

UNITED STATES MILITARY ENTRANCE PROCESSING COMMAND

# Messenger

SHARING INFORMATION TO REACH A VISION

VOL. 34, NO. 1

## Pillars of a successful all-volunteer force

## Leadership

### Analysis



**Dr. Gilroy**

**Test  
Evaluate  
Adjust**



**BE ALL YOU CAN BE**

**Targeted  
Programs**

**Financial  
Resource**

**Recruit**

**Train**

## Reflections from Dr. Gilroy

# Messenger

Sharing information to reach a vision

## 4 Accession Policy Director retires

12 Lansing hosts Liberians

14 *Tuskegee Airman swears in Kansas City shippers*

22 *One soldier, two Marines grant 9-year-old's wish*

38 *Amarillo commander memorializes friend, SEAL*



**Cleveland Browns visit MEPS**  
After signing their contracts, applicants greet Cleveland Brown players, (left to right) Alex Mack (# 55), Quinton Spears (# 90) D'Qwell Jackson - #52, and Jordan Cameron (#84). *Story begins on page 11*

## Departments

Unusual Enlistments .....	8	Leadership Profiles .....	26
Special Visitors .....	12	Testing Talk .....	32
Community .....	22, 33	MEPS of Excellence .....	32

## U.S. Military Entrance Processing Command

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Capt. Eric W. Johnson

By the time you read this, I will have visited all 65 MEPS, in just over a year. The last three were Anchorage, Beckley, and San Juan. I say this not to boast, but to show you — through action — the importance I place on meeting and interfacing with the folks who are on the ground, processing applicants.

From the beginning, I've stressed clear communication and a healthy command climate. My message hasn't changed.

In any organization, there can be rumors and miscommunication, but I believe leaders can address them and thus avoid problems down the road. We can tackle unclear communication with a good dose of transparency and truth.

And our current "truth" is that Department of Defense is staring down at some substantial budget cuts, and everyone is going to have to share the load. In USMEPCOM, we took a cut to our fiscal year 2012 budget and we've absorbed most of it operationally, because our throughput is slightly less this year. But we still do not have a signed fiscal 2013 budget, and we don't know — exactly — what it will entail.

In order to deal with these unknowns, we've done some preparatory work. We've offered voluntary separation programs to certain civilians [the programs include VSIP, or Voluntary Separation Incentive Pay and

# Commander's Commentary

VERA, Voluntary Early Retirement Authority]. These programs have allowed some employees to make their own life decisions, and afforded more flexibility to the command. And we may offer force shaping initiatives again.

Although no one is guaranteed a job if their duties become non-essential to the mission, I will guarantee two things in our command. One, we will communicate changes in an immediate and clear manner, and two, we will maintain a command climate based on trust, dignity, and respect for all.

Related to that topic, I'd like to discuss an essential component of workplace respect — the appreciation of diversity.

In January I attended a five-day Leadership Team Awareness Seminar at the Defense Equal Opportunity Management Institute.

It was exceptional training and, quite frankly, eye-opening in some ways for someone like me who has three decades of service. All the attendees brought their own point of view, and we shared insights and discussion about diversity issues.

The course covered areas including sexism, sexual harassment, leading a culturally diverse workforce, and contemporary equal opportunity issues. Obviously, I won't discuss all of it here, but I will share two important points.

We know that equal opportunity and equal employment opportunity are based on rules and law. However, in order for an organization to reach its full potential, it must move beyond "tolerance" and *truly embrace* diversity. But how do we get there? We will not get there by ignoring our co-worker's race, gender, religion, etc. Instead, we must recognize and capitalize on each others' diverse make-ups and backgrounds in order to gain all that is possible. It is only when we recognize and appreciate

our differences that we become a more powerful whole.

The second topic I'd like to highlight is the importance of the Department of Defense Sexual Harassment/Assault Response and Prevention Program. In February, we distributed a podcast on three topics, including SHARP. I want to stress the importance of this program and remind you that it is *our* responsibility to create and maintain a work climate free of sexual harassment/assault, and one that is supportive of reporting, if an incident were to occur.

If you haven't had a chance to watch my eighth podcast, please do so. It gives more detail on SHARP and how the Defense Department views it and is supporting it. My podcast cites some additional SHARP resources, as well.

On Feb. 22, I attended the retirement of my friend, mentor and leader, Dr. Curtis Gilroy. We will miss him, and his outstanding advocacy, support and understanding of the military processing mission. There's an article about his career that begins on the next page.

In light of an environment of change, thank you for joining me in facing the challenges of accomplishing the mission of processing tomorrow's armed forces. And please remember — in all we do — mission first, people always.

Warmest regards and very respectfully,

Eric W. Johnson  
Captain, USN  
Commanding

# Dr. Curtis L. Gilroy

*Director, Accession Policy  
—Military Personnel Policy*

*Reflections on 30 years in the  
Department of Defense, and  
the role of military processing  
in the all-volunteer force*

By Christine Parker  
Messenger Editor

For most of the past decade, Dr. Curtis L. Gilroy provided “oversight for recruiting the active duty force.” A true expert and enthusiast of *all* military recruiting and processing, Gilroy retired Feb. 22.

Although the military recruiting mission is inarguably more extensive than that of military processing, in a recent interview, Gilroy made it clear that he and others in the Office of the Secretary of Defense recognize the importance of USMEPCOM’s mission. He reflected on the past 30 years he’s worked for the Department of Defense. He also shed light on some of what took place during the first — critical — years of the U.S. military’s all-volunteer force.

When Gilroy officiated USMEPCOM’s most recent change of command in January 2011, he spoke about the significance of the military processing mission of vetting applicants — administering aptitude tests, and conducting medical examinations, and background checks.

“Not for hundreds of people, not for thousands, not for tens of thousands,” Gilroy said. “We’re talking about hundreds of thousands. 1.1 million tests, 570,000 applicant visits ... 315,000 medical examinations, 250,000 background checks, and 225,000 accessions, on average, each year.

“We are challenged like never before to make new efficiencies, leverage new technologies, optimize our capacity and capabilities and continue to deliver the people who will be our war fighters and leaders of tomorrow.”

