tuesday of each month at 1 p.m. at the Orange Park Library. For more information, call 276-9415.

The **Navy Jacksonville Yacht Club** general membership meetings are held at 7:30 p.m. on the first Wednesday of every month at the clubhouse (Building 1956) adjacent to the Mulberry Cove Marina. The Navy Jax Yacht Club is a members only club open to all active duty, reserve and retired mili-

tary, and active DoD personnel. For more information, call 778-0805 or email commodore@njyc.org.

MOMS Club of Northeast Florida meets the second and fourth Thursday of every month from 10 a.m. to noon. The meeting is free and open to all at-home mothers and children who living in zip code 32206, 32218 and 32226. MOMS Club is a support group for moms wanting a variety of activities for you and your children. For meeting location or more information, contact Debbie at 751-0671 or Kathi at 751-3400.

Christian Fellowship Night is held behind the Chapel in Building 749 from 6:30 - 9 p.m. every Tuesday night. For more information, call 542-3051.

The **Association of Aviation Ordnancemen's** meeting is held the third Thursday of each month at the Fleet Reserve Center on Collins Road. For more information, call AOC Chris Johnson at 542-2168.

The **Westside Jacksonville Chapter 1984, National Association of Retired Federal Employees** extends an open invitation to all currently employed and retired federal employees to our regular meeting held at 1 p.m. on the fourth Thursday of each month at the Murray Hill United Methodist Church, (Fellowship Hall Building) at 4101 College Street. For more information, call R. Carroll at 786-7083.

The **National Naval Officers Association (NNOA)** holds its

monthly meeting on the third Thursday each month at 5:30 p.m. at the Jacksonville Urban League, 903 West Union Street. Interested personnel are encouraged to attend or contact Lt. Herlena Washington at 696-5005 or email WashingtonHO@matcombic.usmc.mil.

First Coast No More Homeless Pets is sponsoring a pet adoption Saturday from 9 a.m. to 3 p.m. at the Regency Petsmart at 356 Monument Road. More than 100 dogs and cats will be available for adoption. All animals are already spayed or neutered. Adoption fees will vary. For more information, contact Debbie Fields at dfields@ccjax.com or Rick DuCharme at landollse@aol.com. For directions, call 724-4600.

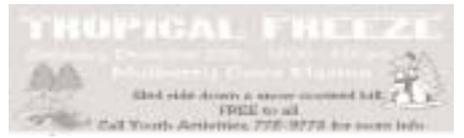
The **Military Officers Association of America (MOAA)** is holding their monthly dinner meeting Dec. 17 at 6 p.m. at the River Cove Officer's Club. All active, reserve or retired officers are welcome. For reservations and more information, call Steve Kerlin at 262-0209.

The **Blacks in Government Kings Bay, Ga. Chapter**, is hosting a New Year's Eve party Dec. 31 from 10 p.m. to 2 a.m. at the Ramada Inn in Kingsland, Ga. The cost is \$15 and funds benefit the chapter's scholarship fund. For more information, call Mr. Wilson at (904) 545-8154 or Mr. Brooks at (912) 729-1081.

JAX TALES

BY MIKE JONES

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In Gear

A weekly look at the automotive market



The Chrysler Crossfire coupe has a stunning design that will get noticed.

Dan Scanlan/special

Caught up with Crossfire

DaimlerChrysler takes aim at the import coupe market

By Dan Scanlan
Special

Welcome to the first example of Route 66 meets autobahn, done the DaimlerChrysler way. Chrysler and Mercedes-Benz merged to form DaimlerChrysler in 1998, and there was high anticipation that Germany's engineers would work with the American car company to improve things like fit and finish. Now we have the 2004 Chrysler Crossfire, with more than one-third of its bits directly from Benz's SLK320 compact convertible. That includes engine, transmissions, seat frames, steering column and some electronics, built at the Karmann coach-builder factory in Osnabruck, Germany, as a niche product for about 20,000 lucky owners in 2003/2004.

The result is a car Chrysler said is aimed squarely at the import coupe market populated by the Audi TT, Nissan 350Z and Infiniti G35 coupe, Porsche Boxster, BMW Z4 roadsters and Lexus SC430 hard-top convertible.

The Crossfire was a concept unveiled at the 2001 North American International Auto Show in Detroit, penned by 25-year-old Erik Stoddard with inspiration from New York City's Chrysler Building. The production version was developed in just 24 months, resulting in a stunning, classic long hood/short tail fastback with a cool chopped roof that looks smaller than its pictures, but two inches longer (159.8 inches) and wider (69.5 inches) than the SLK.

Chrysler's Crossfire brand manager Pablo Cuevas said the Crossfire was a natural for a company seeking to move upmarket. And using so much Mercedes underneath was just a way to get this concept to market using talent on both sides of DaimlerChrysler.

"The car really is a great statement about the styling Chrysler has shown over the years. In terms of a two-door, we are trying to develop the brand more upscale to a premium level, and this was the type of product we haven't had in the lineup," he said. "We are now a combined company, and we have resources that neither side had before the merger, so it makes a lot of sense to have access to talents and components. Speed to market was certainly a factor."

The Crossfire's face is a big egg-crate grille, "the new face of Chrysler" topped with a winged Chrysler badge and flanked by big headlights whose scalloped edges run into the big front bumper over the inset fog lights and split lower air intake. An edgy design line runs off the front fender to merge into the alloy-look windshield frame, while another line that runs off the flared front wheel wells rises up the side before becoming the edge of the rear fender's rounded hips. The hood gets six strakes with a raised center spine. We liked the non-functional fender vents with three alloy accents, although they look like the fender vents on the Mercedes-Benz SL500 roadster.

