The Heart of Health Care

Since the Navy’s infancy, the healing hands of nurses like LT Lisa Saar have provided care to military members. The role of the Navy Nurse has developed through the years, diversifying concepts and expanding its role as medical technology allowed, but one thing hasn’t changed — the Vice Nurse Corps mission.

Caring and personal, today’s Navy nurses are still at bedside to wipe feverish brows, hold anxious hands and maintain a protective watch over their charges.

Photo by JO1(SW) M.J. Darby
Members of Special Boat Team (SBT) 22 practice narrow river beach extractions under hostile fire conditions. SBT-22’s primary mission is to conduct special operations in riverine environments.

Photo by PH2 Eric Logsdon
Members of Explosive Ordnance Disposal Mobile Unit (EODMU) 11 members perform a static jump from the ramp of a C-130 Hercules in groups of three. EODMU 11 is flying with the 731st Airlift Squadron and will descend from altitudes ranging from 1,200 to 13,000 feet.

Photo by France Voss, Shaye
Speaking with Sailors

Master Chief Petty Officer of the Navy

MCPON (SS/AW) Terry D. Scott

These questions are from a recent discussion with Sailors at an all hands call:

Q: With the introduction of web-based curriculums and computerized training, is the focus only on increased throughput or is thought given to the quality of the training? If we ‘computerize’ all training, won’t we lose some of the quality of our traditional training?

A: The goal of the Revolution in Training is not to see if we can computerize all training. As a matter of fact, a command was established from Task Force Excel, the Human Performance Center (HPC), to ensure that we develop the right methods of training for the right objective.

We know that one method of training is not necessarily the best method for all instances. There are some skills that are best taught using computer-based, self-paced systems, while there are other skills that are best taught in a lab setting. There are a number of different mechanisms and manners in which we have to evaluate training programs to ensure that we’re using the right method to train to the right objective. There is no ‘one size fits all’ when it comes to Navy training.

Some of the approaches we’re looking at are providing you the right training, at the right level, so that when you first arrive at your command you’re able to be productive right from the start. Many of us have received training in the past that either was not what we needed when we showed up to the command, or wasn’t in-depth enough in the areas we needed. We want that to ensure that we don’t make those mistakes in the future, and make sure we’re teaching Sailors the exact skills they will need on the equipment and technology that they’ll be using.

Q: I have orders to a ship, and medical has cleared me to be Fit for Duty (FFD). Why do I also have to complete an Operational Screening (OS)?

A: Being designated FFD does not automatically mean you are deployable. Many Sailors are surprised to learn that you can be found FFD by competent medical authorities, yet not be able to serve in an operational billet (afloat or overseas) due to a chronic or continuing medical issue.

When a Sailor is issued orders to operational duty (Type-2 or 4), there is a section of the PCS orders directing that an OS must be conducted. Your local military treatment facility must review your medical record to determine if you can successfully screen for sea duty. If they notice a medical condition, they will either state you are unsuitable, or will ask the gaining command if they can handle the medical condition.

Type-4 orders (overseas sea duty) also have the requirement of an overseas screening. It is possible to be cleared for overseas duty and still not be cleared for sea duty in that particular location. For further details and requirement of an overseas screening see MILPERSMAN 1306-140.

Q: Speaking with Sailors is a monthly column initiated by the Master Chief Petty Officer of the Navy as a way of reaching out to the men and women of the fleet, whether they are stationed just down the road or halfway around the world.

Q: If you want it, go get it! - www.nko.navy.mil -

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AWARDS
Around the Fleet

Family Care Planning Key to Readiness, Updated

Prior planning for family care is essential to combat readiness, by ensuring Sailors and their families are prepared for deployments, and ready to execute their military and professional duties.

To provide Sailors clear guidance for developing reliable family care plans and to assist commands in creating effective family care programs, the Navy recently revised the Family Care Policy instruction (OPNAVINST 1740.4B). “The new revision simplified and clarified many of the requirements of the policy,” explained CAPT Carol Schmidt, branch head of Women’s Policy in Washington, D.C. “We included a simple checklist to guide Sailors through the development of a plan.”

Several topics included in the checklist are:

- Financial preparations, such as establishing allotments, fund transfers, and/or automatic bill pay.
- Logistical concerns, such as family contacts, school arrangements, use of government services, etc.
- Medical/Dental information, such as location of records, names of providers, medication requirements.
- Legal provisions, such as wills, powers of attorney, ID cards, social security numbers, and insurance policies.

The instruction requires Sailors to arrange for support of their family members during deployment, normal and extended working hours, TAD (temporary assigned duty) assignments and weekend duty, regardless of whether the Sailor is on shore or sea duty.

“Advanced planning benefits both the Navy and the Sailor by ensuring care for family members is provided, easing stress on the Sailor and his or her command,” wrote Chief of Naval Personnel VADM Gary Hoeing in a recent NAVADMIN.

The Navy Family Care policy applies to all Navy personnel, active and reserve, who are single parents or part of a dual military couple with custodial responsibility for family members. It also applies to Sailors who are the sole caregivers of another person.

NAVADMIN 0370/04 has more details and is available online at www.bupers.navy.mil/navadmin/navoq/nav4037.txt.

For more information on the Navy’s Family Care Policy, please visit the Office of Women’s Policy Web site at www.bupers.navy.mil. Navy Library Programs Offers Resources on NKO

The Navy General Library Program (NGLP) has partnered with Navy Knowledge Online (NKO) to provide electronic books, reference materials and practice testing services at no cost to Sailors and Marines worldwide. These materials are also available to Reservists, retirees, and DON civilians and non-appropriated fund (NAF) personnel.

The move to partner with NKO saved the Navy an estimated $15.5 million compared to the cost of having each installation purchase the resources individually, according to Nellie Moffit, NGLP director.

“The primary reason for joining NKO was to provide greater library services to a greater number of Sailors at a cost savings,” said Moffit. “There isn’t a Navy General Library at every naval installation, so we can best meet Sailors’ needs through E-content (electronic content), which is accessible worldwide. An added benefit is that NKO also provides support to Navy civilians, NAF personnel and retirees. NKO allows us to meet many needs with a comparatively small investment.”

The idea to put E-content on NKO originated with CAPT James Kantner, director of Knowledge Management at the Naval Personnel Development Command, Norfolk. “These E-content resources are the perfect fit for NKO,” said Kantner. “We developed NKO to serve Sailors with the right knowledge at the right time, to support their professional and personal development. The vision was to create a learning environment dedicated to providing our Navy workforce with the tools to enhance, and that requires us to harness the full power of Navy and commercially-produced resources available today.”