— Dr. Curtis L. Gilroy



“This command is at the very center of a most critical mission for Department of Defense, ensuring our armed forces are manned with quality soldiers, sailors, airmen, Marines and guardians. As Freedom’s Front Door, we not only face the challenges of our day-to-day mission, but also of embracing change and forging the way ahead with process improvements and shaping the way all services’ accessions will be delivered to basic training, and ultimately to the field. We are challenged like never before to make new efficiencies, leverage new technologies, optimize our capacity and capabilities and continue to deliver the people who will be our war fighters and leaders of tomorrow,” he said.

So how did this man journey from graduating college at Acadia University, Nova Scotia, with a bachelor’s degree in economics to holding such an important military position? Particularly as someone who never wore a uniform?

“I did not know what I was getting into actually — I had never served — I was a research economist who had written a lot and built a lot of models in the private sector and General Thurman knew he needed those kinds of models,” Gilroy said. [General Maxwell Thurman held numerous key Army positions in the 1970s and 1980s. He took command of the U.S. Army Recruiting Command in 1979.]

Before working for Thurman, Gilroy worked for 10 years in the civilian labor market as a research economist. After graduating from Acadia University, he earned a master’s in economics from the University of

Toronto, a master's of business administration in marketing research from McMaster University, also in Canada, and a doctorate in economics at State University of New York in 1973 — the first year of the all-volunteer force.

According to him, the early years of the AVF were not without struggle. “General Thurman was one of the most important individuals who saved the all-volunteer force. And in a lot of ways that’s even more important than being an ‘architect,’” he said, referring to the title many use to describe Thurman’s role in the AVF.

Gilroy explained that several years into the AVF, “it was in serious, serious difficulty and many of the critics who were not in favor of a volunteer military were all set to return to the draft.

“General Thurman spoke eloquently about what went wrong,” those first few years, “and he was able to turn things around. He played a very, very important role.” He explained some of the issues they faced during those years.

Initially, the Department of Defense provided ample resources to the AVF. “But the early successes led some in Congress and the Department of Defense to assume that all was well and that all would continue to be well,” he said.

With the volunteer military came a significant pay raise — about 60 percent across the board. The military increased its recruiting budget to attract and retain the force, because it was competing with the civilian sector for America’s youth.



**Dr. Curtis L. Gilroy passes the flag to Capt. Eric W. Johnson at the January 2011 change of command. Photo by Art Heintz**

“The early successes of the volunteer military were taken for granted. Some in Congress and some in DOD thought ‘this was not as hard as we thought it was going to be,’” Gilroy said. “So what happened was that military pay eroded and budgets did not keep pace with requirements. At the same time the economy was expanding, unemployment was low and the department and the

*Continued on page 6*

## Professional Positions

### 2002 - 2012

- Director, Accession Policy

### 1999 - 2002

- Director of the 9th Quadrennial Review of Military Compensation, a comprehensive evaluation of the military compensation system

### 1991 - 1998

- Director of Special Projects and Research within the Office of the Secretary of Defense

### 1981 -1991

- Director, Personnel Policy Research Office, U.S. Army [in support of the Deputy Chief of Staff for Personnel, U.S. Army]

### Prior to 1981

- Senior Economist with both the Congressional-directed Minimum Wage Commission and the Presidential-directed National Commission on Employment and Unemployment Statistics
- Economist with the Department of Labor, Bureau of Labor Statistics

## Awards

- Presidential Rank Award
- Department of Defense Exceptional Civilian Service Medal
- U.S. Army Superior Civilian Service Medal
- U.S. Army Recruiting Command Meritorious Service Award

## Related Work

- Dr. Gilroy has edited seven books, and published 30 articles in academic journals and more than 80 other technical papers and reports. Also, he is a referee for several professional journals.

services did not know how to react to a changing environment.”

Also, the GI Bill expired in 1976, and wasn't renewed in its previous form. “It took a while for us to realize how important educational benefits were to young people,” Gilroy said.

In fact, the services began to miss their recruiting goals in the mid- to late-1970s, and worse, the quality of recruits began to drop. This led to testimony before Congress by the then-chief of staff of the Army, who made his now famous remark about a “hollow force.”

“It was not a good time ... in terms of not only missing our numerical goals, but our quality ones too in education and AFQT [Armed Forces Qualification Test] scores,” he said. “We heard more voices coming from both Congress and the department for a return to conscription.”

When Thurman took command of USAREC in 1979, he began to institute significant changes.

“He was in many ways a business person,” Gilroy said. “He was quantitatively driven. He looked for the business case to solve a lot of the problems. He fought analytically and relied on empirical evidence in making his decisions.”

Thurman and others advocated significant pay raises and increased educational benefits in the early 1980s. Additionally the “Be All You Can Be” campaign began in 1981 and Thurman instituted the “Mission Box” [acknowledging mission makers] and stressed accountability within the command.

“Things began to turn around,” Gilroy said. “We needed an infusion of resources and he was able to obtain that — not only from the Army, but he convinced the Department of Defense to support the Army.”

He said Thurman and others often discussed how important it was for the Army to make its recruiting goals. “The Army, having the largest and most difficult mission, had to succeed for the armed forces to succeed. It was as simple as that. We all argued that, if the Army sneezed, the all-volunteer force could certainly catch a cold.” That phrase was used often during those years — as was Gilroy's analysis.

Gilroy built many of Thurman's early models that provided the quantitative evidence to support his ideas and requests. Often, when Thurman testified before Congress, he used Gilroy's models to make his case. “He looked at the numbers, translated them ... and was able to convince senior members on both the House and Senate Armed Services Committees to believe him, because he had evidence.”



**Dr. Curtis L. Gilroy (center) visits Tampa MEPS Jan. 20. He poses for a photo with (from left) Samuel Dixon, human resources assistant, 1st Sgt. Leona McKoy, senior enlisted advisor, Leland Aughey, administrative service technician, and Cmdr. Brent Cower, Tampa MEPS commander.**

In 1981, when Thurman became the deputy chief of staff for personnel, he hired Gilroy as the director of the Personnel Policy Research Office, in Alexandria, Va. Gilroy remained in that position until 1991, when he moved on to become director of Special Projects and Research in Office of the Secretary of Defense, at the Pentagon.

