

NAVY BASE MARKS NEW NAME, NEW LEADER

Norco facility at ex-hotel celebrating 70th year

BY LESLIE PARRILLA
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It was nearly 70 years ago when the Norco Navy base and former Lake Norconian Hotel off Fourth Street opened its doors as a military hospital for soldiers injured from bombs dropped on Pearl Harbor and others dying from tuberculosis, a move that would boost the health of the military while helping Norco out of the Great Depression.

"They were already on the site fixing up the hospital prior to Pearl Harbor, which is why a lot of people feel it's evidence that (President Franklin) Roosevelt and his staff knew Pearl Harbor was going to happen," said Norco City Councilman and local historian Kevin Bash.

Dates range from Dec. 5, 1941 to Dec. 15 for the official establishment of U.S. Hospital No. 1 at the Norco base. A plaque at the base of a flagpole on the site reads Dec. 8.

"There's lots of different versions to the story" but one thing is clear, Bash said. "The first patients to come in were from Pearl Harbor. There were patients on the grounds within a couple of weeks."

Stories related to Pearl Harbor and the base's opening are common knowledge among naval officers and civilians walking the base today, said Troy Clarke, public affairs officer for Naval Surface Warfare Center Corona Division, the tenant at the base.

Wednesday marks the celebration of the site's 70th birthday and remembrance of the Japanese bombing of Pearl Harbor on Dec. 7, 1941.

The base also recently welcomed new commanding officer, Cmdr. Eric H. Ver Hage, on Nov. 15. Ver Hage, 45, begins a standard two-year rotation following the departure of former commander Capt. Jay Kadowaki.

He will oversee federal labs at the base that
SEE NAVY/A11



CONTRIBUTED IMAGE

New Naval Surface Warfare Center Corona Division Commanding Officer Cmdr. Eric Ver Hage addresses a Chamber of Commerce reception Nov. 29 at the Riverside Marriott.

CEREMONY

WHAT: 70th anniversary of Norco Naval base and Pearl Harbor remembrance

WHEN: 10 a.m. Wednesday ceremony

WHERE: Norco Navy base, Fourth Street at Hamner Avenue, Norco

RSVP: Required by Monday to the Lake Norconian Club Foundation at www.lakenorconianclub.com or Kevin Bash at 951-768-8981

Rivrside council to discuss staffing

Some members who don't have full-time assistants may be filling those positions

BY ALICIA ROBINSON
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As local governments around the country trim payrolls to fit tight budgets, Riverside's staff may grow slightly as some council members who haven't had assistants look to hire them.

Four of the city's seven council members have full-time assistants who get health and retirement benefits and earn bigger salaries than the part-time council members do. Of the three who don't have assistants, one — Councilman Paul Davis — said he plans to hire someone. Councilman Andy Melendrez said he's still evaluating whether he needs an assistant, and Councilwoman Nancy Hart said she's been fine without one and sees no reason to change.

The council on Tuesday will discuss whether to fund two of the three unfilled positions and set a clear policy that if the jobs are vacant, the money goes back to the general fund. The issue arose because of questions over how Davis has been spending the money budgeted for an assistant, which the council calls a legislative field representative.

Davis has said he was told he could either hire someone or use the money for community causes and groups, so he left the position open and spent the money on school crossing guards, youth sports and community events. AS-
SEE COUNCIL/A11



Paul Davis



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NAVY

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assess missiles for national defense. Originally enlisted in the Navy in 1984 as an electronics technician, he recently commanded the frigate USS Carr. He has degrees in political science and national security and strategic studies, and he has received the Meritorious Service Medal, Navy Marine Corps Commendation Medal, Joint Service Achievement Medal and Navy Marine Corps Achievement Medal.

"We feel tied to the base, to the history. We try to stay plugged into the community just to be good neighbors and it keeps us grounded," Ver Hage said.

The base hosts about 1,000 civilian scientists and engineers who analyze the re-

sults of weapons tests. About 53 live in Norco and about a half dozen are Navy personnel.

The base recruits employees from the community, leads partnerships and internships with area colleges related to its research and has about 800 contractors, roughly half of which are from the Inland area.

Not only does the base have a new commander, but is also receiving a name change to prevent confusion. The official base name — Naval Weapons Station Seal Beach Detachment Corona — is a misnomer that started before Norco incorporated in 1964.