NKO is the Navy’s Web Learning Portal through which Sailors will be able to access the professional development resources needed to support their 3 Vector Model (3VM). According to Moffit, the NGLP/NKO relationship is a natural partnership. “It’s great because they handle the technical end, and we do the analysis of what content meets the greatest needs of our community,” she said. “It’s a seamless interface for the end user. They simply click on the product channel on NKO and go directly to a commercial vendor’s site, such as the Gale Student Resource Center or Peterson’s.”

“We’re going to expand the titles in this library next year,” Moffit continued. “We’ve been very pleased at the usage.” NGLP headquarters at the Naval Education and Training Professional Development and Technology Center, Saufley Field, supports all general libraries in the Navy, including more than 300 shelf and 20 at shore installations. NGLP provides professional military materials, such as the Blauerjack’s Manual, books from the Chief of Naval Operations and Master Chief Petty Officer of the Navy reading lists, reference materials, including Jane’s Fighting Ships, atlases and other materials like DVDs, videos and audio books.

For further information, contact the Navy General Library Program office at nglpbncet.navy.mil, (850) 452-1001 ext. 2185, or DSN 922-1001 ext. 2185. To access NKO, visit https://www.nko.navy.mil/.

Story by Darlene Goodwin who is assigned to the public affairs office Navy Region Gulf Coast.

Savings Deposit Program Assists Deployed Service Members

Deployed uniformed service members have the chance to earn a guaranteed 10 percent interest on their savings annually.

Defense Finance and Accounting Service (DFAS), in accordance with the Department of Defense, implemented the Savings Deposit Program in August 1990 for members who were serving in the Persian Gulf Conflict. The Act progressively changed to include troops assigned to areas of operation outside the United States on ships or mobile units. This program includes Operation Iraqi Freedom service members assigned to a combat zone or in direct support of a combat zone.

“A service member can contribute up to $10,000, but interest of 10 percent will not accrue after that amount,” said Roger Castillo, program director for the Savings Deposit Program. “A member can participate in the program if the member is serving outside the United States or its possessions in support of Operation Enduring Freedom, and has served at least 30 consecutive days in an area that has been designated as a combat zone or in direct support of a combat zone.

“Also, members serving on permanent duty assignment outside the United States or its possessions in support of contingency operations and serving on active duty in the designated area for more than 30 days.”

To make a deposit into the fund, troops are asked to contact their financial office. Withdrawing the money before leaving the combat zone is not authorized, unless there is an emergency. The last day to make a deposit into the fund is the date of departure from the assignment. However, interest will accrue for up to 90 days after return from deployment.

“DFAS is in a great opportunity for service members to accrue at a higher interest rate than at a bank’s average interest rate of 2 or 3 percent,” said Patrick T. Shine, acting director of DFAS. “We are always taking the extra step to assist our troops and their families in any way possible, especially while members are deployed.

DFAS will post the savings deposit balance of active-compo- nent members to their Leave and Earnings Statement. For more about DFAS visit www.dfas.mil.

Story courtesy of Defense Finance and Accounting Service.
Around the Fleet

Navy/Marine Corps Team to Revolutionize Naval Warfare

T he Navy/Marine Corps team will revolutionize naval warfare with the programs funded in the FY05 budget, according to Chief of Naval Operations (CNO) ADM Vern Clark during a House Appropriations Defense Subcommittee hearing this spring.

“The budget lays out our future in the form of the littoral combatant ship (LCS); DD(X) [next generation destroyer], CVN 21, the Joint Strike Fighter; unmanned vehicles in the air, on the surface, and under the sea; the Virginia-class submarine, SSGN [guished-missile submarine], and an array of advanced aircraft,” said Clark.

Among these platforms, the CNO singled out DD(X) as playing a critical role in the transformation of the Navy.

“I don’t believe there is a program out there that is more critical to the changing way we war in naval services is going to be conducted in the next 50 years than DD(X),” said Clark. “You want an enemy to have to work hard to deal with you, and that’s why you want to build a ship like DD(X) that has a radar cross section of a fishing boat. By working closely with the CNO and Commandant of the Marine Corps Gen. Michael Hage, Secretary of the Navy Gordon England said the FY05 budget laid the foundation for the future naval force.

“This is a critical budget year for the Department of the Navy,” England said. “This year, we did establish a future course for our naval forces to respond to and defeat future threats.”

In addressing future amphibious platforms, Clark stressed the importance of the Maritime Prepositioning Force (Future) (MPF(F)) and the LANDING Helo Assault (Replacement) (LHAR(R)). The CNO said these new amphibious capabilities will change the way the Navy and Marine Corps teams fight together.

“MPF(F) and LHAR(R) will define how the Navy and Marine Corps teams work together in the future,” Clark said. “This new concept for the Navy Marine Corps team will take the next step in expeditionary warfare, producing the kind of quick response and global reach capability that will revolutionize the way we fight as a team for this nation.”

The commandant thanked the representatives for supporting the new Navy Marine Corps team, and visiting with sailors and Marines on the point.

“The support is really critical to ensuring that we remain an expeditionary force that is most ready when the nation is least ready,” Hague testified.

The CNO said the Fleet Response Plan (FRP) and Sea Swap are two of the many initiatives the Navy is exploring to maximize operational capability and availability, while providing the best value for the nation by producing the right readiness and delivering the right capability at the right cost. The Navy may soon implement the Sea Swap program on a forward deployed Expeditionary Strike Group.

Clark said FRP and Sea Swap both increase the Navy’s flexibility, but he reiterated his commitment to six-month peacetime deployments.

“That means you rotate the crews because we made a commitment,” Clark said. “In peacetime operations, we’re committed to six-month deployments. In war, we’ll do whatever we need to accomplish its missions.”

“SHIPMAIN and the Sea Power 21 Vision

S hip maintenance (SHIPMAIN) and joint initiatives fleet sailors are putting into practice. It is a “best business” practice that is changing the culture of getting ship work completed in a one-step process.

“ Innovative programs like SHIPMAIN and the Naval Aviation Readiness Integrated Program (NAPERIP) helped develop and share best practices, streamline maintenance planning and improved performance goals in shipyards, depots and Intermediate Maintenance Activities (IMA),” said Chief of Naval Operations (CNO), ADM Vern Clark in his CNO Guidance for 2004.

“As we move [closer to] the ‘smart ship’ design and operations, the crew size is significantly reduced. This means that more of the maintenance, above and beyond preventive maintenance schedule (PMS), is performed by outside contractors and in the Intermediate Maintenance Activities (IMA), shipyards, and private sector. The implementation of the SHIPMAIN program ensures that the right group is assigned to the right job from the very beginning, thereby expediting its completion,” explained Master Chief Machinist’s Mate (SW) Jeffery A. Gray, SIMA command master chief, Norfolk.

