

# Wingspan

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Naval Air Station Corpus Christi, Texas

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## Griffin assumes command of VT-27

By JOC Rita Chadrick

Cmdr. John P. Griffin relieved Cmdr. James L. Vandiver as the commanding officer of Training Squadron 27 (VT-27) during a traditional change of command ceremony Nov. 7 at Hangar 58 on board NAS Corpus Christi.

Cmdr. Griffin was raised in Gallatin, Tenn. A 1986 graduate of the U.S. Naval Academy, he was designated a Naval Aviator in August 1987.

His first operational assignment was to Helicopter Antisubmarine Squadron Light Forty Five (HSL-45) in San Diego, Calif., flying the SH-60B Seahawk. He completed two deployments to the Arabian Gulf, the second as an Air Detachment Maintenance Officer aboard the USS Curts (FFG-38) from August 1990 to April 1991 in support of Operation Desert Storm.

After a tour of instructor duty at the U.S. Naval Academy from October 1991 through January 1995, Griffin reported back to HSL-45 in April 1995, where he served as Quality Assurance Officer and Aircraft Maintenance Officer. Additionally, he completed a third deployment to the Arabian Gulf from May 1997 through November 1997 as Officer-in-Charge of HSL-45 Detachment Six aboard USS David R. Ray (DD-971), supporting enforcement of United Nations' sanctions against Iraq.



Griffin

Following this assignment, Griffin reported to the Naval War College in Newport, R.I., from 1998-1999 and then to the Pentagon in December 1999. While at the Pentagon, he worked in the Joint Staff Nuclear Operations Division and as Executive Assistant to the Deputy Director for Global Operations.

Cmdr. Griffin holds Masters degrees from the University of Maryland and the Naval War College. His personal awards include the Defense Meritorious Service Medal, Air Medal (with V) and Navy Commendation Medal (two awards).



Vandiver

Born and raised in Colorado, Cmdr. Vandiver is a 1985 graduate of the United States Naval Academy. He was designated a Naval Aviator in November 1986.

His first operational assignment was to Helicopter Antisubmarine Squadron Light Thirty Five (HSL-35) in San Diego, Calif. While assigned to the squadron, he flew the SH-2F helicopter and served as detachment Maintenance and Operations Officer. During deployments to the Western Pacific, Indian Ocean and Persian Gulf aboard the USS Copeland (FFG 25) and USS Lockwood (FF 1064), his detachments supported the USS

Enterprise (CVN 65) and USS New Jersey (BB 62) battle group operations.

In 1990, Vandiver reported to Naval Postgraduate School, Monterey, Calif., where he was a Distinguished Graduate and received a Masters Degree in Aeronautical Engineering. His next assignment was to Helicopter Antisubmarine Squadron Light Forty Nine (HSL-49), where he deployed to the Western Pacific as Assistant Officer-in-Charge of an SH-60B LAMPS detachment onboard USS Vincennes (CG 49).

In December 1994, he reported to the Helicopter Anti-Submarine Light Wing U. S. Pacific Fleet in San Diego, Calif., as Wing Training Officer. Following his Wing tour, he reported to Helicopter Antisubmarine Squadron Light Thirty Seven (HSL-37) in Barbers Point, Hawaii, where he served as Operations Officer and Officer-in-Charge of Detachment Nine, embarked on board USS Lake Erie (CG 70). While assigned to the Middle East Force, Vandiver's detachment supported the USS Constellation (CV 64) battle group and conducted Maritime Interdiction Operations while enforcing United Nations mandated sanctions.

In November 1998, Vandiver reported to the U.S. Space Command, Colorado Springs, Colo., as aide to the Deputy Commander-in-Chief. His next assignment is at the Naval War College in Newport, R.I., where he'll be studying National Security and Defense Policy.

## From the Skipper

What I am most thankful for. . .

By Capt. Paula Hinger



Hinger

When Thanksgiving rolls around each year the cobwebs get jostled around, and in my case I am reminded of those things that I rarely take the time to acknowledge but most frequently take advantage of, such as freedom and the round the clock commitment required to keep it, my friends and family that shore me up during the rough times and those who are less fortunate.

Over the past seven months it has been quite a ride, as I have had to focus heavily on the regional requirements and rely on my shore station team to act on my behalf. The advantage has been that it has allowed me to see the who, what, when and where of how this base works, and

the disadvantage has been that it hasn't been nearly as much fun, for anyone. So, what I am most thankful for is actually WHO...

The Department Heads who scramble to answer the call, To supply more data for the comptrollers down the hall.

The comptrollers who must refigure the budget, Because the CO wanted to ensure we didn't fudge it.

My secretary who stands guard at the door and phone, Who knows it is better that I not be left alone.

The Weather Office who says there is no way, The rainy weather we're having is here to stay.

It's the Chiefs who genuinely listen with care, You'd think they had plenty of time to spare.

