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NAS achieves outstanding score on FEP

From Public Affairs Staff

During the week of Aug. 7-11, Naval Air Station Meridian welcomed assessors from Commander, Naval Installation Command (CNIC), U.S. Fleet Forces (USFF) and Navy Region Southeast to complete the Final Evaluation Problem Assessment (FEP).

NAS Meridian did an outstanding job on the assessment with an overall score of 94 percent – the highest in the Region to date.

“Team Meridian’s successful response to this evaluation was the culmination of months of training,” said CAPT Luke Davis, NAS Meridian commanding officer. “Our ability to protect and defend our base is clear.”

FEP is a CNIC certification that occurs every three years to assess the command, control, communications and Naval Security Forces (NSF) on all U.S. Navy installations. This exercise was designed to assess NSF’s ability to meet all core competencies, including component and geographical operational requirements.

FEP is a final part of CNIC’s shore assessment and certification cycle which consists of three phases: Command Assessment of Review and Training (CART), Regional Assessment (RASS) and lastly FEP. This will be the final step in the assessment process, which will certify the security forces onboard NAS Meridian for 18 months.

“Force Protection remains the Navy’s most vital mission,” said



LTJG Ashlee South, NAS Meridian Security officer, “I am honored to be a part of such a hardworking and determined group of individuals, who consistently go above and beyond every day. The security department and our fire department brothers and sisters are onboard working 24/7, to react and respond to any emergency. This week’s successful evaluation is a culmination of a tremendous amount of hard work, dedication, and drive by the entire team and shows our ability to defend the base.”

The CNIC assessors recognized some individuals for their outstanding achievements. They included:

- Brian McCrackin for having an outstanding antiterrorism program, receiving a 99% -- the highest grade in CNIC history.
 - Michael Mengarelli and Bruce Rutledge for Physical Security/Access and Control policy.
 - Chief Ralph Garcia for his in-depth Law Enforcement Program.
 - MA1 Calvin Green for his work as the Antiterrorism Training Team Coordinator.
 - MASN Marc Morin for his outstanding post brief and knowledge of access/control and jurisdiction.
 - Civilian Security Guard Nikki Taylor for her impeccable commercial vehicle inspection, receiving a 100 percent and called out for the best inspection the team had witnessed.
- FEP, page 2

Kuch takes helm of TW-1, Lanane retires

From Staff Reports

Training Air Wing One (TW-1) held a change of command ceremony in the hangar onboard Naval Air Station Meridian, Aug. 11. CAPT Juston Kuch assumed command from CAPT Robert Lanane II; after which Lanane retired with 25 years of Naval service.

CAPT Lanane’s management of Training Squadrons Seven and Nine delivered over 53,700 flight training sorties with zero mishap flight hours in the T-45C Goshawk. Championing myriad revolutionary improvements to Intermediate and Advanced Jet Training, He propelled TW-1 to qualify 53 T-45C instructor pilots, designate 227 Navy and Marine Corps strike aviators and wing 35 international military officers. Under his guidance, TW-1 successfully conducted ten Carrier Qualification Detachments accumulating 1,394 student missions

and 2,007 student flight hours.

CAPT Kuch was commissioned through the Officer Candidate School at NAS Pensacola in October 2000 and earned his “Wings of Gold” at NAS Meridian in January 2003.

After initial training in the F/A-18C Hornet, Kuch reported to Strike Fighter Squadron 34 (VFA-34). He embarked on a deployment aboard the USS John F. Kennedy in support of Operation Iraqi Freedom and then aboard the USS Abraham Lincoln for a deployment to the Western Pacific. In March 2007, he reported to Fallon, Nevada, completing Navy Fighter Weapons School (TOPGUN) and becoming a strike fighter tactics instructor. After graduating from TOPGUN, he reported to Strike Fighter Weapons School Atlantic at NAS Oceana for duties as a strike fighter tactics instructor.

● TW-1, page 4



Photo by MC2 Molly Crawford

CAPT Juston Kuch, left, the incoming commanding officer of Training Air Wing One, shakes hands with CAPT Robert Lanane II during a change of command ceremony in the hangar onboard NAS Meridian, Aug. 11.

Pentagon review calls for reforms to reverse spike in sexual misconduct at military academies

By Lolita C. Baldor
AP News

The U.S. military academies must improve their leadership, stop toxic practices such as hazing and shift behavior training into the classrooms, according to a Pentagon study aimed at addressing an alarming spike in sexual assaults and misconduct.