Thurman went on to serve as the vice chief of staff of the Army, commanding general of the U.S. Army Training and Doctrine Command, and commander in chief of U.S. Southern Command. After a 37-year career, Thurman retired in 1991. On Dec. 1, 1995, he died after a five-year battle with leukemia.

Gilroy said his career worked out in a fortuitous manner. “As I think back, if I had known then what I know now — about how complicated the whole process is — I may not have taken the job.”

“We had early successes — clearly — we estimated some simple models [if you can call multiple regression models simple] and we were able to use those models to make a case for the Army's recruiting budget.”

They went on to improve other areas such as military compensation and retention, and had some successes there as well.

“But recruiting is critical to the success of a volunteer military — it's the heart — if we don't get recruiting right, I argue that not a whole lot else matters and General Thurman had that view too.”

Gilroy said Thurman spoke of the importance of the military processing mission often. In fact, he and other military leaders named military processing as one of the 10 pillars of a successful volunteer force.

“We said ... this [processing applicants] was one of the most important pillars. He [Thurman] would say we needed an independent organization to vet those individuals who they [recruiters] brought us. It needed to be separate from the services and it needed to be operated out of the Office of the Secretary of Defense. It would have to be objective and that’s the organization that it has turned out to be — and the work MEPCOM does is absolutely outstanding,” Gilroy said. “There’s no other organization that can do this.”

When asked about how he would advise his successor, Gilroy stressed the importance of staying in tune with both USMEPCOM and especially the military entrance processing stations. He said he visited “a goodly number” over the decade.

“And *there* you get a feel for what MEPCOM does,” Gilroy said. “It always amazed me how efficient the operation was, and the operation is ever so complicated and ever so important. How competent the staff was and how friendly the atmosphere was,” he said. “And this I can say cuts across all the MEPS.”

“You need to understand recruit processing — how well it’s done and how complicated and comprehensive the process really is, and the hours the staff works.

“Every person at the MEPS plays a role — military and civilian alike — they’re visible to applicants, parents and guardians.

“The synergy that I find at the MEPS is particularly outstanding, and that, I think, plays a great role in the efficient and friendly operation of the organization and each MEPS. A role in helping to bring in to the military these patriotic young men and women willing to serve the nation.

“And it’s important to get the story of recruit processing out. Some senior leaders take [recruiting and processing] for granted. It’s not an easy job, and together they’re the heart of the all-volunteer military.”

The quality of the U.S. military recruits is the highest it’s been in more than 20 years. “That says a lot about the recruiters in the field, but it says a lot about how the MEPS are processing these individuals. We can have a very high quality individual brought into the MEPS by an outstanding recruiter. Vetting is done by the MEPS and this person is found to be ineligible to serve, and that is an incredibly important function. Every staff member contributes to that function and ... we end up with the cream of the crop among the civilian population.

“And I can say it from experience,” referring to his visits to MEPS. “The first person who shakes my hand is the one who greets me at the front desk. There’s always a smile and great conversation, and that’s every MEPS visit for me. Wherever it is — it’s the same experience — outstanding commanders and wonderful and so competent staff,” he said.

“The synergy that I find at the MEPS is particularly outstanding, and that I think plays a great role in the efficient and friendly operation of the organization and each MEPS. A role in helping to bring in to the military these patriotic young men and women willing to serve.”

— Dr. Curtis L. Gilroy

When asked whether USMEPCOM will continue to move toward paperless processing, he answered: “Yes. Obviously we need to be more efficient and the drive to a paperless process environment is a more efficient situation. How we get there is hard.”

He explained that USMEPCOM is not the only government organization facing the same challenges. He named constrained budgets and the challenges of different communities — resource management, information technology, acquisition, policy makers — all communicating and working together to make it happen. He said, “It just so happens it’s the nature of the beast.

“So whether we end up with a full VIPS [Virtual Interactive Processing System] or we go paperless with an enhanced MIRS [the current MEPCOM Integrated Resource System] is yet to be determined. If that is the most efficient way of progressing to get at paperless, then we need to do that.”

But, that’s not his worry anymore. Gilroy plans to “legitimately retire.” He does not plan to affiliate with any organization, but he plans to “stay engaged.” He said he will be happy to get involved with projects that he finds interesting.

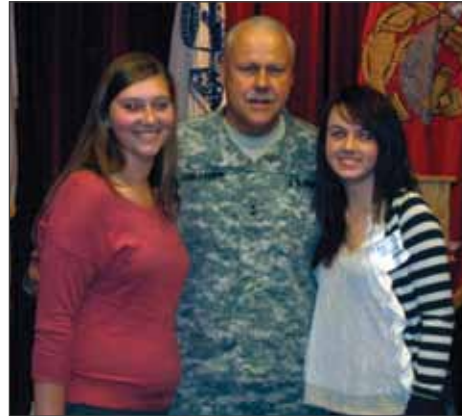
“And if I can be helpful to the department or to the services or any organization within the military — I would be happy to help out. I don’t want to work full time, but I still have my health, and my fitness, my enthusiasm, and my passion for the military and I want to contribute to both the nobility of service and the military’s mission. And I will do that on every occasion that I am offered and I will seek out venues to preach the military’s gospel.

“It’s been an incredible journey — really — it has — and I turned down a lot of other opportunities ... to stay in jobs that I enjoyed. I can say that honestly and without regret.”

**Editor’s Note. We thank you, Dr. Gilroy, for your service to the Department of Defense and USMEPCOM.**



Maj. Gen. R. Martin Umbarger conducts an oath of enlistment ceremony at Indianapolis MEPS.



Major Gen. R. Martin Umbarger poses with Indiana National Guard applicants Jessica Faust (left) and Gabrielle Sunier, whose grandfather is the executive director of the Indiana Department of Homeland Security. Photos by Sgt. Leon Vanterpool



Maj. Gen. R. Martin Umbarger poses with Indiana National Guard applicant, Gabrielle Sunier (center) and her family, including her grandfather, Joseph Wainscott (far right).