The great folks at Public Works who work miracles each day, With no money but dedication that goes a long way.

And the air traffic controllers who are strong at heart, Working long hours to give students a good start.

There's the maintenance crews and Huey fliers, Who keep the bird airborne without any wires.

The chaplains, MWR and FFSC have given their best, To help everyone find a way to handle the stress.

Security forces and firefighters whose risk is great, They answer the calls and pray they are not too late.

Safety, Admin, MSO and Training to name a few, And the CMC and OOD who provide the glue.

Each department and person has given their all, I wish I could hang all their pictures up on a wall.

So I could relay the stories of each, And use their examples as a way to teach.

That sometimes we forget those that are very near, And overlook what to me is quite clear.

So this year I'll spend an hour or two, Quietly thanking my God for the NASCC crew.

I wish everyone the best over the Thanksgiving holidays. As a way to begin recognizing the contributions of everyone on this base, I am going to start a new column in the Wingspan called Station Spotlight, highlighting military and civilian personnel that are part of this great team. Thank you for everything that you do and have a safe and happy holiday!

## Healthwatch

### FCFs: Other than ordinary

By Lt. Nate Rutting  
TRAWING-4 Flight Surgeon

Some of the hardest working individuals on base are the functional Check Flight (FCF) pilots of Vertex. Whenever a repair is done to an aircraft, that aircraft must be proven to be safe and that the repair was successful. Sometimes the repairs to an aircraft are major, other times minor, but whatever the case it's crucial for safety

purposes. that all parts of the aircraft are functioning properly. This is the job of the FCF pilot.

Aviation safety is the most important part of aviation in general, and at the forefront of aviation safety is the FCF pilot. These pilots, highly trained, have to take specific written exams and have to undergo qualification flights. They are experts on their aircraft, knowing it inside and out. Aviation safety is an important part of a flight surgeon's job, and I recently had the opportunity to do a few FCF flights with Maj. Joe Hall. He's a reservist who works for Vertex, but when on

## Chaplain's Corner

### A day for Thanksgiving

By Chaplain Jairo Moreno



Moreno

*"Oh come, let us sing to the Lord!...Let us come before His presence with thanksgiving"*  
Psalm 95:1-2

When the American colonies were first settled, the newcomers suffered many hardships. They spent much time in fasting and prayer, asking the Lord to help them in their distress.

According to Tom Olson in Now Magazine, on one occasion when the New England settlers were discussing their hardships, one person suggested that they set aside a special day for fasting and prayer. Another man stood up and said they had been dwelling to much on their problems. It was time, he emphasized, to focus on their blessings.

The man pointed out that the Colony was making good progress. The harvests were becoming more abundant. The streams were full of fish, and the forest provided plenty of game. But more important than that, he reminded them that they now had what they had been seeking when they had left their homeland—liberty. He recommended that instead of a day of fasting they have a day of thanksgiving!

Many nations do not set aside an annual holiday known as Thanksgiving Day, as we do in the United States. But I would encourage you, wherever you are reading this, to join with us. With praise to God for His many blessings, let's make this a great day for thanksgiving!

*For the year of peace and plenty,  
And for blessings without end,  
Let the voices of the people  
In thanksgiving praises blend.*

Rhoderick

If we pause to think, we will have cause to thank.



Rutting

Hall, a former Cobra helicopter pilot in the Marines, has logged more than a few

Healthwatch continued on page 4

## Wingspan

NAS Corpus Christi  
*"Exceeding Expectations Through Pride In Performance"*

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## Toys for Tots Campaign Underway

Story and photos by JOC Rita Chadrick

On Nov. 14, the Marine Corps Reserve of NAS Corpus Christi joined forces with the City of Corpus Christi to launch this year's Toys for Tots program at Padre Staples Mall.

Their goal is simple: to provide as many children as possible with a shiny, new toy for Christmas and make their Christmas wishes come true.

"Last year, we collected 54,539 toys and more than \$28,215.64 in monetary donations, which was used to purchase toys for children of various age groups from 35,900 families in the local community," said Staff Sgt. Eloy Rohrman, Company C, 1<sup>st</sup> Battalion, 23<sup>rd</sup> Marines, assistant program coordinator. "This year, we're again going to exhaust all means possible so that as many children as possible can experience the spirit of Christmas. I'm from this area and I know how much it means to have this program in place."

"This year we want to at least meet, if not exceed last year's donations," added 1<sup>st</sup> Sgt. Thomas Glembin, program coordinator. "It's going to be a lot of hard work, but being Marines and Sailors we're very competitive and hopefully with everyone's assistance we'll surpass last year's numbers."

In 2002, the Marine Corps Reserve Toys for Tots program in Corpus Christi was recognized as the 2002 Toys for Tots Reserve campaign of the year, placing first out of approximately 445 sites around the nation. 1<sup>st</sup> Sgt. Glembin was also named the 2002 Reserve coordinator of the year.