U.S. officials said the academies must train student leaders better to help their classmates, and upend what has been a disconnect between what the cadets and midshipmen are learning in school and the often negative and unpunished behavior they see by those mentors. The review calls for additional senior officers and enlisted leaders to work with students at the Army, Navy and Air Force academies and provide the expanded training.

● Pentagon, page 2

"LEAN ON US"
MERIDIAN, MS

Join us as we celebrate and honor Women's Equality Day!

Where:
NTTC Meridian (Administration Schoolhouse, RM 125)

When:
24 August 2023 (1030-1130)

We are so excited to share our first ever "Lean On Us" event with you! "Lean On Us" is a forum designed to help women come together to learn from each other, help them achieve goals, give and get peer mentorship, sharpen skills, network, share best practices, and have a place to be *unapologetically ambitious*. Our goal is to promote a world where women have a space and opportunity to learn from other women, give and get advice, celebrate each other's wins, foster connections, and promote mentorship for leaders at all levels.

We seek to support women, may they be in the military, DoD, civilian, or in the Meridian community, regardless of rank, race, ethnicity, gender, or status.

Workshops, keynote speakers, breakout rooms, and much more to follow!

DoD leaders praise outgoing Chief of Naval Operations

By Joseph Clark

DoD News, Defense Media Activity

Secretary of Defense Lloyd J. Austin III today underscored Adm. Michael Gilday's dedication to advancing American sea power at a critical time for global security during Gilday's relinquishment of office ceremony at the Naval Academy in Annapolis, Md.

Austin said that throughout Gilday's 38-year career and four-year tenure as the Navy's top admiral, he has led key advances in the nation's sea service with "vigor, expertise and foresight."

"Ladies and gentlemen, to tackle the national-security challenges of the 21st century, we need our Navy more than ever," Austin said. "It's especially vital in today's world."

"We rely on our Navy to sail, fly and operate wherever international law allows," he said. "We rely on our Navy to project American power and to protect American interests. We rely on our Navy to bolster our unmatched network of allies and partners, from the South China Sea to the Caribbean. And we rely on our Navy to deter conflict and to keep the peace."

The Navy's global reach is critical, Austin said, for maintaining an "open, stable and peaceful" 21st century.

"And that's exactly what Admiral Gilday



Photo by Chad J. McNeeley, DOD

Secretary of the Navy Carlos Del Toro, center, looks on as Adm. Lisa Franchetti, left, assumes responsibilities as acting chief of naval operations during a relinquishment of office ceremony for Adm. Michael M. Gilday at the United States Naval Academy in Annapolis, Md., Aug. 14.

has been focused on for the past four years as our CNO," he said.

Austin underscored Gilday's focus on readiness as CNO — highlighting his data-driven reforms to improve maintenance,

speed up shipyard repairs, and invest in supply chains to ensure new parts get to the fleet faster and more reliably.

The secretary also highlighted Gilday's focus on modernizing the fleet, noting the

deployment under his tenure of the first-in-class USS Gerald R. Ford aircraft carrier, the largest and most technologically advanced warship in the world.

Gilday has also been instrumental in deepening the Navy's integration across the joint services and improving interoperability with U.S. allies and partners, Austin said.

Under his leadership, the Navy has played a key role in deepening the United States' integration with Australia and the United Kingdom to deter conflict in the Indo-Pacific under the AUKUS partnership.

In addition to Gilday's accomplishments as CNO, Austin said the admiral's career has been defined by his commitment to advancing a culture of respect throughout the ranks.

"Mike, you are a sailor's sailor, through and through," Austin said. "And I'm reminded of something that you said here in May on Commissioning Day. You said that you've always found that sailors just want to be led well and treated with respect."

"And that's been your hallmark, Mike, from ensign to admiral," he continued. "You've always led superbly, and you've always treated everyone with the respect that they deserve."

Adm. Lisa Franchetti has been nominated to serve as acting chief of naval operations, but her confirmation remains on hold.

Peden Promotion



Submitted photo

Anna Peden places a new patch on the uniform of her husband, CDR Matthew Peden, as their children look on. Peden, who is the commanding officer of Navy Reserve Center Meridian, was promoted on July 28.

● FEP

The overall scores in various departments included:

Naval Security Forces: 94 %,
Emergency Management: 97%
Fire and Emergency Services: 90.73%
USFF Score: 85% - (Of note, an average score for this is usually in the high 60s – low 70s.)