SHIPMAIN provides the maximum benefit per maintenance dollar by a one step process, eliminating time lags, prioritizing ship jobs and empowering surface ship Sailors in their ship’s maintenance decisions.

Each ship has in place a maintenance team consisting of a ship’s port engineer, members of SIMA, ship repair supervisor (SUPSHIP), Fleet Training Support Center (FTSC) personnel and the ship’s representative. These teams meet twice a week in the same location at the same time to discuss the same issues. The ship’s representative takes the lead on deciding priority jobs for the ship. This team approach is producing a mindset change and encouraging best business practices.

“SIMA now has more time to plan and execute the availabilities within the prescribed dates, saving thousands of premium dollars,” explained Seaman First Class Hull Maintenance Technician (SW) Paul Corey, senior project manager SIMA during the SHIPMAIN fires up fleet Sailors to concentrate on other upkeep jobs and training, because the repair activity is doing more of the repair jobs.”

“The process for getting a ‘2Kilo,’ Navy paperwork to assign repair work, from the ship to the maintenance activity is now more streamlined and more efficient. This seems to be fewer duplicated job orders and less items sent that are Ship’s Force (SF) capable,” said Chief Hull Maintenance Technician Chris Perry, SIMA Norfolk project manager.

The Navy’s sea plan, Sea Power 21, requires the capabilities of a 375-ship Navy to be in place and executing its mission. SHIPMAIN is contributing to the future of a 375-ship Navy by saving time, labor and dollars—dollars that can be recapitalized into future assets. SHIPMAIN is also training Sailors and providing them opportunities to be good stewards of the scarce government resources entrusted to them. Maintenance jobs that used to take weeks before a Sailor actually turned a screw, now have a screening turn-around time of 48 to 72 hours.

“Sea Enterprise is focusing headquarters leadership on cost-cutting measures, streamlining and improving processes, and is creating ideas that will improve our productivity and reduce our overhead costs. The Sea Enterprise (SE) Board of Directors established an enterprise-wide approach to transformation, validating $38 billion in savings across the FY04 future years defense plan, and identifying $12 billion in new initiatives to help us recapitalized and transform the force,” Clark wrote in his 2004 guidance.

Ricky’s Tour

By JOY Mike Jones

www.rickystour.com

JULY 2004 • ALL HANDS

12

Time Capsule

This month we look back in the All Hands archive to see what was going on in July of 1994.

To view these issues in more detail on the Web, go to www.news.navy.mil/allhands.aspx?search

20 Years Ago – 1994

Our cover reflected Navy deep water engineers exploring the Antarctic. Inside, we focused on the Navy’s advancements in undersea rescue and recovery. We also featured stories on the Navy sket shooting team and we spent time in Washington D.C. with the Navy’s ceremonial guardsmen. The All-Navy sports roundup was also included in this issue.

26 Years Ago – 1978

The cover of this issue of All Hands showed two women from the sister cities of Guinea-Bissau in West Africa. USS Velder was the first American warship to visit the cities. There was also a feature on Joy Bright, Director of the WAVES (Women Accepted for Volunteer Emergency Service). We also outlined the rights and benefits for Navy families and spotlighted the Navy’s deep submergence rescue vehicle (DSRV).

30 Years Ago – 1968

Members of the Navy’s Blue Angels were featured on the cover of this All Hands issue. They were just one part of the 1968 Armied Forces Day Open House celebration feature. This month also featured stories about the Navy Enlisted Permanant Individual Career System. This program combined shipboard experience and structured technical training, which helped to replace some traditional classroom learning for first term enlisted Sailors. Also featured in this issue were articles about the dangers of tattoos and safety and survivability.
Sea Power 21 provides our nation with widely dispersed combat power from platforms possessing unprecedented warfighting capabilities. The global environment and the nation’s defense strategy call for a military with the ability to respond swiftly to a broad range of global missions and homeland defense against terrorist threats. To meet these demands, ships must be deployable and surge ready when needed. It is through initiatives such as SHIPMAIN that the fleet remains a prepared and viable source of military power.


Story by JOC Milinda D. Jensen, who is assigned to the public affairs office, Naval Sea Systems Command, Washington, D.C.

Navy Steps Up Fight Against Alcohol, Drug Abuse

Continuing its onslaught against alcohol and drug abuse in the military, Drug and Alcohol Program Management Activity (DAPMA) San Diego started a Certified Prevention Specialist (CPS) pilot program this spring.

The two-week, 80-hour program is aimed at training military members and DOD civilians on the ins-and-outs of assessing and implementing successful drug and alcohol prevention programs within their commands.

“We feel the Navy has taken the lead in substance abuse prevention with this course,” said LT Jason Holdeman, DAPMA’s department head of training operations.

Following the DOD Survey of Health Related Behaviors Among Military Personnel results, which suggests that military members between the ages of 18 and 25 are more likely to binge drink than their civilian counterparts, DAPMA recently graduated its first 20 prevention specialists. The students spanned three services, including Navy, Marine Corps, and Air Force, as well as DOD civilians.

CDR Maureen Alexander, DAPMA San Diego’s officer-in-charge, said the students learned that a military alcohol and drug program is effective only if it’s reinforced in the environment around the member.

“Prevention is a very dynamic thing,” said Alexander. “You have to have many different things working for it to be effective.”

Many military members and their families live in the surrounding civilian communities and are influenced by many of the factors in that community. The Navy realized this and incorporated civilian alcohol and drug experts from the San Diego area to help facilitate the class, ensuring that military members understand how to deal with all aspects of alcohol and drug abuse prevention, and not just military policies.

Many of the students have been involved with treatment programs or have been command counselors. For them, the gained knowledge will help them take a proactive approach instead of a reactive one.

“I think that if we stop (alcohol and drug abuse) before it happens, then we wouldn’t lose a lot of manpower,” said Chief Aviation Boatswain’s Mate (Equipment) (AW/SW) Milton Young, who is a substance abuse counselor in Yokosuka, Japan.

Holdeman said DAPMA has submitted a radical plan for CPS to replace the programs it currently teaches, such as the Drug and Alcohol Program Advisor and Alcohol and Drug Abuse Leaders courses, by FY07.

“If approved, CPS will be the course, and the prevention specialists will then be able to go out and teach the courses DAPMA previously taught,” said Holdeman, who is also a clinical psychologist.

The course is a big step for Sailors to obtain certification as Certified Prevention Specialists, a certification that can be used when transferring to the civilian sector. DAPMA is also pushing for military students to receive college credits for the course.