The Toys for Tots campaign runs through Dec. 19. To schedule an event, become a drop site or for more information about the Toys for Tots program, contact Staff Sgt. Rohrman or 1<sup>st</sup> Sgt. Glembin at (361) 961-2885/2814 or fax (361) 939-8712.



City of Corpus Christi Fire Chief J.J. Adame, center, flanked by 1st Sgt. Thomas Glembin (l) and Staff Sgt. Eloy Rohrman (r), reads the proclamation officially kicking off the Toys for Tots campaign.

# Station Spotlight



## BU1(SCW) Cullen Wilson Leading Petty Officer, First Lieutenant

A native of Mobile, Ala., Wilson has been in the Navy for 15 years and has been at NASCC since June 2002.

"I like Public Works because it keeps me outside and there's always something new," he said. "Also, the feeling I get when I accomplish a project is great."

In his spare time he plays softball, disc golf and is also the youth director at a local church.

His goals include making chief petty officer and retiring from the Navy, followed by a career in the remodeling business.

Wilson is married and has two girls, ages 10 and 7.



## Esther Barrera Purchasing Agent, Public Works

Born and raised in Corpus Christi, Barrera has a total of 14 years of civil service, 12 of them spent here at NASCC. She would like to promote into an upward mobility position and stay until retirement.

In her spare time, she enjoys running and volunteer work.

"I work on the base beautification committee and help with the company dinners," she said. "I also enjoy going out and meeting new people; being a buyer I meet lots and lots of people," she added.

Barrera has two children, a 12-year-old son and a 16-year-old daughter.

## New device to train aviators to recognize hypoxia will save lives

From Bureau of Medicine and Surgery Public Affairs

A new device to train aviators to recognize the signs and symptoms of hypoxia offers a safer and more realistic environment for crewmembers to learn proper emergency procedures.

Hypoxia, insufficient oxygen to the brain, occurs rapidly at high altitude. In the past two years, naval aviation has experienced more than a dozen in-flight hypoxia incidents, one of which resulted in the death of the pilot and the loss of an aircraft.

"Most hypoxia incidents during flights result from oxygen system malfunctions, loss of cabin pressurization and other equipment failures," said Lt. Cmdr. Mike Prevost, aerospace physiologist and director of safety and standardization at the Naval Survival Training Institute. "Hypoxia affects every person differently. The only way to determine how an individual will react under hypoxic conditions is to go through the actual experience."

Recently, researchers from the Naval Aerospace Medical Research Laboratory (NAMRL) successfully completed testing on the Reduced Oxygen Breathing Device (ROBD), a system they developed. The ROBD duplicates the hypoxia experience in a normal room at ground level using a standard aviation mask and a software program that adds nitrogen to room air, explained Prevost.

NAMRL will transition the ROBD to the Naval Survival Training Institute this month to be incorporated into the training program during the spring of 2004. The new curriculum is scheduled for release at selected survival training centers on the east and west coasts.

For more than 50 years, aerospace physiologists and technicians have provided hypoxia training to Navy and Marine Corps aviators. The current training uses a lower pressure chamber to simulate an altitude of 25,000 feet. While in the chamber, aviators remove their oxygen masks for four minutes and experience hypoxic symptoms, which include everything from euphoria, lightheadedness and visual disturbances to muscle twitching, mental confusion and cyanosis (bluing of the skin, prevalent around the nose, mouth, and fingertips).

"Hypoxia training in an altitude chamber does have its drawbacks. Namely, the training environment is a bit unrealistic and there are numerous medical risks including

decompression sickness (DCS) and barotraumas (damage to the ears and sinuses caused by the change in pressure)," added Lt. Anthony Artino, director of Human Performance and Training Technology at the Naval Survival Training Institute.

"Using the ROBD may be more effective training for aviators. The advantages are numerous and include the ability to induce hypoxia with no risk of DCS or barotraumas and the ability to operate the device almost anywhere, including inside a fleet simulator," said Artino.

Ultimately, the Naval Survival Training Institute hopes to provide better, more realistic training by using a combination of the altitude chamber and the ROBD. They intend to take full advantage of the chamber's proven success as a training device while supplementing that training with the ROBD's portability, flexibility, and enhanced realism to help move naval aviation survival training into the next century.

## Make sure your meals are safe this holiday season

By Capt. James Amyx

OIC, Fort Sam Houston Veterinary Treatment Facility

An abundant quantity of great food is one of the best aspects of the holiday season. From the turkey and ham at Thanksgiving and Christmas, to the prime rib or filet mignon at New Year's Eve, meats are an essential part of holiday meals for most people. When properly prepared and stored, meats are a very safe, healthy, and tasty source of protein, but if not cooked and handled properly, they can leave the whole family feeling under the weather.