Our ITT drills were all noted as outstanding to include:

Antiterrorism: 99%
Physical Security: 98%
Law Enforcement: 97%
Overall Core capabilities score: 98%
Readiness: 98%
Watch stander Proficiency: 91%
FEP Administrative score: 98%
FEP Operational score: 90%

● Pentagon

Several U.S. officials described the report on condition of anonymity because it has not yet been publicly released. They said that too often discussions about stress relief, misconduct, social media and other life issues take place after hours or on the weekends. The report recommends that those topics be addressed in classes and graded, to promote their importance.

The study comes on the heels of a report this year that showed a sharp spike in reported sexual assaults at the academies during the 2021-22 school year. It said that one in five female students said in an anonymous survey that they had experienced unwanted sexual contact. The survey results were the highest since the Defense Department began collecting that data many years ago.

Plea negotiations could mean no 9/11 defendants face the death penalty, the US tells families

Student-reported assaults at the academies jumped 18% overall compared with the previous year, fueled in part by the Navy, which had nearly double the number in 2022, compared with 2021. The anonymous survey accompanying the report found increases in all types of unwanted sexual contact — from touching to rape — at all the schools. And it cited alcohol as a key factor.

In response to the spike in assaults, Defense Secretary Lloyd Austin ordered on-site evaluations at the U.S. Naval Academy in Maryland, the Air Force Academy in Colorado and the U.S. Military Academy at West Point in New York, to explore the issues and identify solutions. The new report, expected to be released Thursday, makes several immediate and longer-term recommendations to improve assault and harassment prevention and eliminate toxic climates that fuel the problems. Austin is ordering quick implementation of the changes.

In a memo, Austin acknowledges that the academies "have far more work to do to halt sexual assault and harassment." He says the increase in assaults and harassment "is disturbing and unacceptable. It endangers our

teammates and degrades our readiness."

Officials familiar with the study said that while the academies offer a lot of strong programs, toxic and unhealthy command climates make them less effective. When cadets and midshipmen learn one thing about leadership or prevention in the classroom, but they don't see it reinforced in other settings, it sends mixed messages about what to expect, about how to be treated and how to treat others, said one official.

Such mixed messages, they said, create cynicism and distrust.

The officials pointed to the Air Force Academy's longstanding system that treats freshmen differently and badly, promoting hazing and an unhealthy climate. They said those students may leave the academy with a poor sense of what good leadership looks like.

They added that a contributing factor to the behavior problems is that — like other college students around the country — many more cadets and midshipmen are arriving at the academies with previous bad experiences, ranging from assaults and harassment to thoughts of or attempts at suicide. On top of that, the report says incoming students then face a lot of stress as they grapple with their education and the military training.

In many cases, the report says that student leaders aren't trained or equipped to handle those issues or provide proper support to the students.

Another problem, officials said, is the ever expanding influence of social media, where bullying and harassment can go on unchecked. The report pointed to Jodel, an anonymous social media app that focuses on a specific location and is in wide use by academy students.

The report said students can get inaccurate information about assault prevention, reporting, resources and military justice from the app, making them less likely to seek help.

It said training at the academies has not kept pace with change, including the ever-evolving social media platforms and how students differ today from in the past.

The Skyline ~ Naval Air Station Meridian, Miss.

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Hotlines & Helpful Numbers

SAPR Victim Assistance: 601-604-3037
SAPR Civilian Victim Assistance: 601-486-3122
SARC: 601-481-4274
SAFE Helpline: 877-995-5247
Suicide Hotline: 800-273-8255
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FFSC Meridian: 601-679-2360
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Local Happenings

AUGUST

17: NightMarket from 5-8 p.m. at the Mississippi Arts + Entertainment Experience. Join The MAX and Earth's Bounty for NightMarket at The MAX. Browse vendor booths with products from local artists, artisans, bakers, and more. Enjoy a drink, live music, and food trucks. Free and open to the public; call 601-581-1550, ext 35.

19: SummerFest from 10 a.m.-4 p.m. at Dumont Plaza, downtown Meridian. Outdoor community event for the entire family. Live music, livestock, food vendors as well as arts and craft vendors. Face painting for the kids and Cornhole toss for the big kids (Adults...lol). Email ustilllookn4me@gmail.com for details.