## Indianapolis hosts two generals in two days

Indianapolis MEPS hosted two generals in as many days, Jan. 26 and 27.

Maj. Gen. R. Martin Umbarger, adjutant general of Indiana, conducted an enlistment ceremony for Indiana National Guard applicants Gabrielle Sunier and Jessica Faust Jan. 26.

Sunier is the granddaughter of Joseph Wainscott, executive director of the Indiana Department of Homeland Security.

The next day, Maj. Gen. Omer C. Tooley, Jr., visited to conduct an oath of enlistment ceremony, as a friend of the applicant's family.

A member of the Indiana Army National Guard, Tooley is commanding general of the Camp Atterbury-Muscatatuck Center for Complex Operations and assistant adjutant general for the state of Indiana. Tooley conducted the oath for Army applicant Adam Teeters.



Major Gen. Omer "Cliff" Tooley and his wife (both on right) chat with Indianapolis MEPS commander, Lt. Cmdr. Matt Byrne (second from left), 1st Sgt. Harold Gonzalez, Indianapolis MEPS senior enlisted advisor (third from left), and an Army recruiter, as the group waits before the oath of enlistment ceremony.



Following his enlistment ceremony, Adam Teeters poses for a photo with his parents (on left) and Maj. Gen. Omer "Cliff" Tooley and his wife (on the right). Tooley conducted the ceremony as a friend of the Teeters family.



## Military family shares in son's enlistment

By Capt. Telisa L. Watkins  
Dallas MEPS  
Assistant Operations Officer

Every day, dozens of young men and women report to the Dallas MEPS to enlist, but it's not common for a young man to take the oath in his mother's workplace, with his father as the presiding officer.

That's exactly what took place recently when Darius Jamaal Harding enlisted in the Army, in front of his mother, Virgie Harding, Dallas MEPS medical supervisor, and father, Army Reserve Lt. Col. Darriet W. Harding.

"This has been a very emotional day for me," Virgie Harding said. "I see young people going in the service every day, but it never dawned on me that I would be going through this one day. My husband and I are very proud of our son volunteering to serve our country."

His grandmother, Sadie Harding, his aunt, Sharon Ellis, and members of the Dallas MEPS family attended his enlistment.

The new private will attend basic training at Fort Jackson, S.C., and advanced individual training at Fort Sam Houston, Texas, to become a pharmacy technician.

"Lieutenant Colonel Ralph Williams [Dallas MEPS commander] was awesome in making this happen for our family," Harding said.

Currently Harding serves as the operations and training officer, 300th Sustainment Brigade (Reserve) and Logistics Management Specialist, Special Troops Battalion, 300th Sustainment Brigade, Grand Prairie, Texas. He has served in a variety of assignments in both active and reserve status, including commander, 11th Heavy Equipment Transportation Company, Boblingen, Germany, and 143rd Transportation Command Coalition Forces Land Component Command and Officer and Deployment/Redeployment Coordination Cell Operations Officer, Camp Arifjan, Kuwait. He plans to retire in July.



**Family Affair**  
Dallas MEPS medical supervisor, Virgie Harding (center) and her husband, Lt. Col. Darriet Harding (right), and their son, Darius Jamaal Harding, who enlisted recently.

## Son of LA ops officer joins parents in National Guard

Capt. Herbert Franklin is the Los Angeles MEPS Operations officer and was standing by when his son, Aaron Terrell Franklin enlisted in the California Army National Guard Jan. 19.

As one of four children, Private Franklin has seen both parents serve in the California Army National Guard for 20 years.

He shipped to Fort Sill, Okla., March 20, to begin training in military intelligence. Following that, he will move to the Defense Language Institute where he can study a language of his choice — his current choice is Japanese.

"My son Aaron is truly a gem and will be an incredible asset to the military," Franklin said. "I am very proud of him and will be conducting several other road marches and battle drills with him until he leaves for basic training."

Los Angeles MEPS commander, Lt. Col. Matthew McDivitt (right) poses for a photo with father and son, Capt. Herbert Franklin and Aaron Terrell Franklin, who recently joined both parents in the California National Guard.





## Louisiana Adjutant General swears in son

The Adjutant General for Louisiana, Brig. Gen. Glenn Curtis, swears in his son, Nicholas, Dec. 29 at Shreveport MEPS. His son will be a wheeled vehicle mechanic in the Louisiana National Guard. In conjunction with the enlistment, the Curtis family toured the military processing facility and received a presentation about the MEPS area of operations and mission. Curtis began serving as an enlisted member in the Louisiana National Guard in 1982. Today he is responsible for the deployment and coordination of programs, policies and plans affecting the more than 11,000 members of the Louisiana Army and Air National Guard. He was commissioned in 1984.

## Sioux Falls commander serves on Service Academy Advisory Panel

Sioux Falls MEPS Commander, Army Maj. Trisha Meyer served on South Dakota Senator Tim Johnson's Service Academy Advisory Panel Dec. 3.

The panel members assisted the senator in selecting candidates for the three service academies, including Air Force Academy, Naval Academy, and West Point. The senator's oldest son, Brooks, has served with the Army in Bosnia, Kosovo, South Korea, Afghanistan, and Iraq, and currently works with the Army National Guard.

Amy Bilka-Skilbred, staff assistant to the senator, contacted Meyer to ask her to be part of a five-person panel.

The five met at Johnson's Congressional Office. The four others were retired Army Lt. Col. Paula Johnson; retired Navy officer, John Kubal; Col. Larry Burris, South Dakota Air National Guard; and Randy Jencks, a Naval Academy graduate.

The panel members pre-screened files of 15 students applying for congressional nomination. During the interview sessions, which lasted 20 minutes per applicant, each panel

member asked questions from a wide range of topics. They covered subjects including integrity, stress management, community service, and physical fitness. At the conclusion of each individual interview, the panel members rated the applicant in 10 different categories, and write comments. At the conclusion of the interview day, all five panel members and Bilka-Skilbred ranked the applicants, and made notes related to their potential to succeed at the academies.