While the regularity of the course has not been determined, Alexander said that DAPMA San Diego will hold the course at least one more time this fiscal year.

Story by JO2 David Van Scoy, who is assigned to the public affairs office, Navy Region Southwest.

Photo by PHAN Wesley Marquis

HTFN Clifford Salvatore welds safety rails in the engineering spaces aboard the amphibious command ship USS La Salle (AGF 3).
The Heart of Health Care

Navy nurses care for patients with a personal touch.

With nurses and doctors busily preparing patients for surgery, the pre-op staging area appears chaotic and overwhelming. But due to the surgical anesthesia many patients, such as Mamie Burke, don’t recall this portion of their hospital stay.

Story by JO1(SW) M.J. Darby, photos by JO1(SW) M.J. Darby and JO2 Cherri Boggs
Lisa Saar eyed the monitors nervously. The readings indicated the patient’s blood pressure was dangerously high and climbing. Instinctively, the woman lying among tangled intravenous tubes tried to assume a protective fetal position. Saar quickly cleared the tubes as best she could. She applied a cool cloth to the woman’s forehead and held the woman’s hand as a series of convulsions contorted the patient’s limbs and features.

As her patient briefly opened her eyes and looked dazedly around the room, Saar quickly reassured her, “It’s OK, Mamie. You’re doing fine. You’re out of surgery now, and everything went well. You’re doing just fine.” Amid the pain and nausea, intensive care patient Mamie Burke blindly stared at the woman hovering over her before passing out again.

Since the Navy’s infancy, the healing hands of nurses like Saar have provided care to military members. The role of the Navy Nurse has developed through the years, diversifying concepts and expanding its role as medical technology allowed, but one thing hasn’t changed—the Nurse Corps mission. Caring and personal, today’s Navy nurses are still at bedsides to wipe feverish brows, hold anxious hands and maintain a protective watch over their charges.

Saar served as an electrician’s mate before applying to a nursing program and receiving her commission in 1997. She now finds great satisfaction in her work as a health care provider. As a member of the expansive patient recovery team at National Naval Medical Center (NNMC), Bethesda, Md., she admits there are down sides to her profession.

“It can be completely exhausting, particularly in the Intensive Care Unit (ICU),” she said. “Nurses deal with end-of-life issues on a daily basis here. I’ve even had family members come and thank me after a death because I was there for their loved one when they couldn’t be.”

Typically, even when a patient does leave intensive care, it is often only a short matter of time before we see them again because a majority of our patients are the elderly, whose health is spiraling downward. That’s a difficult thing to deal with day in and day out,” Saar added.

Despite the tremendous physical and emotional strain placed on them, Saar and her co-workers assume their duties with uncommon strength.

“We just do what we can to make them as comfortable as possible while they’re here, and hope for the best,” she said.

For the next 36 hours in NNMC’s ICU, Saar watches over Burke, a retired U.S. Air Force photographer hurriedly admitted to NNMC for emergency surgery following a mild stroke. NNMC surgeons saved Burke’s life by clearing an artery along her neck, but following the multi-hour surgery it was the attentive nursing team who cared for and comforted Burke throughout her ordeal.

ICU patients require constant observation so ICU nurses are assigned only one patient at a time. Due to the nature of the job, nurses sometimes feel they’re not appreciated enough.

“We deal with end-of-life issues all the time, and it’s a difficult job,” Saar said. “Some days are better than others. Every day is hard, but we take care of our patients.”

Saar said she sometimes feels like she’s a “war nurse” for her work with the Navy, but she said that’s not the case.

“Nurses deal with trauma patients constantly. It’s not unusual to deal with trauma. I’ve done a couple of deployments and seen a lot of things that were difficult,” she explained. “I don’t feel like I’m a war nurse.”

Saar said she enjoys the work she does, and she says she would do it again if she had the opportunity.

“Working as a Navy Nurse has been a challenging, rewarding experience,” she said. “I’ve had to be flexible and adapt to the different situations I’ve been in.”

Saar and the other nurses in the patient recovery team at NNMC’s ICU are the backbone of the hospital, and they do a great job. They work long hours, often sacrificing time with family and friends, but they do it for the love of the work they do. They are heroes in their own right, and we should all be grateful for their service.
explained to Burke’s concerned siblings. “She’s that their sister would awaken when she elevating once again. Saar firmly but compas- with her, causing Burke’s blood pressure to meaning brothers and sisters tried to talk medications. We have to make sure they’re clearly marked completely different in purpose and dosage. medications are so similar in name, but tasks close to Burke’s bed. “Some of these coffee help Saar make it through her surgical scrubs and several cups of strong waste collected by catheter recep- tion, checking on me and always conscientious of my comfort and well-being. All the attention made me feel as if I was the only patient here.” I don’t remember much from pre-op, and nothing of the surgery. I don’t even remember arriving in ICU. But I remember Lisa,” Burke said as she continued placing get-well cards and stuffed animals into her bags. “I think Lisa stands out so vividly in my mind because she was constantly there for me during the most difficult time of my stay.” When I woke up from surgery, I was incredibly sick to my stomach. I felt miser- able, and Lisa was there doing everything in her power to try and make me feel better. My comfort seemed to be the only thing on her mind,” concluded Burke.

Burke and her husband departed NNMC a few hours later, taking with them specific instructions for medications and a follow-up appointment.

recovered patient out of the ICU, delivering her patient to new attendants on the 5 East ward where she bade farewell to Burke.

Sometimes we receive letters from former patients or their families,” said Saar, heading back to the ICU. “But, it’s just nice to know they are going home and resuming a life.”

Eager to depart the confines of the medical facility, Burke called her husband, James. As Burke packed her bags to go home early the following morning, word came that she would be discharged later in the afternoon. While she packed for her discharge, she talked about the overall care her recovery team provided.

“There were so many nurses,” Burke reflected, “that I honestly don’t remember them all. They were all wonderful, constantly checking on me and always conscientious of my comfort and well-being. All the attention

At midnight, Mamie Burke’s overnight nurse Angela Pettis arrived during Saar’s watch while a civilian nurse, Angela Pettis arrived for the overnight shift. Saar went over a comprehensive passdown and checked on her patient one last time before calling it a night. Exhausted, she headed to the Nurses’ locker room to change out of her scrubs. “Poor thing, she looks absolutely miserable. I’m hoping for the best, but I’m not sure,” said a worried Saar. “She’s doing better, but she’s definitely not out of the woods yet. And I’m concerned about her continuing nausea.” Back in civvies, knowing she has done all one could possibly do, she headed home for a few hours of her own rest before returning at 7:00 a.m. for another 12-hour shift.