Turkey is perhaps the most commonly consumed meat during the holiday season. When frozen, turkey is safe almost indefinitely, but it's the thawing and cooking that can allow food borne pathogens to grow. Turkeys should be thawed in the refrigerator or in cold water. This will require planning ahead because thawing may take a long time. Thawing in the refrigerator is the safest way to defrost a turkey, but this requires about 24 hours for every five pounds of turkey in a 40 degree Fahrenheit refrigerator. Thawing in cold water takes 30 minutes per pound, and the turkey must be kept in a sealed plastic container to prevent contamination from the environment and to minimize water absorption into the turkey, creating a watery texture. The cold water must be monitored frequently and changed every 30 minutes. Do not thaw a turkey by leaving it on the counter, on the back porch, or in the basement.

Proper cooking of turkey and stuffing is also essential to a safe holiday meal. Ideally, stuffing should be cooked separately from the turkey. This is because often, the stuffing does not reach the required internal temperature of 165 degrees Fahrenheit before the turkey reaches 180 degrees Fahrenheit. Internal temperatures of both the stuffing and turkey must be monitored with a food or meat thermometer. The proper places for measuring temperatures are in the center of the stuffing, and in the innermost part of the turkey thigh. If the stuffing does not reach and internal temperature of 165 degrees Fahrenheit before the turkey reaches its required temperature of 180 degrees Fahrenheit, the stuffing must be removed and further heated. If not cooked to the proper temperature, stuffing can be a feast for disease-causing bacteria. Once the meal is over, place all leftovers in the refrigerator within two hours and consume them within four days, or freeze them.

Cooking times for other meat products are important as well. Raw pork products should be cooked to an internal temperature of 145 degrees Fahrenheit for a minimum of three minutes. Beef (steaks) should be cooked to at least 145 degrees Fahrenheit for 15 seconds (rare), and ground beef to 155 degrees Fahrenheit for 15 seconds. Beef and pork roasts should be cooked to an internal temperature of 145 degrees for three minutes. For those who like to eat wild game or ratites (emu, ostrich, etc.), those ground products must be cooked to 155 degrees Fahrenheit for 15 seconds, and steaks must be cooked to 145 degrees Fahrenheit for 15 seconds as well. Any stuffed meat should be cooked to at least 165 degrees Fahrenheit for 15 seconds, measured in the center of the stuffing.

Safe cooking habits for all meats include the following:

- Never allow raw meat to contact other ready-to-eat foods.
- Wash all utensils, surfaces, and hands used to process raw meats before preparing other foods.
- Don't store cooked meats at room temperature for more than two hours, and consume all refrigerated leftovers within 4 days.
- When cooking or re-heating meats in the microwave, cook them to an internal temperature of 165 degrees F.

This holiday season, keep your food and your family safe by properly preparing those holiday meals. For more information on handling and cooking of meats, you can contact the USDA's Meat and Poultry Hotline at 1-800-535-4555, or visit their website at [www.fightbac.org](http://www.fightbac.org) or stop by the Corpus Christi Veterinary Treatment Facility and pick up complimentary brochures with more information on safe food handling and preparation.

## Healthwatch (CONTINUED)

hours in the T-34C. Not only did I ride along on two of his flights, but I also got a glimpse into his job.

With a relaxed, reassuring demeanor, he inspected the airplane while I sat down in the cockpit, strapped on the parachute and buckled up the safety harness. We then taxied out to the runway and were soon lifting off. Punching through some clouds we reached the blue sky above, and soon it was down to business.

He began maneuvering and checking the plane's instruments, all the while marking things down in his notepad. He also had to make radio calls and keep track of where we were. After landing, he explained to me that oftentimes on FCF flights the planes are put through spins and stalls in order to evaluate the plane's recovery properties.

The FCF pilot has many tasks to do at once and they also fly aircraft that have just been repaired. For this reason FCF pilots usually do not fly with anyone else in the plane. They take their jobs very seriously; they know that they may be the last person to fly a plane before a student just learning to be a pilot flies it. Lorne Wallace, Thomas Goodwin, Brian Ivey, and Kurt Henry are the other FCF pilots on base; most are also reservist instructors. Their job is an important one and their work is definitely appreciated. Thank you.

## PAID CLASSIFIEDS

**Brand New Padre Island Town Home For Rent.** 3/2/1. May share. Available December. 8 minutes from NAS. 1050, please call (361) 949-2780 or 548-0942.

## FREE CLASSIFIEDS

**Affordable Home-** 2 bedroom, 1 1/2 bath ready to move in \$795 per month, \$795 deposit. Small pets acceptable. North Padre Island, 5 minutes from ocean. 949-9802.