"I gained a much better perspective on the various service academies, the application process, and the one-week immersion experience students can attend at the service academies during the summer between their junior and senior years of high school," Meyer wrote.

She intends to incorporate this knowledge in her discussions with students, when she's invited to speak at high schools about her experiences and the officer opportunities available to them.

The Sioux Falls Veterans and Military Affairs Council, in coordination with the Sioux Falls Chamber Office,

will hold an Academy Dinner Dec. 22 to provide candidates and their families an opportunity to receive first-hand information from current and past cadets, midshipmen, and military officers. All applicants selected for nomination will be invited to attend this event.



Army Maj. Trisha Meyer, Sioux Falls MEPS commander.



Cleveland Browns players — Alex Mack (# 55), D'Qwell Jackson (# 52), Jordan Cameron (# 84) visit with National Guard liaison, Sgt. 1st Class Christopher Simon, and Marine Corps liaisons Master Sgt. Michael Booker and Gunnery Sgt. Clifford Allen.

## Cleveland Browns witness enlistment ceremony, congratulate new enlistees, greet staff, guests

Cleveland Brown players visited Cleveland MEPS and the offices of the USO of Northern Ohio Nov. 8, just a few days before Veterans' Day.

On a clear day, the players watched an oath of enlistment ceremony outdoors. Inside, they talked with staff

and applicants. They also handed out autographed team pennants.

Various media showed up to capture the event, including News Channel 5, MSNBC, Yahoo News and Firstpost.



1st Lt. Gino Georgetti conducting the shippers oath of enlistment ceremony.



Jordan Cameron (# 84) and Quinton Spears (# 90) sign autographs and hand out team pennants to applicants and family members.

# Liberians visit Lansing to learn about processing

## — War-torn country looks for guidance in building its military

By 1st Lt. Andrew Cremonte  
Assistant Operations Officer  
Lansing MEPS

The staff at Lansing MEPS had the opportunity to show three Liberian medical personnel how the United States performs military processing recently.

All three visitors are members of the armed forces of Liberia. The U.S. Africa Command is assisting the Liberians with building their military from the ground up. Capt. Ross Bettis, U.S. Army, is currently stationed at the U.S. Embassy in Monrovia, Liberia, escorted the visitors.

The former army in Liberia was decommissioned after a 14-year civil war from 1989 to 2003. The new army is only six years old. For the past five years, the American defense

contractor, Dynacorp, has conducted training for Liberia that is based on American military doctrine. Most of the AFL have attended U.S. Army schools, and use Army doctrine.

The three visitors included a physician, Capt. Joseph Kowo, a physician's assistant, Sgt. Kokolu Flomo, and a nurse, Sgt. Alfred Diggs. They were attending a one-week medical familiarization to give them the opportunity to learn from and interact with various factions of the Michigan National Guard's medical units. The AFL plans to conduct its first independent basic training and recruiting class this summer.



1st Lt. Andrew Cremonte explains the blood draw and HIV procedures to Sgt. Kokolu Flomo and Capt. Joseph Kowo.

Liberia faces an 85 percent unemployment rate. Thousands of people line up for a few spots in their military. Also, they face the challenge of finding a way to medically screen the huge number of Liberian natives who will apply for military service.

The visitors and their AFRICOM liaison arrived promptly at 5:30 a.m. March 3. After exchanging greetings, MEPS personnel gave the visitors a tour of the MEPS.

Within 15 minutes, applicants arrived on the bus and the Liberians watched as the staff checked them in at the front desk.

The visitors were curious about how the staff had the applicants' medical packets ready for them when they walked in the door. The staff explained that, when an applicant chooses to enlist in the military, they fill out a pre-screen form with the recruiter that is submitted to



Chad Reece, Medical Section lead, demonstrates a hand maneuver during the orthopedic exam to the Liberian guests (left to right) Sgt. Alfred Diggs, Capt. Joseph Kowo, Sgt. Kokolu Flomo.



Liberia is located in western Africa. The United Nations Mission in Liberia maintains a strong presence throughout the country, but the security situation is still fragile and the process of rebuilding its social and economic structure continues. (*Central Intelligence Agency maps*)

MEPS medical personnel who determine whether or not the applicants need to include additional medical documentation. All paperwork is placed into their packets and will be reviewed again by a medical practitioner during processing.

After the applicants were signed in and had walked to the medical area, the guests observed the front-loaded tasks, including vitals, hearing and vision tests. Next the Liberians witnessed the MEPS Commander's Welcome Brief and the medical brief.

Lansing MEPS medical technician Dale Wethy took the Liberians into the exam room to watch a demonstration of the orthopedic exam and a tour of the rest of the medical section.

They also met with the medical non-commissioned officer in charge, Sgt. 1st Class Brian Bradstreet and medical section lead, Chad Reece.

The Liberian physician, Kowo asked what the staff looks for to qualify or disqualify a person during the examination. He learned the MEPS uses Department of Defense Instruction 6130.03 as a guide.

Next the visitors listened to a briefing on how the MEPS functions as a whole. They also had a chance

to review the pre-screen form and DODI 6130.03 and the opportunity to ask questions.

Quiet and observant during most of the visit, this was the time they shared some of the challenges they are facing.

Because of the drawn-out civil war that has affected every village

in the country, almost every citizen has some degree of Post Traumatic Stress Disorder. Also, due to a lack of medical records, it is impossible to look at an applicant's medical history. They explained that the American screening process does not address some of the medical issues that are more prevalent in that part of the world.

The Liberians left the MEPS, taking with them many challenges in their future. After exchanging contact information with MEPS personnel, who wished them well, the Liberian visitors departed with a deeper understanding of the challenges before them.



From left to right, 1st Lt. Andrew Cremonte, Capt. Joseph Kowo, Sgt. Alfred Diggs, Sgt. Kokolu Flomo, 1st Sgt. George Hunter and Capt. Ross Bettis line up for a photo.