The next morning, Saar was visibly surprised to find Burke alert and feeling better. “Good morning, Mamie!” Saar greeted Burke with a large smile. “You probably don’t remember me, but I took care of you yesterday following your surgery.” “Oh, I remember you,” Burke corrected her, quietly returning her caregiver’s smile.

Burke may stop in and visit her ICU guardian on her return—or perhaps not. Some of Saar’s future patients will similarly recover and leave the hospital. Others will not. What is certain is that Navy nurses worldwide provide their patients with compassion and care. Whether with hands, as in a simple touch or a cool cloth, or with heart, in the form of a reassuring smile or a call for a grilled cheese sandwich, gestures like these from Navy nurses provide a healing touch to naval healthcare. 

Darby and Boggs are photojournalists assigned to All Hands.
Smoke from a MK-13 Mod 0 flare can be the most welcome sight in the world for a search and rescue team trying to locate downed aviators. Here students practice the proper activation and use of smoke flares.
Angels exist. The Navy makes them, and its factory is in Florida. Navy angels wear green flight suits and snug-fitting flight helmets that leave little room for halos or even fluffy white feathers. These guardian angels have faithfully stood watch over aviation crews, passengers, aircraft and cargo since the dawn of naval aviation.

Yet they go mostly unnoticed among the rest of the fleet, set apart from typical Sailors only by the gold wings pinned on their chests with the letters “AC” branded in the center. The letters stand for “air crew,” and earning one of the rare gold enlisted pins is one of the toughest qualifications in the fleet.

Officially known as the Naval Air Crew Candidate School (NACCS), Naval Air Station (NAS) Pensacola, Fla., it’s a duty station that is easily confused as a little slice of heaven with mostly year-around sunbathing weather. But don’t let the vacation-like setting fool you; NACCS is anything but a vacation for air crew candidates.

“Boot camp physical training might prepare you for duty in the Navy, but it doesn’t prepare you for air crew school,” said Air Crew Candidate, Airman Apprentice William Joseph Hamilton.

Just to earn the right to attempt air crew school is a physical and mental challenge. Worthy candidates, all volunteers, must be in great physical shape and be a strong enough swimmer to pass a second-class swim test during boot camp. They must pass the Navy’s physical fitness assessment (PFA) with a “satisfactory-medium” in all categories for their sex and age, and pass a flight physical prior to setting foot on the air crew school’s quarterdeck.

Air crew duty isn’t for everyone. Sailors can and do submit a drop on request at any point during the high-risk air crew training process. Stiff physical, mental and even emotional obstacles weed out anyone who can’t handle whatever is thrown their way.

“We can’t just throw any enlisted guy into an aircraft and expect him to contribute to the mission,” said Master Chief Aviation Warfare Systems Operator Kenneth J. Ellenburg, NACCS Master Chief Petty Officer in charge of training. “Flying Navy isn’t anything like flying on an airline. There’s a lot for air crew personnel to do during a flight.”

Air crew duties during these flights can include maintenance of airborne electronic, mechanical and ordnance delivery systems; operating airborne electronic equipment; performing tactical duties as flight engineers, load masters, analysts and reel technicians; operating airborne mine countermeasures equipment, or crew served weapons; and serving as flight communications operators, in-flight medical technicians or even flight attendants.

“Air crew makes the mission successful,” said Ellenburg. “The pilots just get you there.”

Sometimes, just getting there—and back—is the most difficult part of the mission. By design, just about every plane and helicopter device air crew candidates climb aboard at NACCS will crash during training. Instructors waste little time in snapping their student’s attention into the harsh reality of naval aviation, where mishaps can and do happen.

Training contraptions eerily named after aviator nightmares, like the “helicopter dunker,” a full-scale mock-up of a helicopter, are used by instructors to “crash” candidates into the water. Without warning, instructors send the dunker plummeting to the drink, rotating the cabin as it sinks. Students are required to egress from their seats through specific pathways once while wearing their flight gear, then again with black-out goggles.

Like many Navy jobs, air crew survival centers on attention to detail and following procedures, which are drilled into candidates’ minds as they go through water survival training. The practical, hands-on training allows students to experience things that no classroom can fully communicate, like the intense ocean spray from a helicopter’s rotor.

Officer in charge of training. “Flying Navy isn’t anything like flying on an airline. There’s a lot for air crew personnel to do during a flight.”

Air crew missions vary depending on the type of aircraft they are assigned to and that aircraft’s tasking. Navy aircraft move Sailors and mail, engage targets, conduct surveillance, direct battles, hunt submarines and perform other tasks the Navy deems necessary.

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During the fourth week of training, air crew candidates complete the bay operations of their water survival training. The practical, hands-on training allows students to experience things that no classroom can fully communicate, like the intense ocean spray from a helicopter’s rotor.

When you’re an air crew candidate, you need to be prepared for everything including having to jump out of your aircraft with only a parachute to slow your descent. Air crew school trains student on the proper methods for parachute landings.

(continued on page 27)
One of the key elements of surviving an at-sea mishap is simply escaping from the ship or aircraft. Basic water survival instruction, taught in nine fundamental levels, educates air crew students in the proper techniques for abandoning ships and sinking aircraft.

Looking more like a carnival ride than a Navy training device, the multistation disorientation device (MSDD), commonly called the "spin and puke" by students, familiarizes aviators with how easy it is to lose your bearings without reference points in total darkness.

Escaping from the helicopter dunker after students are submerged and rotated is hard. Doing it while wearing blackout goggles is even harder, but a necessary step in the familiarization of future aircrewmen to their surroundings. Air Crew Candidate AN Michael Dinkleman takes a moment to reflect on his own escape from the helicopter dunker.
heads until they’re instinctive. “You don’t carry a checklist with you when you hit the water,” said Ellenburg. “You have to be mentally tough enough to do the right things, because you’ll only get one chance if disaster finds you.”

Getting out of the aircraft is only part of surviving a mishap at sea. Air crew personnel must avoid drowning while dodging sinking aircraft, possible fires, enemy aggression, heat, cold, waves, exhaustion, dehydration and other obstacles between them and any rescue attempts the Navy sends their way. NACCS covers all of it— in four weeks.

Air crew personnel are trained to take responsibility for their entire crew, passengers and any salvageable cargo, so it should come as no surprise that the two most prominent things at air crew school are physical fitness and swimming— lots of swimming.

Candidates must pass nine levels of water survival training to graduate from NACCS. “Most of the time, when you end up in the water as an aviator, it’s because something went terribly wrong,” said Water Survival Instructor Aviation Boatswain’s Mate (Equipment) 2nd Class Cory Smith. “We give students the confidence they’ll need to survive a mishap in the water. We make them understand that they have to get deep and swim away from the ship (or aircraft) to avoid falling debris, fire, explosions and other Sailors. It matters how you jump into the water. Jump the wrong way and you have to try to survive with a broken leg, dislocated shoulder, or worse.”