**Divorce Must Sell-** 98 Yamaha FZR 600. Low miles, Blk, extras \$2995. (361) 688-8339.

**1991 Ford Bronco-** 4x4, V8 auto, A/C. \$3500 OBO. 947-1474. Ask for David.

**Baby Trend Ultra-** Baby Jogger. Like new \$90 OBO. Call Tina 986-1153.

**Christmas at the Crossing-** You are invited to Kings Crossing Country Club for a Luncheon, Fashion Show with unique booth shopping galore. Please call now for your reservation and join us for "Christmas at the Crossing". Thursday, December 4th. 10-3pm. Luncheon and Fashion show 12:00 -1:00pm. Tickets are \$19.95 Proceeds will be donated to M.D. Anderson Center for Children. Call Hilda at 994-1300, ext. 120 to make your reservation. Seating limited. Open to members and non-members.

**Truck for sale:** 2001 Toyota Tacoma PreRunner w/ TRD Package. V6 eng. w/ 22,500 miles. Excellent condition, with a perfect scheduled maintenance upkeep. Options:Century bed cover, bed liner, bed divider, split rear window, chrome bumpers and side step bar, AM/FM cassette, CD stereo. Asking \$18,500. Call Steve at 361-688-0219 anytime.

**For Sale: King's Crossing,** 6406 Bellac St. Approx 2400sf, 2-story 3/2.5/2 on cul-de-sac lot. Fenced back yard has in-ground heated pool w/hot tub & backs to park. Master suite down opens on approx 300sf tiled patio. Tiled foyer to formal dining and LR w/French doors to patio. Den w/wetbar. LR/den w/cathedral ceilings divided by see-through stone wood-burning fireplace. Eat-in kitchen w/island. 2 bdms & full bath up w/balcony overlooking LR. Laundry room & powder room down. Garage w/built-in work table and shelves. Attic decked for storage. \$214,900. Call 994-4940.

**For Sale: Set of 4 Bridgestone Potenza RE730 tires** (245/50ZR/16), this set of four tires has less than 1k miles on them. These tires are "Z" Rated high performance. These tires offer great wet & dry traction. Price: \$400.00 OBO for the set of 4 tires. Call (361) 992-1134.

**Improve Your Golf Swing.** 30 years teaching experience by PGA Professional Joel Freeman. Individual, group, and corporate lessons available. Call (361) 548-9053 for appointment.

## VITA program volunteers needed by NLSO

Volunteer tax preparers are needed for the upcoming 2003 Volunteer Income Tax Assistance (VITA) program. VITA provides free income tax preparation and electronic filing for military personnel, retirees, and family members. Both military and civilian volunteers receive free training from the IRS in tax preparation to enable them to prepare tax returns for eligible people. We encourage anyone who wishes to help to volunteer. If you are generous enough to assist our service members with your spare time, we will accommodate your busy schedule. There is no minimum amount of volunteer time required. VITA tax preparation sites will be open for the tax season from Jan. 19, 2004 through April 14, 2004. Training will be offered at NAS Corpus Christi from Dec. 8-12 at TRAWING-4.

For more information or to volunteer, call either Lt. David Lee or LNC Robert Howeth at the Naval Legal Service office at 961-3765. There are plenty of slots for volunteers, but seating can be limited for these training seminars. Thank you for considering this opportunity to help yourself by helping others. Last year, the 2002 VITA program prepared more than 1,400 returns for the service members, dependents, and retirees of Navy Region South, providing almost \$2,700,000 in tax refunds. This year, we are hoping to make the program better than ever.

## MWR News and Events

### Civilian Morale, Welfare Recreation Activity

The Christmas holidays are just around the corner; don’t wait until the last minute to start your Christmas shopping. Make your list and check it twice, then stop by the CMWRA office and reserve your seat for the “First Day of Christmas Shopping” trip to San Marcos, Texas, and a night of relaxation in San Antonio, Texas, on Nov. 29 and 30. The cost for this super trip is \$35 per person. Take a look at all you get for this awesome price:

- One day shopping at the San Marcos Factory Outlets
- One (1) night hotel accommodations at the Amerisuites Hotel located on the historical River Walk in San Antonio (four (4) people per room)
- A day to explore downtown San Antonio
- Transportation on a chartered bus

Seats are limited so stop by the CMWRA office (located in Building 249) today and reserve your seat on this “must do” holiday shopping trip (only payment insures reservation). Participants must be 18 years or older. For more information, call the CMWRA office at 961-3476.

### Corpus Christi Bay Club

The holiday season is approaching fast and our catering department is here to do all the work for you so you can enjoy your holiday parties. We provide takeout and deliveries for your office and home holiday parties on base and full catering at the Bay Club and the recreation center. Take a look at what else the Corpus Christi Bay Club has planned for you this month:

#### Monthly Specials:

**November 21:** Chateaubriand Flambe for Two \$29.95

**November 22:** Seafood Platter \$13.95

The above specials are served along with the a La Carte from 5 p.m. to 9:30 p.m. Prices are for club members. An additional \$1 per person is added for non-members. Salad, iced tea or coffee are included with all the meals. Reservations are required for the specials in order to serve you better.