# Original Tuskegee Airman is guest speaker, swears in Air Force shippers in Kansas City

Retired Air Force Maj. Harvey A. Bayless conducted the oath of enlistment ceremony for several airmen and Marines shipping to basic training from the Kansas City MEPS Feb. 14.

This event honored the accomplishments and history of African-Americans who participated in air and ground crew operations in the Army Air Corps during World War II and undoubtedly made an impression that the new service members will not soon forget.



A reporter interviews retired Air Force Maj. Harvey A. Bayless at Kansas City MEPS.

Before administering the oath, Bayless recalled being a scared 19-year-old when he enlisted in May 1943, nearly 69 years ago.

After rising to the rank of technical sergeant, he earned a

battlefield commission in June 1945, in Bari, Italy, from Maj. Gen. Nathan F. Twining, commander of the 15th Air Force.

He noted that he was one of only four African-American World War II veterans in the entire Army Air Corps to receive a battlefield commission, and attributed that honor to the opportunity ultimately provided by an open-minded President Harry S. Truman, and to his desire to be the best airman possible.

Bayless is one of the original Tuskegee Airmen, having served in the U.S. Army Air Force as communications officer with the 96th and 523rd Air Service Groups that provided field services to the 332nd Fighter Group in the Italian Theater during World War II.

During the Korean War, he was recalled to active duty in the Air Force, where he served as a research and development officer, at Rome Air Development Center, Griffiss Air Force Base, N.Y., and staff communications-electronics officer with the Pacific Air Forces in Hawaii.

Bayless retired from the Air Force Reserve as a major in 1969, and was assigned to the retired reserve in 1984. After retiring from the Air Force, he worked in the Department of the Air Force as a civilian supervisory electronic engineer, and retired in 1979.

Bayless presently serves as historian for the Heart of America Chapter, Tuskegee Airmen, Inc., and resides in Overland Park, Kansas, with his wife, Mamie Bayless.



Newly enlisted airmen pose for a photo with retired Air Force Maj. Harvey Bayless, after he administered their oath of enlistment.

## Tuskegee Airmen

The title, “Tuskegee Airmen” refers to all who were involved in the “Tuskegee Experiment,” the Army Air Corps program to train African-Americans to fly and maintain combat aircraft. The Tuskegee Airmen included pilots, navigators, bombardiers, maintenance and support staff, instructors, and all the personnel who kept the planes in the air.

In spite of adversity and limited opportunities, African-Americans have played a significant role in U.S. military history over the past 300 years. They were denied military leadership roles and skilled training because many believed they lacked qualifications for combat duty.

Before 1940, African-Americans were barred from flying for the U.S. military. Civil rights

organizations and the black press exerted pressure that resulted in the formation of an all African-American pursuit squadron based in Tuskegee, Ala., in 1941. They became known as the Tuskegee Airmen.

The Tuskegee Institute was selected to train pilots because of its commitment to aeronautical training. Tuskegee had the facilities, and engineering and technical instructors, as well as a climate for year-round flying. The first Civilian Pilot Training Program students completed their instruction in May 1940. The Tuskegee program was then expanded and became the center for African-American aviation during World War II.

The Tuskegee Airmen overcame segregation and prejudice to become one of the most highly

respected fighter groups of World War II. They proved conclusively that African-Americans could fly and maintain sophisticated combat aircraft. The Tuskegee Airmen’s achievements, together with the men and women who supported them, paved the way for full integration of the U.S. military.

On Nov. 6, 1998, President Clinton approved Public Law 105-355, which established the Tuskegee Airmen National Historic Site at Moton Field in Tuskegee, Ala., to commemorate and interpret the heroic actions of the Tuskegee Airmen during World War II. The site contains a museum and interpretive programs at the historic complex at Moton Field as well as a national center based on a public-private partnership.



Retired Air Force Maj. Harvey Bayless poses for a picture with Kansas City MEPS military service members. From left to right: Sgt. 1st Class Gemma Simmons, Sgt. Sergio Velasquez, Maj. Robert Baker, retired Maj. Harvey Bayless, Master Sgt. Shawn Hall, Capt. Angel Hernandez, Staff Sgt. Aundrea Nixon, and Sgt. 1st Class Michael Catlin.

# Sailor, soldier, civilian

## — Arnie Gorospe's seen a lot in 45 years

By Christine Parker  
Messenger Editor

After spending 45 years associated with the military, working in personnel, recruiting, processing, retention, Arnie Gorospe says he's "been there, done that ... and enjoyed it."

He's the type of guy who won't try to impress you with big words. He'll tell you the way he sees things — tactfully — yet simply and straightforwardly.

After growing up in Detroit, Gorospe enlisted in the Navy in 1962 and attended boot camp at Recruit Training Command Great Lakes. He retired — at Great Lakes — on March 1.

Following basic training, Gorospe served as a personnelman for about two years on the minesweeper USS

Pinnacle, out of Charleston, S.C., and the destroyer USS Twining, out of Treasure Island, Calif. In 1966 he transferred back to the Midwest to work as a personnelman at Navy Recruiting District Chicago. In September 1968 the Navy reassigned him to work as a guidance counselor at the Armed Forces Examining and Entrance Station Chicago (AFEES was the name for MEPS before 1982).

At that time, the Chicago AFEES was located downtown, in a General Services Administration contract building at 615 W. Van Buren Street. The late 1960s — especially in Chicago — were wrought with strife and protest, some of it aimed at the government and military. Chicago was the site of violent protests at the 1968 Democratic Convention.

"That was the height of the Vietnam War," Gorospe said. And the



Petty Officer 2nd Class Arnie Gorospe (1968)



Gorospe was part of Recruit Training Company A31, that posed for this photo 50 years ago, on April 20, 1962, at Recruit Training Center Great Lakes. U.S. Navy Photo

draft was in full swing. "I personally interviewed and processed 75 to 100 young people a day at the Chicago AFEES. I never got a chance to ask why they wanted to join the Navy, because we didn't have time."

The AFEES didn't have automation either. "Everything was strictly pencil, paper, manual typewriters, and we had time lines to go by, because we had to get these young men and women to their basic training sites."