"Even though it was in the community of Norco, the nearest post office was in Corona. In this day and age it's not an accurate re-

presentation of where the base is located, nor the ties that we have in the community of Norco," said Gregg Smith, spokesman of Naval Weapons Station Seal Beach, which oversees the Norco base.

The 70th celebration Wednesday will mark the official name change to Naval Weapons Station Seal Beach Detachment Norco, the base's birthday and Pearl Harbor. The Fourth Street sign at the main entrance is under construction to reflect the new name. Seal Beach has been in the process of making the name change since shortly after it took over command of the base several years ago, Smith said.

City officials had been campaigning for the Norco name for years.

COUNCIL

CONTINUED FROM A5

sistants for Hart and Melendrez were not funded in the budget, but they get some help from a development department employee.

The salary range for legislative field representatives starts at slightly less than the annual \$39,408 earned by council members and tops out at \$52,572. City spokeswoman Cindie Perry confirmed all current field reps earn more than their bosses.

This year Davis has spent \$8,000 and promised \$3,750 to community groups that hasn't been paid out. He said Friday he will ask the council to honor his commit-

ments and then he will look to hire an assistant.

"I think it'd be good for the district," he said.

All council members except Hart and Mike Gardner work in addition to holding a council seat. Hart said because she doesn't have other employment, she doesn't need staff, but she also doesn't think the money should be spent elsewhere as Davis was doing. The city already has a program to give grants to community groups, she noted.

"It's still taxpayer money," she said. "You want to give money, use your campaign fund."

Melendrez said the council should take a closer look at the cost of assistants,

whose salaries increased from about \$40,000 to \$50,000 between the 2007-08 and 2008-09 fiscal years; they were later granted benefits worth up to \$28,000.

Asked whether it's an efficient use of taxpayer money for part-time council members to have full-time assistants who earn more, Gardner said he doesn't want to open a debate on council members' salaries, but he thinks residents benefit from him having an assistant to help respond to their concerns.

"I get a lot of compliments on my field rep from constituents," he said. The fact that the assistants make more than the council "is sort of just the way things are."

REPORTS

CONTINUED FROM A2

10:53 a.m. at 31415 Congressional Drive. Firefighters arrived to find the two-story home well-involved in flames.

It took about an hour to contain the fire.

The cause of the blaze is under investigation.

The people displaced said they planned to seek accommodations with relatives.

—SANDRA STOKLEY
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HEMET

Police suspect man of burglary, drugs

A Perris man under surveillance by the San Jacinto Police Department was chased down and arrested Friday evening on suspicion of residential burglary, receiving stolen property and possession of methamphetamine for sales, Riverside County sheriff's Sgt. Joey Nardone wrote in a news release.

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Clayton Perkins, 35, had a felony warrant and was under surveillance stemming from a series of residential burglaries in the San Jacinto and Hemet areas when a foot pursuit ensued, the news release stated. A police dog assisted in the apprehension of Perkins.

Perkins, who was arrested about 5 p.m. on East Menlo Avenue in Hemet, was in possession of methamphetamine for sales, the news release stated.

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FONTANA

Two die when car hits medic vehicle

The San Bernardino County coroner's office has identified two men killed early Saturday in Fontana when their car hit a medic squad vehicle returning to the fire station from a call.

Sateki Latu and Talai Livi, both 21 and both Fontana residents, were declared dead at the scene of the 2:30 a.m. crash.

Two firefighters riding in the medic squad were taken

to Arrowhead Regional Medical Center in Colton with injuries that were not life threatening, Tracey Martinez, public information officer for the San Bernardino County Fire Department, wrote in a news release.

Fontana police Lt. Mark Weissman said the medic squad vehicle was southbound on Sierra Avenue at the intersection of Randall Avenue when the car ran a red light and collided with the squad vehicle, according to witnesses.

The impact was so violent that the car had to be extricated from underneath the medic squad vehicle.

Weissman said evidence in the car pointed to alcohol as a possible factor in the wreck.

The Fontana Police Department's Major Accident Investigation Team is handling the investigation, Weissman said.

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HERO

CONTINUED FROM A3

Another Hero was Brent Conan, a Beaumont police officer.

"It's fun. I've been doing it the last four years," Conan said. "I've got kids of my own."