26: Sipp & Savor Preview Party from 5-9 p.m. at the Mississippi Arts + Entertainment Experience. Join us for an exclusive preview party at Castle Grove Plantation featuring an unforgettable evening of food, craftsmanship, and artistry. The event will feature three talented individuals: Victoria Loomis, The Gatherin Girl Chef, Josh Raggio Custom Calls, and Mary Landrum of ML Provisions. Call 601-581-1550, ext 35.

Area Happenings

AUGUST

19: New Orleans Hip Hop Festival from 4-10 p.m. at Vybes Nation, 1681 Religious St, New Orleans, LA.

22: 50 Cent: The Final Lap Tour (with Busta Rhymes and Jeremih) at 7 p.m. at the Tuscaloosa Amphitheater, 2710 Jack Warner Pkwy, Tuscaloosa, AL. Call 205.248.5280.

25: The Doobie Brothers - 50th Anniversary Tour at 8 p.m. at the Radians Amphitheater, 750 Cherry Rd, Memphis, TN. Call 901-636-4100.

26: Chris Stapleton's All-American Road Show from 7-11 p.m. at the Ameris Bank Amphitheatre, 2200 Encore Pkwy, Alpharetta, GA. Call 404-733-5010.

26-27: Taste of 4th Avenue Jazz Festival 2023 Historic 4th Avenue Business District, 4th Ave N, Birmingham, AL.

NPS students' quick reactions save classmate

Two Naval Postgraduate School (NPS) students were presented with the U.S. Army Commendation Medal for quickly coming to the aid of a fellow classmate following a life-threatening surfing incident in October 2022.

U.S. Army Maj. Joel Vinson and Maj. Harrison Leary, both of whom are Green Berets studying in NPS' Department of Defense Analysis, would have been perfectly comfortable with having the incident remain a rousing surf story shared among friends.

But the heroism of their actions, captured in the award citation, speak to the significance of their efforts.

The citation commended the "exceptionally meritorious actions" of Vinson and Leary "to provide medical aid and emergency response leadership in a life-threatening crisis, [and] their clear and decisive actions in a time sensitive situation greatly aided efforts to prevent the untimely death of an injured Soldier."

The awards were presented in May by Army Brig. Gen. Guillaume Beaurpere, commanding general of the Special Operations Center of Excellence, during a visit to NPS to talk with students about the state of Special Operations Forces (SOF).

-- From Javier Chagoya

[Read more, click here](#)

U.S. nuclear-powered submarine visits Western Australia

USS North Carolina (SSN 777) docked at HMAS Stirling, a naval base in Western Australia, today following participation in Talisman Sabre 2023.

This marks the first visit by a Virginia-class submarine to the country since the leaders' announcement of the Australia, United Kingdom, and United States (AUKUS) Optimal Pathway.

Initially announced in September 2021, the AUKUS partnership is designed to bolster the security and defense capabilities of the three nations and promote security in the Indo-Pacific region.

"North Carolina's presence in HMAS Stirling is an example of the United States' full commitment to the AUKUS

partnership starting with a promised increase in SSN port visits to Australia in 2023," said Mr. Abe Denmark, Senior Advisor for AUKUS to the Secretary of Defense. "These port visits are an essential step for Australia to build the necessary operational capabilities and skills to steward and operate its own fleet of nuclear-powered attack submarines."

The Optimal Pathway is a phased approach that represents an ambitious plan to provide Australia with a conventionally-armed, nuclear-powered submarine capability at the earliest possible date while ensuring Australia's capacity to safely operate, maintain and regulate this technology.

-- From Team Submarine Public Affairs

[Read more, click here](#)

Navy lays keel for future USS Oklahoma

Senior Navy leaders and shipbuilders gathered at HII-Newport News Shipbuilding (NNS) Wednesday, Aug. 2, to attend a keel-laying authentication for the future Virginia-class submarine USS Oklahoma (SSN 802).

The keel laying signifies a major milestone in the life of a ship where the ship begins to transition from design to reality. The future USS Oklahoma will be the 29th Virginia Class Submarine and the first Block V submarine. It is the second Navy vessel, and the first submarine, to be named for the state of Oklahoma.

"Today represents a culmination

of hard work and skill performed by a talented shipbuilding workforce and a strong foundation for future Sailors who will patrol the deep seas aboard Oklahoma in service of our nation," said Capt. Mike Hollenbach, Virginia Class Program Manager.