In those days, they arrived for work at about 5:30 in the morning. "It was non-stop all day long. And, of course, you had the hippies and the yippies ... you know, the political upheaval at the time. They were protesting war in Vietnam and the 1968 Democratic Convention. Chicago was a battleground — there were all kinds of things going on."





USS Twining

There were protestors outside the GSA building, so the services required Gorospe and fellow military personnel to wear civilian clothes to work. "You didn't want to walk to work through that maze of people [wearing a uniform]. So, if you went to work looking like everybody else, they wouldn't mess with you." Still, the protestors shouted at them.

"We were told to control ourselves ... conduct ourselves," Gorospe said. "We were told to act like we were applicants going into AFEES." Once inside, they had lockers at which they changed into military uniforms.

Although he was about the same age as many of the protestors, Gorospe said he didn't understand their views. He was brought up differently. "You went to school, you said the pledge of allegiance, you bought war bonds. You put the red and green stamps in a book, filled up the book and gave it back to your teacher," he said. "That would buy you a \$25 dollar war bond. That was a patriotic thing to do at the time."

So he was horrified the first time he saw someone burn the American flag. "I couldn't understand. What are these people protesting? What are they doing? There were certain things we were raised — in our home — to do. I often wondered, do these people have a home? Were they raised just to cause a ruckus? I could

never figure it out."

Certainly, Gorospe wasn't raised to cause a ruckus. And, he was part of a military family. His father served in the Navy Reserve, his brother, the Army, another brother, the Navy, and his sister, the Army.

"My father was a chef for Admiral Broadhead on the Great Lakes," Gorospe said.

"He was Filipino and he was an excellent cook. Gorospe said his father prepared all the holiday meals for the family. "Until the day he died, he was an excellent cook."

While Gorospe was in high school, his oldest brother, George, a soldier, was surveying the desert in Libya. Since it was hot at mid-day, they would go swimming in the Mediterranean. Although George had been a diver on his high school swim team, one day he was diving off a buoy and misjudged the waves. He hit his chin on a sandbar and broke his neck. They air-lifted him to the hospital in Wiesbaden, Germany, and from there to Walter Reed, where he wore a neck brace for about eight months. Following that he was discharged due to the disability.

Their brother, Tom, spent two years aboard a cruiser, the USS Macon and their sister, Tina was stationed at Fitzsimons Army Hospital for three years.

Following his assignment at AFEES, Gorospe left the Navy in October 1969 and began selling life insurance. "I was doing a lot of Servicemen's Group Life Insurance conversions — to commercial policies." But he missed military life. "I guess after so many years you get the military in your blood and you miss the camaraderie — which I did — so I went back into the Naval Reserve in August 1970." He found

a commonality. "It's just enjoyable talking to military people."

He worked for various Navy Reserve surface units as a retention NCO for about four years, while still selling insurance. But he didn't really like the insurance business. "It wasn't me." So, he applied for an Army Reserve supply technician position. He got it and transferred from the Navy Reserve to the Army Reserve, as required by the position.

Later he became an Army Reserve recruiting specialist, earned a Gold Recruiting Badge in two years, three star sapphires, and a commanding general's trophy for recruiting excellence. He retired as an Army master sergeant in 1994.

In 1980 he was hired as an administration officer for the director of engineering and housing at Fort Sheridan, Ill. Following that he worked as a project manager for US-AREC's recruit military occupational specialty reservation system, and later, on the Navy Recruiting District's automated reporting system at Great Lakes.

In 1987 he began working for USMEPCOM Information Management, known today as Information Technology and, more recently, J6. He is the information assurance manager for the directorate. Gorospe worked for 10 USMEPCOM commanders.

"It's time to go," he said. "I turned 70 Thanksgiving Day. I want to do things — travel — there's another world out there."

The good thing about retirement is that you don't need to have specific plans — so Gorospe doesn't. He's active in his church and has been part of a Christian fellowship softball league for 26 years. He volunteers at a local homeless shelter once a month and has done hospital ministry. Upon retirement, he plans to stay in the area, continue caring for his two Labrador retrievers, visit family on the holidays, continue to vacation in Florida, and do volunteer work, possibly at a cardiac rehab center.

This is because, during a routine physical in 2005, his physician suggested he take a stress test, followed

*Continued on page 18*

up by a cardiologist visit, nuclear testing, and an angiogram. They found three partial blockages and scheduled surgery. On July 14, 2005, Gorospe quit smoking. Five days later, he underwent bypass surgery. When he woke up afterwards, he learned they had done six bypasses. Then his doctor told him that, if they hadn't taken care of it, he may not have lived.

He quit, cold turkey, and hasn't smoked since. "I found out I wasn't addicted to nicotine," Gorospe said. "I don't miss it," he added. "I'll walk through a line of smokers and it doesn't bother me."

He said he can smell his food now, the fresh air, and he doesn't get as many colds. "It has its good points," he said. "I'm a fanatic now about working out, watching my diet, tak-

ing my medication. That's the key. Don't get in the situation I was in."

And Gorospe has been around long enough to offer advice. Although much has changed in the past 45 years, much has remained the same. The interview brought to light similarities between the 1960s and today — job market woes, protests, war and patriotism. He's learned that life — and work — is cyclical.

And, throughout that cycle, he's enjoyed people. "I guess recruiting, retention, processing — people work — is who I am. Where I was, where I've been — I was a people person — and you learn so much about them, you end up being a better person yourself.

"I don't think I've ever met anybody who wasn't in my life for something. Normally I like to be with

people because I can learn something that day," he said.



Arnie Gorospe. Photo by Art Heintz

## Photographer sees military processing change through a lens

By Christine Parker  
Messenger Editor

He's USMEPCOM's man behind the camera, and he's captured so much.

One day in early December, Art Heintz was watching a Chicago news broadcast when he caught a glimpse of a familiar site — the building at 400 S. Jefferson that once housed the Chicago Armed Forces Examining and Entrance Station [predecessor to Chicago MEPS].

In 1956, Heintz said he received a letter from the President of the United States that read, "Greetings ... " and ordered him to report for induction at that AFEES. He did.