#### Special Events This Month:

**Nov. 21: Winging Designation Ceremonies** will be held in the main ballroom at 3:30 p.m. **Nov. 27: A traditional Thanksgiving buffet** will be served from 11 a.m. to 2 p.m. Our “Bountiful Menu” will include corn chowder and French onion soup, fresh garden salad, waldorf salad, roast turkey with dressing and giblet gravy, baked ham with fruit sauce, fluffy whipped potatoes, honey glazed yams, Italian mixed vegetables, sweet peas, hot rolls with butter, bread pudding, pumpkin, pecan and mincemeat pies, ice tea, coffee and a complimentary glass of champagne, a Bloody Mary or a fountain soda. Prices are as follows: members, \$14.95; non-members \$15.95; children 3-10 years old \$6; children under 3 years of age are free. Reservations are required for this Thanksgiving feast; call 961-2541 to make reservations.

#### November Holiday Hours:

**Nov. 28, day after Thanksgiving:** CLOSED

### E-Street Gym

**Intramural Sports Program:** All Captain’s Cup sports are unit competition; participants must compete with their unit. Military, military dependents 18 years of age and older, and DoD/NAF employees working at NAS Corpus Christi are eligible to participate. Women are encouraged to participate in all sports. There is a minimal entry fee for contractors. Awards are given to first and second place finishers for each sport. Please register on time. Team roster sheets are available at the gym. Coach’s meetings are **mandatory**. For additional information call the E-Street Gym at 961-2401.

**6th Annual Holiday Basketball Shootout:** Deadline for registration is Dec. 8. The shootout will take place on Dec. 13.

#### November Holiday Hours:

**Nov. 27, Thanksgiving:** CLOSED

### Gonzalez Liberty Program and Center

The Gonzalez Liberty Program and Center has a month full of fun activities and events planned for you. Start your month off with some fun playing pool, and end it with a great Thanksgiving dinner and a whole lot in between.

**Popcorn Sundays, Nov. 23:** Why fight the crowds and pay the high prices at the theaters? That’s what your Liberty Program is for. Come by the Liberty Center on Sundays and enjoy new release movies and all the popcorn you can eat. The best part of this is that it is all FREE. All you have to do is round up the crowd and show up and let the GLC take care of the rest.

**Thanksgiving Dinner, Nov. 27:** Enjoy Thanksgiving with your friends at the Gonzalez Liberty Center. There will be lots of good food, plenty of fun games and much, much more for all active duty personnel to partake in on this day of giving thanks. It is our way of showing you how thankful we are for all you do for us. Dinner will start at 2 p.m.

**Attention all commands:** If you have active duty personnel on watch Thanksgiving day, let us know and we will deliver a FREE hot Thanksgiving dinner to your work space. Please call the GLC at 961-6405 with a list before Nov. 21.

**Volunteers needed:** If you would like to help deliver or prepare plates for this Thanksgiving feast, please come by and see us at the GLC.

#### Information, Ticket and Tours (ITT)

ITT has your entertainment needs covered, be it music, sports, theater or travel. For those seeking to satisfy their taste for music, ITT has tickets to the following concerts being held at Corpus Christi’s Concrete Amphitheater:

#### Nov. 21:

Please keep the following information in mind when purchasing tickets to these concerts.

- No refunds
- No cameras
- No video cameras
- No food or drinks
- Bring your own chairs
- All concerts are general admission

Music not your forte? How about basketball? ITT has tickets to some of the hottest Spurs games coming up:

**Dec. 3:** Spurs vs. Lakers

**Jan. 10:** Spurs vs. Pacers

**March 5:** Spurs vs. Mavericks

Only a limited amount of tickets are available so stop by the ITT office, located in Bldg. 39, and get your tickets today. For more information on these or any other ITT ticket sales, call 961-2267 Monday thru Friday from 8 a.m. to 4 p.m.

### Lighthouse Lanes Bowling Center

The Lighthouse Lanes Bowling Center has super “Rockin” bowling specials going on this month. Visit the bowling center for the following fun games.

**Rock 300 Bowl:** All you can bowl Fridays from 9 p.m. to 11 p.m. for only \$10.

**Rock 300 Bowl:** All you can bowl Saturdays from 9 p.m. to midnight for only \$15.

**Holiday 9-Pin-No-Tap Handicap Tournament:** Nov. 22, 2003 at 7 p.m.

**Youth Bowling League:** Saturdays at noon. The Youth Bowling League is always accepting new bowlers.

**Holiday Parties:** The holidays are just around the corner. Plan to have your command holiday party at the Lighthouse Lanes and All Hands Pub.

**Lighthouse Lanes Hours of Operation:**

Monday -Thursday	2 p.m. to 10 p.m.	Monday –Thursday	5 p.m. to 10 p.m.
Friday	Noon to 11 p.m.	Friday	6 p.m. to 10p.m.
Saturday	Noon to midnight	Saturday & Sunday	*CLOSED
Sunday	Noon to 8 p.m.		