According to Smith, it can take up to 15 minutes for a rescue helicopter to get off the deck, so surviving a crash means you have to make it to a life raft or tread water until help arrives. Air crew graduates leave knowing drown-proofing techniques like treading water, floating and making it to that life raft, even if it’s a mile swim away while wearing between 45 and 50 lbs. of flight gear.

“Learned a lot at water survival,” said Airman Recruit Avery Layton. She considered the tread and float test (WS-4) the toughest part of her training at air crew school. “I got over being scared to put my face in the water here because I did it so many times. And another thing … wearing boots doesn’t give you more traction in the water.”

Air crew personnel are entrusted to do more than complete their mission. They’re expected to serve as watchdogs for the rest of the crew and the aircraft to prevent mishaps. One of the things air crew look for are symptoms of hypoxia.

Hypoxia is a physical condition the body experiences when blood oxygen levels fall below 87 percent, and typically begin at altitudes above 10,000 feet. Low levels of oxygen cause slowed motor skills and impaired judgment. Candidates go through a low-pressure chamber, where aviation physiological technicians like Hospital Corpsman 2nd Class Mark Morin educate the airborne-bounded Sailors.

“Even though the air crew aren’t actually flying the aircraft,” Morin said, “they need to understand the signs of hypoxia, because if a pilot has hypoxia, everyone aboard that plane deals with his fate.”

Being on the ground doesn’t release air crewmen from their duties. When not flying, they perform duties such as aircraft maintenance, operations, line division, communications and other duties associated with their source ratings.

The air crew warfare designation is one of the toughest pins to earn. The Navy plans to keep it that way because of the reputation that the air crew wings have earned in the aviation community.

“The air crew training program’s reputation has allowed pilots to trust air crews without question,” said Ellenburg. “The pilots never second guess the enlisted air crew’s decisions.”

The rewards for graduating from NACCS are brief, with a hearty handshake and a push onward to the next challenge in the
AS2 Kacey Bowman, flare fire instructor for NACCS, gives training on the MK-13 Mod O flare. Flares and smoke are two of the primary ways aviation personnel have to identify their location for missions, rescues and wind direction.
four-part gauntlet that is the air crew qualifica-
tion process. In addition to passing NACCS, candidates must conquer their
source rating “A” school, Survival Evasion
Resistance and Escape training and finally
qualify on their specific platform at a fleet
replacement squadron. Then, and only then
do these guardian angels earn their wings
and some extra cash with career enlisted
flyer incentive pay.

But that daydream remains fuzzy for
candidates back at NACCS, who are more
focused on not swallowing more than their
fair share of water, completing the dreaded
mile swim and escaping the chaotic heli-
copter dunker, than on the day they get
their wings, the holy grail of these guardian
angels.

Pinsky is a photojournalist assigned
to All Hands.

As is the case with any high-risk training,
physical fitness is the key to avoiding injuries
and completing demanding tasks. Air crew
students participate in physical training daily.
It's all about the uniform. "You'll be surprised at the effectiveness of simply wearing a Navy uniform around here," said NC1 Stacey Butler. "Being Navy here works to our advantage because our uniforms are something different from the day-to-day Army green these kids see."

Story and photos by: JO1(SCW/SS) James Pinsky
No one in Fayetteville, N.C., needs a television to be reminded about the war on terrorism. In Fayetteville, a city that borders Fort Bragg—one of the largest Army bases in the world—it isn’t just the family members of the Soldiers who worry, but the entire city. Fayetteville loves its Soldiers, and if a city could show its wounds, then Fayetteville would surely bleed Army green.

But Ft. Bragg is more than just your typical Army town. It’s the home of one of the military’s elite fighting elements—the paratrooper—and just about every kid in Fayetteville who ever thought about joining the military grows up wanting to be one. That is, until they talk to Gas Turbine Systems Technician (Electrical) (SW) 1st Class Harry Blackmore Jr.

Blackmore is a Navy recruiter stationed in Fayetteville’s Eutaw Shopping Center in the heart of Army country. Despite facing David vs. Goliath-like odds in selling the Navy in an Army town, the Navy is doing quite well.

“Fayetteville has an enormous military population with Ft. Bragg and Pope Air Force Base,” said Blackmore. “It’s the home of more than 50,000 troops, the military retires here and if you aren’t directly related to a Soldier then you know someone who is. Make no mistake; this is an Army town if there ever was one.”

If you think a recruiter would dread selling the Navy to a bunch of kids in the Army’s backyard, think again.

“There’s nothing hard about recruiting Navy in an Army town,” said Career Recruiter, Navy Counselor 1st Class (SW) Stacey Butler.

In fact, the Navy recruiters think having an Army base so close works to their advantage.

“Fayetteville is a patriotic town,” said Machinist’s Mate 2nd Class Keenan Ashworth, a Navy recruiter. “Here, the military sells itself. Everyone knows where Fayetteville is because of Ft. Bragg. People, in general, want to be a part of the military.”

But with so many camouflaged Soldiers dominating the landscape of Fayetteville, marching to the beat of a different military drummer is just the thing the Navy needs to keep potential Sailors coming through their doors.

“Though they love their Soldiers here,” said Blackmore, “they get tired of seeing green. I can’t tell you the number of times I’ve gone to the mall or somewhere else to pay a bill in my Navy uniform and had the sales clerk say how nice it was to see something other than camouflage.”

“Recruiting is more than just getting someone to join the Navy. It’s giving them the opportunity to change their life,” said MM2 Keenan Ashworth. “A lot of people join the military for more than just a job. You can definitely rebuild your life from scratch in the Navy.”

Because few people in Fayetteville, N.C., realize there’s another service out there besides the Army, Navy recruiters like Fayetteville-native MM2 Keenan Ashworth still needs to market the Navy to their primary audience—high school and college-age students.
All recruiters understand the power of the Navy uniform, but from time to time Fayetteville recruiters conduct a marketing technique called personally developing contacts, or “PDCing.” They mingle with Fayetteville’s public in pro-Navy civilian clothes which helps them relate to people who may be intimidated by the uniform.

They call Fort Bragg, the home of the Airborne, for good reason – more paratroopers are assigned to the North Carolina military reservation than anywhere else in the world.

Concrete blocks dedicated to deceased Soldiers and their family members guide the way to the doors of the Airborne and Special Operations Museum, Fayetteville, N.C. Two other area museums include the 82nd Airborne Division War Memorial Museum and the JFK Special Warfare Museum, both located on Ft. Bragg, dedicated to the airborne units stationed at Ft. Bragg.