In a time-honored Navy tradition, the submarine's sponsor, Ms. Mary Slavonic, looked on as a NNS welder etched her initials onto a ceremonial steel plate that will be installed on the submarine at a later date. The bond symbolizes the enduring relationship between the sponsor, the ship, and her crew.

-- From Team Submarine Public Affairs

[Read more, click here](#)

Sale... Or

BOATS/CAMPERS/TRAILERS

New Price 21 foot - 2021 Jayco Travel Camper. Like new; beige & walnut interior and mattress kept in original plastic. Selling to upgrade to larger size - Price is \$15,000 some accessories included. To view or request pics please contact: Gary 601-575-5062.

2018 Mallard M185 Travel Trailer. Sleeps 4 with 1 queen bed/2 bunks. Easy to tow at 3,575 lbs; only selling because military member is moving

overseas. Great living quarters with lake view. Hooked up and ready to live in, including cables, hoses, plus the \$500 towing kit. Asking \$17,000. Call 360-434-3035.

AUTOMOBILES, ETC.

2018 Subaru Outback 2.5 limited, 12k miles; Subaru safety features and warranties included. Asking \$29k. Call 601-480-5100.

2017 Dodge Challenger, grey with racing stripe. \$24k. Call 601-880-3237.

HOMES/APARTMENTS

New! For Rent: 3 BD/1.5 BA with another room used as a gym. All kitchen appliances included. Large backyard. Address 145 Skyland Drive, Meridian. About 25 minutes to Navy Base. \$900 per month, with \$900 deposit. Available Aug. 1. No pets. Call 601-490-0849

For Rent: 3BD/2BD home near Causeyville Road. Furnished in quiet neighborhood. \$900 per month. 954-895-5485, 601-692-4048 or 606-571-0820.

For Rent: Water front home in Dalewood. Spa-

cious two-story home facing the Lake; great for fishing and relaxing. Remodeled kitchen and new appliances. Rent is \$2,000; please call 813-406-9687.

For Sale: 3BD/2BA Home with 2,560 sq. ft. Sits on 1 & 1/2 lots on dead end with privacy woods on 3 sides. Asking \$180,000. Contact: lucindawnichols@gmail.com, call 601-527-7829 or 601-917-6145.

For Rent: 2BD/1.5BA Home at 3702 Rollins Dr, Lauderdale in Dalewood. 2136 sq ft on a .29 acres

lot. Beautiful newly renovated single family home. Call 973-876-5006.

For Rent: 2BD/1.5BA single family home in Dalewood - fully renovated. Fenced in back yard with boat slip & pier. Pets allowed. Pet deposit \$300. \$1,300 rent per month. Call 973-876-5006.

For Sale By Owner: 3BD/3BA brick home with sunroom, large fenced in yard. Convenient to shopping and base. \$139K. Call 601-513-3395 or 601-227-1870.

MISCELLANEOUS

Event Space for Rent: Deer Creek Banquet Hall. 6000 sq. ft. indoor with 1600 sq. ft. outdoor spaces for rent for gatherings and events. Call Reginald at 251-455-1559.

Service for hire: Dixie Lawn LLC, lawn care in Meridian. Call 850-376-4499. Military owned company.

To submit an item to the "Sale...Or" column, email adam.w.prince.civ@us.navy.mil. Deadline is the Wednesday prior to publication.

Listings in the "Sale...Or" column are free for anyone who works at NAS Meridian. To include your announcement, email adam.w.prince.civ@us.navy.mil

DoD committed to assisting Hawaii as wildfire recovery continues

By Joseph Clark

DoD News, Defense Media Activity

The Defense Department is committed to supporting Hawaii in any way it can as state, local and federal officials respond to the devastating wildfire that swept through Maui, Pentagon Press Secretary Air Force Brig. Gen. Pat Ryder said today.

Approximately 250 Hawaii National Guard personnel have been activated to assist in the ongoing wildfire response and recovery efforts, Ryder said, and Defense officials are ready to assist further at the request of state and federal emergency management professionals.

“We’re going to continue to lean very far forward to assist the state of Hawaii, assist [the Federal Emergency Management Agency] and other supporting agencies to do everything we can to support the state and the people of Hawaii as we respond to this,” he said.

The fast-moving blaze, which has been fueled by strong winds from a nearby hurricane, began on Tuesday, leaving more than 90 people dead and destroying hundreds of structures.