\*If the All Hands Pub is closed, bottled beer and wine coolers can be purchased from the front desk attendant.

**Reminder:** The Lighthouse Lanes Bowling Center will be CLOSED on Nov. 27, 2003 for Thanksgiving. For more information please call 961-3805.

### Outdoor Recreation and Adventure Center (ORAC)

Don’t wait any longer to get those motor boat qualifications you have been putting off. Take advantage of the qualification classes and fishing boat rentals being offered at the Paradise Cove Marina. Registration is going on now, so stop by and register today. The courses will be held on Nov. 22 and 29 at 10 a.m. The cost for each class is \$10. The classes are open to all MWR eligible patrons. While you are there ask about all the other lessons and equipment available to you from the Paradise Cove Marina. For more information, please call 961-1293.

## Holiday Safety for Pets

By Capt. Amy L. Sanders and Maj. Todd M. Thomas

As the holiday season approaches, it’s time to think about safety... animal safety. Many things we enjoy during Thanksgiving and Christmas can be hazardous for our pets. This article will address these threats and ways to prevent them.

First and foremost on the list is food. We enjoy lots of rich, fatty foods, but our pets don’t need these things. Your veterinary treatment facility staff realizes that most pet owners think their pets enjoy the taste of many of these foods, but these items are still potentially harmful. Feeding things like ham, turkey and sweets are common causes of gastrointestinal upsets, vomiting, diarrhea, and even pancreatitis, which can be very serious. Even the juices from cooking these foods can have enough fat to cause problems. Food with bone fragments is even more dangerous. Eating chocolate causes a completely different type of problem. All forms of chocolate contain enough caffeine and other similar compounds to cause hyper-excitement, seizures and ultimately death. Of the different types of chocolate available, baker’s chocolate, which is frequently used for holiday baking, is the most toxic.

In general, pets are much healthier when they have a consistent diet limited to pet food. It is also important to keep holiday treats and candies out of your pet’s reach. Consider what you’ve placed on your coffee table and how accessible it is to your dog or cat. Additionally, remember gifts under your tree that may be food items and may be very tempting to curious pets.

A similar way animals are exposed to seasonal danger is from plants. Some holiday ornamental plants can cause illness in your pet if it eats either the leaves or the stems. Poinsettias and mistletoe are two highly poisonous plants. Pine sap from a Christmas tree mixed with water makes a poisonous drink for your pet. Also, many of the artificial fragrances may be potentially irritating or harmful, especially for birds.

Another common problem comes from the ribbons and strings associated with wrapping presents. The wrappers for some meat items are also in this group. Animals will see these items as toys and start to chew on them. Eventually they may swallow the string or wrapper and begin to become sick and start to vomit; many times this is because an intestinal obstruction has occurred. This can be life-threatening situation that may need emergency surgery to remove the foreign material. Keeping these types of items away from pets is a simple way to protect them. Pick up ornament hooks and ornaments that may have fallen on the floor. If a pet picks these up, injuries the insides of its mouth can occur, and even more damage can be done if your pet ingests an object. Additionally, if your cat is tempted to play with the ornaments on your tree, decorate the bottom third of the tree with non-breakable, plastic or wooden ornaments, or decorate only the top two-thirds of your tree. You may feel your tree looks funny, but at least you won’t be spending the holidays at an emergency veterinary clinic.

Animals are also attracted to Christmas lights, and will chew or pull on the cords. Electrocutation or burns to the face and mouth can result when a pet bites an electric cord. Lights need to be hung out of reach of pets, and animals should not be left unattended around strands of lights, Christmas trees, or other shiny attractive objects. This is not only a danger to the pet, but to the family as well if the electric cords become frayed or the Christmas tree falls. On that same note, secure your Christmas tree to a wall or ceiling hook with sturdy fishing line. This will help prevent the tree from toppling over should your pet decide to jump on it to get to a tempting ornament, or should a large, wagging tail hit it.

As you’re shopping, visiting friends and relatives, and preparing for visitors to your home, be sure to keep your pet’s exercise and feeding schedule regulated. Remember the importance of daily walks for your dog and playtime for your cat, cleaning the litter box, as well as grooming your pet.

Carelessness or lack of concern could ruin the holiday season by resulting in serious illness, injury or death. Remember that our pets can’t protect themselves by deciding what is safe and what isn’t. As owners, we must be aware of these risks in order to prevent mishaps. For more information or if your pet experiences any of these problems, call the Corpus Christi Veterinary Treatment Facility at 961-3952.

## “Blackhawks” complete successful beach ops

By Lt. j.g. Jim Schwarze

HM-15 PAO

As the crowd gathered, eyes transfixed upwards, a very large, very loud helicopter hovered over the sand dunes pulling a contraption the size of a semi-truck out of the water and onto the beach. Luckily, it was not an actual amphibious invasion but an important training exercise conducted by Helicopter Mine Countermeasures Squadron Fifteen (HM-15) off the coast of Mustang Island State Park recently.