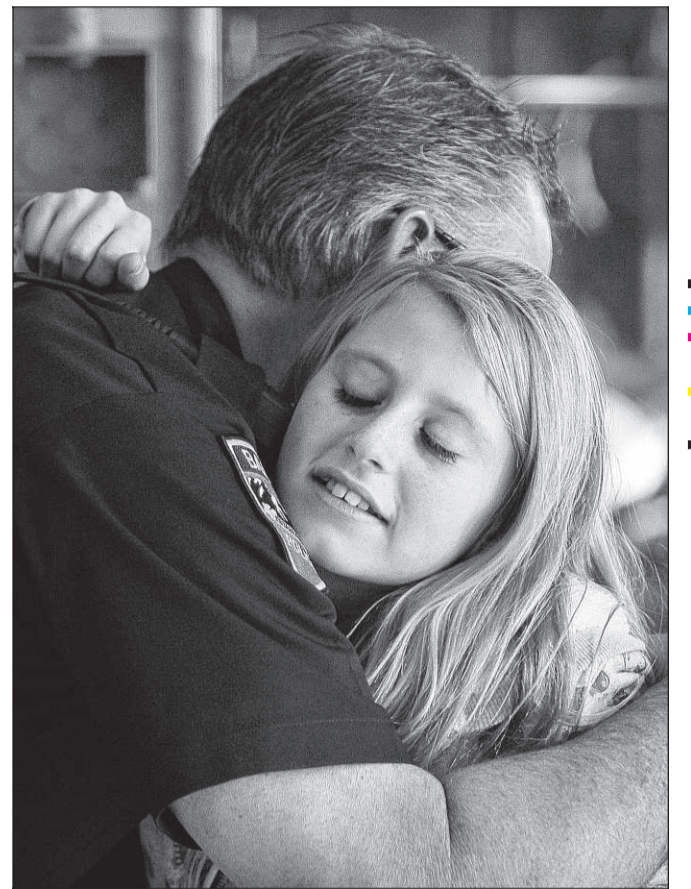
Ashley used most of her \$100 to buy Christmas presents for several young cousins. She picked out toys, including a Barbie, Transformers and spinning tops, and clothes for a 1-year-old. Ashley said she shopped for her cousins "so my mom could shop for the adults and me and my brother."

She also got something for herself: a messenger bag.

About \$37 into her shopping trip, 12-year-old Brandi Black of Beaumont had treated herself to makeup, some shirts, jewelry and body spray. She wanted a Justin Bieber doll but the store was sold out.

Brandi described the day as fun.

"I got to ride in the fire truck," she said.



DAVID BAUMAN/STAFF PHOTOGRAPHER

Christina Davidson, 11, of Beaumont, hugs Banning police officer Joe Feola after the Shop with a Hero event.

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Medicare Events of the Season!

Dec. 5th @ 9 a.m.
Carrow's
8800 Limonite Ave.
Riverside, CA 92509

Dec. 5th @ 10 a.m.
Marie Callendar's
3969 W. Florida Ave.
Hemet, CA 92545

Dec. 5th @ 10 a.m.
TGI Friday
40830 Winchester Rd.
Temecula, CA 92591

Dec. 6th @ 10 a.m.
Coco's Bakery
3246 W. Florida Ave.
Hemet, CA 92545

Dec. 6th @ 10 a.m.
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10406 Indiana Ave.
Riverside, CA 92503

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Dec. 6th @ 2 p.m.
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332 N. Lyon Ave.
Hemet, CA 92543

Dec. 7th @ 11 a.m.
Moreno Valley Senior Ctr.
25075 Fir Ave.
Moreno Valley, CA 92552

Dec. 6th @ 11 a.m.
Calimesa Senior Center
908 Park Ave.
Calimesa, CA 92320

Dec. 6th @ 2:30 p.m.
Canyon Crest Country Club
975 Country Club Dr.
Riverside, CA 92506

Dec. 6th @ 12 p.m.
Juniper Terrace Mobile Park
530 W. Devonshire Ave.
Hemet, CA 92543

Dec. 7th @ 10 a.m.
London Spires Home Community
725 W. Thorton
Hemet, CA 92543

Dec. 6th @ 1 p.m.
Magnolia Garden Apts.
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Riverside, CA 92504

Dec. 7th @ 10 a.m.
Whispering Fountains
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Riverside, CA 92503

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