Officials are preparing for an extended recovery effort.

The National Guard began assisting soon after the fire broke out last week, initially activating 134 troops and assigning



Photo by National Guard Master Sgt. Andrew Jackson

Search and rescue soldiers and airmen assist Maui County and state officials in search and recovery efforts in Lahaina, Maui, Hawaii. The guardsmen mobilized after a wildfire struck Maui.

two Army National Guard CH-47 Chinook helicopters to support wildfire response and search-and-recovery efforts.

Additional National Guard troops have been activated in recent days.

National Guard crews have dropped more than 189,000 gallons of water so far

in support of wildfire efforts, Ryder said.

The National Guard personnel are also serving as liaison support to the Hawaiian Emergency Management Agency and are supporting local law enforcement.

In addition to the National Guard support, the Army Reserve is providing the

American Red Cross with space at the reserve center in Maui for supply distribution.

The Army Corps of Engineers has sent debris removal personnel and temporary power experts to Maui to assist with response efforts.

The Coast Guard has been conducting underwater surveys of the Lahaina harbor to identify any structural damage that may have occurred.

Ryder said the DOD is coordinating its response closely with state and local agencies on the ground so as not to add additional logistical challenges to the response effort.

“We are going to support the state of Hawaii with whatever it is asked for in order to assist on the ground there,” Ryder said. “What you don’t want to do in these situations is add insult to injury with everyone rushing things forward when you’re also now creating additional potential logistics challenges, communication challenges, etc.”

“We’re all watching those images, and everyone fully understands the pain that people are experiencing right now,” he said. “We want to do everything we can to help, but we also don’t want to contribute to the problem by sending unnecessary capabilities that would hinder any type of emergency response.”

●TW-1

In August 2009, Kuch joined the “Jolly Rodgers” of VFA-103 as the Training Officer and deployed aboard the USS Dwight D. Eisenhower in support of Operations Enduring Freedom (OEF). In February 2011, he reported back to the VFA-34 as a department head, deploying twice aboard the USS Abraham Lincoln for combat missions in support of OEF.

In November 2013, Kuch reported to the Naval War College in Newport, Rhode Island, graduating with distinction while obtaining a Master of Arts in National Security and Strategic Studies. Upon graduation, he was assigned to the Joint Staff J-6 Directorate at the Pentagon.

In June 2018, he reported as executive officer to VFA-34. He served as commanding officer of VFA-34 from November 2019 to March 2021. Following his command tour, he received orders to Naples, Italy, where he served as the deputy commodore for Task Force 63.

Kuch has over 3,500 flight hours and 670 carrier landings and is the recipient of the Legion of Merit, Defense Meritorious Service Medal, Meritorious Service Medal, Strike Flight Air Medal (four awards), Navy Commendation Medal (three awards), Navy Achievement Medal (three awards) and various campaign and unit medals.



Fair Winds and Following Seas

CAPT Robert Lanane II is piped ashore following his retirement from the Navy with 25 years of service.

Photo by MC2 Molly Crawford

My Sailor won't batten down the hatches or clean the house

Ahoy, fellow soldiers' and sailors' spouses! Are you tethered to a spouse who won't hang a ceiling fan? Does your soldier plead ignorance when it's time to program the remote? Are you anchored

COLUMN

to a sailor who can't assemble the baby's crib? Does your partner call the plumber when the faucet leaks?

If you answered, “Aye, aye” to any of these questions, then I've got the scuttlebutt for you! Just sit right back and you'll hear a tale, a tale of a fateful sailor's wife who'd thought she'd snagged a handyman, but instead, found herself stuck doing all the home repairs.



Molinari

Three decades ago, I left home to marry a Navy man. A true greenhorn, I assumed that all military men were “manly” types who tinkered with cars, hooked up stereos, and fixed stuff

around the house. I envisioned a happy marriage involving traditional gender roles, where I, as wife and mother, managed the children and domestic tasks, and he, as husband and father, took primary responsibility for yard work and home repairs.

Shiver me timbers, was I off course! For the first few tours of duty, we rented or lived on base, where housing management was primarily responsible for repairs. So my misconceptions about my husband's fix-it skills persisted. It wasn't until we bought our first home in 1998 that I realized – not only did my husband have no fix-it skills — he also didn't feel an ounce of embarrassment if I handled the bulk of the yard work and home repairs.