Some Soldiers apparently get tired of wearing green, as well.

Some of the Fayetteville office’s most frequent visitors actually come from Ft. Bragg. Prior service and even active-duty Soldiers, many of them on their lunch break from Ft. Bragg and still in their Army uniforms, come to the Navy recruiting office looking for a different life.

“There’s no better compliment to a branch of service than to have ‘defectors’ try to join your ranks,” said Blackmore. “A lot of people have the misconception that the Navy is nothing but sitting on a ship in the middle of the ocean for six months, but there’s so much more to us than deployments. Once other services reveal that they do long deployments too, do six months on an air-conditioned ship with three square meals a day and a treadmill a few feet away sounds a lot more appealing than dumping sand out of your boots day in and day out.”

The recruiters have also found that just wearing the Navy uniform draws people into Navy recruiting offices.

“Our uniforms are major recruiting tools,” said Butler. “I get a lot of compliments about how professional I look in my whites and blues. People see that I look professional, and once they talk to me they see that I am professional, and that’s an attractive combination in today’s job market.”

Not being able to give qualified candidates what they want when they want it is just one of the many heartaches of being a Navy recruiter.

“Being a recruiter is a lot of fun because I get people to join a service I’m a big fan of,” said Ashworth. “But there’s a lot about recruiting that makes this job not for the faint of heart. Selling the Navy is the easy part. The hard part begins after someone has joined the Navy.”

The Navy has a delayed entry program commonly referred to as DEP. Qualified recruits join the Navy and simply wait in a holding pattern while going about their daily lives until it’s their turn to go to boot camp. Sometimes “deppers” can wait for more than a year before their training pipeline is ready for them to go to boot camp. A lot can happen to a well-qualified recruit in a year, a fact that has grayed the hairs of more than one Navy recruiter over the years.

“A year is a long time,” said Ashworth. “Recruits can gain weight, turn into couch potatoes, get into legal trouble and ruin their credit rating if you don’t keep a close eye on them. No, getting a person to join the Navy isn’t the toughest part of my job;
it’s getting deeper safely to boot camp. That’s where the real challenge is.”

Getting someone to join the Navy is the easy part for Ashworth, because he was trained to sell the Navy. All recruiters receive six weeks of sales-related education at the Naval Recruiting Orientation Unit (NORU) based at Naval Air Station Pensacola, Fla. Potential recruiters learn how to talk to people about the Navy, how to introduce the Navy as a plausible option to people and how to make sure the Navy is getting the right kind of people.

Earning the right to be a recruiter is a challenge in and of itself. All recruiting hopefuls must complete at least one prescribed tour, receive a commanding officer’s endorsement, get released from their rating into the special programs detailer and pass NORU. Recruiters get to pick their naval recruiting district (NRD), which in some cases can cover a lot of square miles. An interview with NRD’s chief recruiter settles the exact location within the district. For Fayetteville-native Ashworth, getting shore duty in his hometown was a two-step process.

“When I talked to the chief recruiter for NRD Raleigh, N.C., the closest I could get to Fayetteville was the town of Lumberton, about an hour south,” Ashworth said. “But it worked out well for me there, because that’s where I met my wife. We just had our first child and I was able to move to the Fayetteville region where I can go back to E.E. Smith High School, where I graduated in 1997. Now if only Ashworth can keep his kid from growing up to be a paratrooper.”

Pinsky is a photojournalist assigned to All Hands.

“Iron Mike” and more than 50,000 Soldiers cast quite a shadow of influence over Sailors like Navy recruiter MM2 Keenan Ashworth, who competes with the Army and Air Force recruiters at Ft. Bragg, N.C., for prospects. Iron Mike is the Army’s monument to the Airborne soldier.

Educating people about the Navy as an alternative to the Army and the Air Force is the real work, according to Navy recruiters in Fayetteville, N.C. “Recruiting in an Army town is still recruiting, and that means kissing babies and shaking hands trying to sell the Navy as a viable option as a military career choice,” said NC1 Stacey Butler, the Fayetteville-area zone supervisor.
Focus on Service

OVERCOMING FEARS ALOFT

Two-hundred feet is a long way to fall. A real long way. In fact, not many people can climb that distance without shuddering at the thought that a tiny slip will return them to the unforgiving earth below. When at height, it can reduce most people to frightened, panicky shells of their normal selves.

Two-hundred feet is also the distance Interior Communications Technician 2nd Class (SW) Joseph Christensen of USS San Jacinto (CG 56) must climb up the forward mast when working aloft. Some would say it’s a good thing the Navy is filled with daring, courageous Sailors who laugh in the face of the average person’s fears.

But there is no laughter coming from Christensen’s direction. This particular daring, courageous Sailor is afraid of heights. “You won’t see me mountain climbing anytime soon,” Christensen said with a laugh. “Never. You may see me at base camp, but that’s about as far as I’ll get.”

Fortunately for Christensen, mountain climbing isn’t a real problem on a ship. Working aloft, however, is a dilemma that Christensen takes very seriously. “We go up quite a bit, so it’s pretty scary for me,” he said. “It gets kind of windy up there, and on a smaller size ship like this one, you feel a lot of rocking and rolling back and forth, depending on the waves and all.

“But it’s my job, so I have to keep telling myself ‘it’s something I have to do, and it’ll be over with soon.’ Oh, and I try not to look down.”

The typical aloft time for a San Jacinto IC-man is 30-45 minutes, according to Christensen, so, for him, a little bit of extra safety is essential to completing a job without a mishap. “[Safety precautions] are personal for me,” he says. “We’re required to have one dyna-strap on for protection, but I make sure I always grab at least two. And I make sure to check it about 100 times before going up.”

When he is not aloft, Christensen, a former San Jacinto Junior Sailor of the Quarter, works as an integrated voice communications system technician for the Ticonderoga-class cruiser. As one of six people responsible for ensuring shipboard communication equipment is continuously operational, Christensen and his fellow IC men are constantly performing maintenance and answering trouble calls.

“We’re always moving, always working to get things back online as soon as possible,” he said, “because if we are out of the limelight, we are in a good light.”

Besides tending over scores of communication equipment, ICs aboard San Jacinto get to play the role of TV executive and technician while under way, scheduling and operating the ship’s closed-circuit television system.

It makes for a busy daily routine. “We always need to be on our toes so we can stay on top of things,” he said. “The days can be long.”

And days when Christensen needs to work aloft are even longer because 200 feet is a long way down.