This quarterly training exercise is necessary for HM-15, also known as the “Blackhawks,” to maintain proficiency in its mission of protecting friendly military and civilian shipping waters from destruction by sea mines.

The helicopter used in the exercise is a MH-53E “Sea Dragon,” the largest helicopter in the U.S. Military. The MH-53E is used primarily for Airborne Mine Countermeasures (AMCM). AMCM missions include mine sweeping, mine neutralization, and floating mine destruction. Additional mission capabilities include the transportation of personnel and cargo, often called Vertical Onboard Delivery or VOD.



The MK-105 magnetic influence-sweep “sled” ready for action.

The contraption being pulled is the MK-105 magnetic influence-sweep “sled.” Many sea mines do not need to contact a ship to detonate. Instead, they rely on the magnetic signature associated with a large metal hull to sense when a ship is close by. The MK-105 sled is a sophisticated and powerful electric generator that produces a similar magnetic field designed to trick a sea mine into detonating.

Training to conduct MK-105 sled operations in a remote location, such as a beachhead, is key to the unit maintaining maximum flexibility. This capability prevents the need to use the large naval ships required to carry multiple MH-53E helicopters and their various equipment to the fight. Navy ships of that size, typically an amphibious assault ship, are in short supply and are put at unnecessary risk of being struck by a mine when tasked to support mine countermeasures operations.

The streaming and recovery of the MK-105 sled is a complex ballet of aircraft, personnel on the beach, and personnel in small boats known as RHIBs (Rigid Hull Inflatable Boats). Boatswain’s Mates generally make up the three-person boat crews, who tend the sled when it is not towed by an aircraft. These hearty Sailors sometimes spend 14 hours on the water.

Construction Battalion personnel (Seabees) also play a critical role. What do Seabees do in an aviation squadron? Prior to the exercise, they prepare the remote site for operations, including laying out runway matting on the beach, moving all the heavy equipment needed for the exercise (i.e. generators, cranes, forklifts, and the MK-105 itself), and smoothing out the beach’s surface. All these personnel are necessary for HM-15 to be remote-site capable and explain why the Blackhawk squadron is one of the largest squadrons in the Navy.

So the next time you see a large black helicopter towing the sled through the Corpus Christi Bay, give a friendly wave. It’s not an invasion, it’s just the Blackhawks of HM-15 clearing a safe passage for shipping.



The MH-53E “Sea Dragon” tows the “sled” through Corpus Christi bay.

# Awards & Achievements



From left to right: Cmdr. Al Alabata, NASCC executive officer; Mike McClure, MWR athletic director; and Tom Hudson, MWR recreation director, present the Captain's Cup trophy to Lt. Michael Sheedy, VT-31's athletic coordinator.

## VT-31 "Wiseowls" take Captain's Cup Tournament

The Captain's Cup sports program is intended to promote physical fitness, wholesome recreation and unit "esprit de corps." Points are awarded to each unit based on the results of each sport they compete in, and the command with the most points at the conclusion of the fiscal year is awarded the traveling Captain's Cup trophy. When a unit wins the trophy three times, it is retired to that unit.

This year's Captain's Cup trophy was presented to VT-31 by Cmdr. Al Alabata, NAS Corpus Christi executive officer, during a recent squadron quarters held at hangar 57. Lt. Michael Sheedy, VT-31's unit athletic representative, accepted the trophy for the squadron.

### FY-03 final Captain's Cup standings (top four teams):

- 1<sup>st</sup> place: VT-31 (1,505 points)
- 2<sup>nd</sup> place: CCAD (1,325 points)
- 3<sup>rd</sup> place: HM-15 (1,030 points)
- 4<sup>th</sup> place: NAS (930 points)

### Previous winners:

- 2002 NASCC
- 2001 CCAD
- 2000 CCAD
- 1999 VT-28
- 1998 VT-28 (cup retired to VT-28)
- 1997 VT-28 and H-15 (tie)
- 1996 VT-28



Photo by Mike McClure

## Flag football champions

The Air Operations team (in red jerseys) won the Captain's Cup Flag Football championship game against VT-31's "Wiseowls" with a score of 21 to 14.

## Cmdr. Gerald Nyberg, VT-31 commanding officer, awarded Navy Achievement Medals to the following personnel during a squadron quarters at hangar 57:



Lt. Michael Savarese

Photo by Capt. Richelle Roedecker



Lt. Cmdr. Silvio Barbosa

Photo by Capt. Richelle Roedecker

## Cmdr. Paul Lluy, HM-15 commanding officer, presented the following squadron personnel with certificates designating them Enlisted Aviation Warfare Specialists (EAWS) during an awards quarters at the squadron:



AM3(AW) Michael Pantlitz

Photo by HM-15 Staff



AM1(AW) Gilber Garnes

Photo by HM-15 Staff