In denial at first, I believed he'd change as the demands of our growing family increased. I decided to set a good example, and bought a manual on DIY. With a baby on my hip and a toddler at my feet, I replaced the kitchen faucet. I hung new light fixtures. I assembled the crib. I aerated the lawn. I replaced the sprinkler heads. I jig-sawed my son's Cub Scout soapbox derby car.

The feeling of accomplishment was so exhilarating, I forgot to notice that

my husband hadn't joined in my DIY efforts. He even stood idly by as I embarked on a complicated two-month project to build shelving along one wall of our playroom. I couldn't see past the sawdust to notice that he was conveniently and contentedly absent.

One night while simultaneously nursing our third baby and chopping onions for dinner, I asked my husband to assemble a new tabletop grill. The parts bag only contained four metal legs, two handles, and six screws. An hour later, he was still looking cross-eyed at the instructions. “I swear Honey, you could strand me on a deserted island with this thing, and I'd never figure this out.”

A few days later, I was venting my frustrations to another Navy wife. Expecting compassion, I was surprised when she told me ... it was all my fault.

At first I thought that she didn't understand, because her aviator husband was mechanically inclined; whereas, my husband couldn't identify a “Phillip's head” and referred to hardware stores as “Haunted Houses.”

However, she explained: “I'm no stranger to a tool box,” she whispered. “That's my little secret. Try being help-

less every once in a while and see what he does. Trust me, it works.”

But it was too late for my damsel in distress act to work. My husband had already seen me chop onions, nurse a baby, and assemble a grill all at the same time. There was no going back.

Now, as a salty ol' navy wife, I'm still the one who programs the remote, does the weed-whacking, and assembles the Ikea furniture.

It was too late for me, but if this is your maiden voyage as a military spouse, there's still time! You may be perfectly capable of skipping your own boat, but don't go overboard. Stow those fix-it skills in your ditty bag and play the roll of dizzy Ginger or goofy Gilligan while your spouse takes the helm. They'll figure out how to replace the toilet float or fix the cabinet hinge in no time.

Be ye mariner or landlubber, heed this whale of a tale and your marital DIY projects will always be smooth sailing.

Lisa Smith Molinari's self syndicated columns appear on her blog, www.themeatandpotatoesofflife.com and she recently co-authored *Stories Around the Table: Laughter, Wisdom, and Strength in Military Life* Follow Lisa@MolinariWrites.



COED KICKBALL TOURNAMENT

Registration:
July 31st - September 3rd

Team Meeting:
September 7th at 1500

Games begin:
September 12th at 1730

Scan the QR Code or
call (601) 679-2367
to sign up

DRIVING RANGE
CALL (601) 679-2526

RUN FOR THE FALLEN

PRESENTED BY GEICO MILITARY

SEPTEMBER 9, 2023
Sonny Montgomery Fitness Center
08:00AM - 09:30AM
NAVYMWRMERIDIAN.COM

Run for the Fallen is a memorial run honoring military service members who made the ultimate sacrifice.

The Department of the Navy does not endorse any company, sponsor or their products or services.

TICKETS & TRAVEL
CALL (601) 679-2526

Crochet Club at Liberty

August 22nd • 1800

Come to Liberty to our crochet club! We will be going over Crochet 101 & basic terminology! Instructor & materials will be provided!

Drive-in Movie

AUGUST 25th • 2030 • FIELD BY BUILDING 216
(ON TRUCKS BY BEFORE THE NEXT SESSION)

THIS EVENT WILL BE MOVED INSIDE THE MCCAIN REC CENTER IF MADE NECESSARY DUE TO WEATHER

Labor Day Story Time

August 30th • 1000 • Library

Come celebrate Labor Day at Story Time!

3D TARGET ARCHERY SHOOT

September 2 • 1100 • Ponta Creek Archery Range

GET READY FOR THE HUNTING SEASON BY COMING OUT TO OUR ARCHERY SHOOT! PAY \$15 TO SHOOT; THIS FEE INCLUDES A BOW & 3 ARROWS. HAVE YOUR OWN EQUIPMENT? JUST PAY \$10 & YOU CAN BRING ANY TYPE OF ARCHERY EQUIPMENT. PERSONAL WEAPONS MUST BE REGISTERED WITH SECURITY! COMMUNITY RECREATION DOES NOT HAVE CROSSBOWS/ RECURVES AVAILABLE TO RENT. CALL 601-679-2526 FOR MORE INFO.