Ludwig is a photojournalist assigned to All Hands.
Eye on the Fleet

Eye on the Fleet is a monthly photo feature sponsored by the Chief of Information Navy Visual News Service. We are looking for high impact, quality photography from Sailors in the fleet to showcase the American Sailor in action.

To be considered, forward your high resolution (5” x 7” at 300 dpi) images with full credit and cutline information, including full name, rank and duty station. Name all identifiable people within the photo and include important information about what is happening, where the photo was taken and the date. Commands with digital photo capability can send attached .jpg files to: navyvisualnews@hq.navy.mil

Mail your submissions to: Navy Visual News Service 1200 Navy Pentagon, Rm. 4B 514, Washington, D.C. 20350-1200

For a new Eye on the Fleet every day, click on the Navy NewsStand’s home page, www.news.navy.mil, for fresh images of your shipmates in action.

Equipment Operator Constructionman Jeff Glass, assigned to Construction Battalion Unit (CBU/Self Help) 413 at Naval Station Pearl Harbor, helps refurbish the explosive ordnance disposal range with the aid of a 40-ton crawler crane.

Photo by PH2 Ryan J. Courtade

A young boy waves an American flag to welcome home aircrew assigned to Electronic Attack Squadron (VAQ) 137 at Naval Air Station Whidbey Island, Wash.

Photo by PH2 Michael L. Larson

Sailors assigned to V-1 Division aboard USS George Washington (CVN 73) participate in a “Scrub Ex” of the flight deck during a no-fly day.

Photo by PH1 Brien Aho

LCU 1600 loads a U.S. Marine Corps Abrams M1A1 Main Battle Tank aboard USS Saipan (LHA 2).

Photo by PH2 Ryan J. Courtade

AM1 Ed Pennycook renders a salute to the flight leader of the U.S. Navy Flight Demonstration Squadron “Blue Angels” as the team taxis their F/A-18s for one of many winter training flights.

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Eye on the Fleet

SN William Reed stands the aft lookout watch on the fantail aboard the nuclear-powered aircraft carrier USS John C. Stennis (CVN 74). Photo by PH3 Mark J. Rebilas

Dentist LT Jeff Lee (left) and DTSN Vincent Washington perform oral surgery aboard USS George Washington (CVN 73). Photo by PH2 Michael R. Bonnell

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MA3 Mark Fenton fires an M-60 machine gun on full automatic during a qualification exercise in Yokosuka, Japan. Photo by PH2 Mark D. Greason

AD2 Delone Campbell from Helicopter Anti-Submarine Squadron (HS) 75, performs maintenance on the tail rotor of an SH-60F Seahawk aboard USS Ronald Reagan (CVN 76). Photo by PHAN Kevin S. O’Brien

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**Eye on History**

**Eye on History** is a monthly photo feature sponsored by the Naval Historical Center. For more photos pertaining to naval history, go to [www.history.navy.mil](http://www.history.navy.mil).

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**1953**

Tugs removed USS Iowa (BB 61) from reserve fleet for reactivation and return to duty at San Francisco Naval Shipyard.

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**1966**

Gunner's Mate 2nd Class William J. Santabar pauses during a busy day aboard USS Franklin D. Roosevelt (CVA 42) to read the world's best morale builder, Mail.

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**1948**

Ships of the Iowa-class are always in fighting shape, and so are her crew members. Calisthenics on the deck of the battleship USS Iowa (BB 61) keep muscles in tune, while a band, rehearsing in the left foreground, keeps the musicians in tune.

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**1943**

Dive bombers on an aircraft carrier roar into the take-off run for a smashing blow against a Japanese target in the South Pacific.

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**1953**

U.S. Navy Photos Courtesy of the Naval Historical Center
Going Internationally Crazy

I probably shouldn’t admit this in the pages of an international magazine, but when I was younger, I did some pretty stupid things. I’m talking about downright outrageous risks, stuff professional crazy men like Evel Knievel and others would never even dream of.

Doubt me? Well, listen to this: I used to drink soda while eating pop rocks! (I could have exploded you know.) Not enough for you? Well how about this: I used to drive a car that was NOT equipped with a CD player!

Ever try to jump off of your parents’ roof in a single bound … because there was nothing better to do? I did–when I was a teenager. I was a rebel.

But among the craziest things I remember doing was playing a weekly game of rugby at a lot down the street from my house. For us, rugby translated roughly into, “destroy the man with the ball,” so bloody noses, twisted ankles, and occasional broken bones were the rule. The pain didn’t matter, because it was all about FUN.

Despite being a “rugby veteran,” I can’t imagine any reason why I would ever step on a field with one of the highest-ranked rugby teams in Europe. Why would anyone? You’d need to talk to a group of USS Wasp (LHD 1) Sailors to find out.

In March, Wasp’s rugby team played their first game during a port visit in Valletta, Malta, teaming up with the island’s star ‘B’ team to take on Kavallieri RFC, the two-time defending champion of the Malta Rugby Football Union League.

Teaming up with the Malta Alligators in the game meant 80 minutes of hard-hitting, energy-sapping action in one of the world’s most physically demanding sports.

“I’m still new to the sport so I was bit confused during the first couple of plays,” he said. “Yet, practice and playing are totally different. The running and hitting took my body by surprise.”

Prior to the match, Wasp’s team had four weeks of practice to prepare for the spirited contests. That training routine couldn’t prepare the Sailors and Marines for the intense physical contact that comes with competitive rugby.

“The opposing team played pretty rough. They didn’t hesitate to throw in extra kicks and elbows,” said Dental Technician 1st Class Rom Hunter, a North Carolina native (not exactly rugby country). “We’ve been practicing for about a month, yet nothing can prepare you for the hits, tackles and scrums.”

Hits! Tackles and scrums! This sounds vaguely like the game I played before. All that’s missing is the bloody noses. But what happened after the game jogs even more memories.

In my “rugby” days, it was common for everyone to finish playing, patch up various injuries and hobble out to a group dinner and a night on the town. See, in my experience, a dash of craziness here and there brings about a lifetime of camaraderie and friendship. In Malta, those qualities are apparently not lost in translation.

“(The Maltese rugby players) picked us up from the ship, allowed us to play in their match, and took us out for food and drinks afterwards,” said Marine Corps Cpl. Joseph Gaughan of Marine Medium Helicopter Squadron (HMM) 266. “The opposing team even came out with us.”

Okay folks, let’s add this up: 80 minutes of beating each other up followed by a night of merriment and international high spirits. Hmmmm … I’ve changed my mind. Call me for the next game.

Ludwig is a photojournalist assigned to All Hands.
Alcohol-related motor vehicle crashes kill someone every 30 minutes and nonfatally injure someone every two minutes.