The fastback tail gets a wide boat-tail look somewhat reminiscent of the (don't laugh) mid-1960s' American Motors Marlin fastback, its rear window/hatch flanked by huge taillights that waterfall down the rear fenders, with dual exhausts carved into an aerodynamic rear undertray and a spoiler above that pops up at 57 mph. The whole thing sits on high-performance Michelin Pilot Sport 2 tires — P225/40 ZR-18-inches in front, and P255/35 ZR-19-inches in back, on seven-spoke aluminum alloy wheels. Fit and finish was superb, as was the creamy white paint.

The coupe garnered lots of double-takes, with phrases like "sleek little thing" and "pretty cool" heard a lot and a thumbs-up/"that's sweet!" yelled from a passing pickup driver. It gathered a crowd at a recent First Coast Car Council cruise-in, while a

BEHIND THE WHEEL

2004 Chrysler Crossfire



Dan Scanlan/special

The interior of the Crossfire uses Mercedes-Benz switchgear as well as an SLK-derived gauge package.

Specifications:

Vehicle type	.....two-door, two-seat sports coupe
Base price	.....\$34,495 (As driven — same)
Engine type	.....SOHC, 18-Valve V-6
Displacement	.....3.2-liter
Horsepower (net)	.....215 hp at 5,700 rpm
Torque (lb-ft)	.....229 at 3,000 rpm
Transmission	.....6-speed manual
Wheelbase	.....94.5 in.
Overall length	.....159.8 in.
Overall width	.....69.5 in.
Height	.....51.4 in.
Front headroom	.....36.9 in.
Front legroom	.....42.7 in.
Cargo capacity	.....7.6 cubic feet
Curb weight	.....3,060 pounds
Fuel capacity	.....15.85 gallons
Mileage rating	.....18 mpg city/ 27 mpg highway
Last word	.....Stunning American Art Deco, acceptable European performance and handling, all in a well-done package.

passerby gushed, "My God, that's gorgeous!" and another who said "That's my dream car."

Inside, you see more evidence of Chrysler's new design direction, and switchgear from Mercedes' parts bin.

Streamlined buff-alloy door handles allow entry via wide-opening doors to comfortable 10-way high-back black leather bucket seats with serious bolstering that holds you in well. The seating position is low, my shoulders level with the door top. The four-spoke steering wheel telescopes (but no tilt) for a good view of the SLK-derived gauge package with 160-mph speedometer, 7,000-rpm tach and gas and tempera-

ture gauge trimmed in alloy. The hood's center spine is repeated on the pebble-finish black dash top, alloy-look plastic gearshift knob and cloth headliner overhead.

The dash's center section is done in alloy-look plastic. The good six-speaker, 240-watt Infinity AM-FM sound system with CD player has tiny buttons and a display too dim to see in the sun.

Along with front and side air bags, there is an air bag shut off when kids occupy the passenger seat. Behind the bulkhead sits a deep but small cargo area under the rear hatch, with a full-size spare tire underneath. The spoiler whirs when it goes up and down, and we heard some rattling when it was up over rougher roads. The entire body structure was stiff — no surprise, since Chrysler added a roof to the already stiffened Benz SLK320 structure.

It all looks, acts and works very well, indeed, with an almost Germanic fit and finish. The only thing we didn't like was the sweeping fastback's rear panels ability to create large blind spots when you want to look back before a lane change, while the rear hatchback window is narrower than it looks. And when the rear wing deploys, it further restricts rearward visibility.

Under the long hood resides a 215-hp Mercedes-Benz 3.2-liter V-6 connected to a six-speed manual or five-speed automatic transmission. That's respectable enough for our 6,200-mile-old test car to get to 60 mph in a decent 6.5 seconds with wheelspin reined in after a short squeak with the standard all-speed traction control. We liked the snarling exhaust note, but had some notchiness shifting from second to third. That time matches the last SLK320 we tested with the same engine. For comparison, the Nissan 350Z, with 287-hp V-6, did it for us in 5.7 seconds, while the last Audi TT we tested did it in about the same with a 225-hp turbocharged four.

Rear-wheel drive with an independent double wishbone front suspension with coil springs and gas-charged shock absorbers, an independent five-link rear suspension with coil springs and gas-charged shock absorbers and wide, low-profile Z-rated rubber mean the Crossfire handles well indeed.

The standard Electronic Stability Program made sure the rear end stayed planted in vigorous turns, although the tail was catchable even with it turned off. And the standard Benz anti-lock brakes with brake assist had a solid, progressive feel and did the job superbly time and time again without any fade.

All of this came at a manufacturer's suggested base price is \$34,495, options limited to metallic paint, all-season tires and automatic transmission.

Bottom line — the Chrysler Crossfire is a stunning sporty car from an American company once known for so-so fit and finish. It looks great, handles very well, and is an easy car to live in. That it contains so much Mercedes leaves me with mixed feelings. The right Benz bits were used to make sure this coupe made it to market when Chrysler didn't have any rear-wheel-drive platforms around, and that's a bargain on content alone. But you sort of wish the next round of stuff from Chrysler (like the new Pacifica sports tourer) showcases what its engineers can do with Daimler's help, and not just its parts. As to a convertible version, all Cuevas would say was that his design office is "so in love with it that they are continuously proposing versions," but which version is up to management.

Dan Scanlan test-drives new vehicles on Northeast Florida's roads, averaging about 200 miles of combined highway and city traffic during a weeklong test. The test vehicles are provided by the manufacturer according to their schedule, and represent a broad spectrum of sizes and retail prices. The prices listed are manufacturer's suggested retail prices.