The building was "massive, with very little privacy, almost like a warehouse," Heintz said. And they did exams in groups.

What was next? "They marched us to Union Station, put us on a train, and we woke up at Fort Leonard Wood [Mo.]" After basic training, Heintz served in the Army until 1958.

Just after Chicago's blizzard of 1967, the largest single snowfall in the city's history, Heintz started working for the federal government



At USMEPCOM's recent National Training Conference, Art Heintz literally positions himself in a bed of rose bushes, in order to take the outdoor group photos. Photo by Sabrina Smith

as a photographer at the Naval Ordnance Station in Forest Park, Ill. There he took photos of the torpedoes they built, for their plant newspaper and related manuals.

The torpedoes were for Navy ships. He said he even took some secret clearance photos during the Vietnam War. The Naval Ordnance Station location is now the site of a shopping center that houses a gun turret display.

In 1969, Heintz took a job at the Chicago Corps of Engineers, where he worked for 20 years. He took another position at USMEPCOM in 1989, and is still the command photographer. In addition to being the only photographer for the command, Heintz is "master of the Mac universe" in the Public Affairs Office.

And, back to the original point ... the building that originally housed the Chicago AFEES was highlighted on the Dec. 8 news, because Sara Lee announced the corporation would remodel the 400 S. Jefferson St. location and it will become its new headquarters. Sara Lee's suburban-based business split recently, between a new international coffee and tea business, and a retail meats business. The North American meats business will move from the suburbs to same location that once processed military inductees.

# Extraordinary circumstances seem to be common occurrence for new lieutenant

By Christine Parker  
Messenger Editor

Steven Mudroch II attended a lecture at the Medical College of Wisconsin, in Milwaukee recently, a typical activity for a first-year medical student. Possibly slightly more unusual for a newly commissioned Air Force officer. What was extraordinary was that the physician who presented the lecture was the same one who delivered Mudroch 23 years prior, when he was born weighing less than three pounds.

In 1988, Mudroch's parents were traveling from Guam to Milwaukee to visit family, before they continued on to San Antonio. They were on their way to his father's next duty station at Randolph Air Force Base.

While in Milwaukee, still in her second trimester, Kathy Mudroch was having unusual medical symptoms, so she went to the hospital. There, her son was born 12-weeks premature.

Six weeks later, he weighed only six pounds, so the Air Force transported mother and baby, via medevac, to Wilford Hall Medical Center at Lackland Air Force Base. Mudroch spent another six weeks in that facility.

Surprisingly, this unusual circumstance wasn't the reason he chose to study medicine. He hasn't moved around like the typical military child, either. He's lived in only two locations — San Antonio, until he was four, and spent the rest of his childhood living in Bristol, Wis.

His father's career has been unusual, as well. After San Antonio, he worked at USMEPCOM Headquarters from 1992 to 2002. He served one more assignment at the Air Force Personnel Center at Randolph, but



**Lt. Col. William Dones is the commissioning officer for Steven Mudroch II, at USMEPCOM Headquarters, Dec. 29. Photo by Diana Nicholas-Addy**

left his family in Wisconsin, since his two children were attending high school.

His father retired as a master sergeant in 2004, returning to USMEPCOM Headquarters in October 2005 as a contracted project manager in the Test Score Control Office. In 2009, as a civilian, he joined the J-6/Information Technology Directorate Quality Assurance Branch, then working for J-3/Operations Direc-

torate Accessions Division and recently returning to J-6 Plans and Resources.

While working in the Test Score Control Office, his office was adjacent to the Lt. Col. William Dones' office, when Dones was the USMEPCOM National Guard liaison. When Dones returned to the command recently, assigned as the Western Sector deputy commander/executive officer, Steven Mudroch knew he'd be the right commissioning officer for his son.

"He epitomizes characteristics I value — commitment to success, team building, development of the individual — and has great interpersonal relationship skills," the father said. Also, he said he helped guide his son toward an Air Force career, because of the service's emphasis on family.

Mudroch graduated from the Prairie School, Racine, Wis., in 2006, and from the University of Chicago, as a biochemistry major, in 2010.

He's been accepted into the Air Force Health Professional Scholarship Program, and he commissioned as a second lieutenant Dec. 29.

When he completes his fourth year of medical school, the Air Force has the first claim on his residency. If they do not place him, he can complete his residency elsewhere.

Following residency, he will repay the Air Force one year of active duty for every year they funded his medical school.

But, before all that, Mudroch will attend Commissioned Officer Training at Maxwell Air Force Base in Alabama this summer. He would like to eventually work in geriatric medicine.

# Injured Iraq veteran settles into second career at headquarters

Story and photos by Skip Wiseman  
*Messenger Associate Editor*

The first Wounded Warrior to join the USMEPCOM Headquarters staff has no regrets about his military service despite losing his right arm.

Nate Lindsey is an information technology specialist with the Network Support Branch, Information Technology Directorate (J-6).

He lost his right arm below the elbow to a roadside bomb in Iraq Aug. 12, 2007, while serving on convoy duty in Iraq. He was the only one seriously injured in the explosion. The others injured suffered concussions.



Nate Lindsey makes an adjustment in an equipment rack.

“It was a bad night, but I got lucky,” he said. “Luckily, I still have my elbow. I just lost my hand, wrist and forearm. It was pretty clear. I didn’t have a hand. I had like one pinkie that was holding on by a piece of skin. I remember because I put on my tourniquet, so I remember what I had.”

Lindsey joined the Army Reserve in 2003 even though there was no family history of military service.

He said watching the Twin Towers collapse in New York as a result of the Sept. 11, 2001, attacks angered him and was the main reason he joined the military.

“No one in my family has ever been in the military, as far as extended family or anything, so I was kind of the first one. My dad had five brothers and a sister. Nobody ever wanted to (enlist) and I wanted to kind of do something different.

“I didn’t know what I was getting myself into,” Lindsey said. “I didn’t know I was going to be shooting and getting shot at in the next couple of years, but it was something I wanted to do.”

His first Military Occupational Specialty was 92F, Petroleum Supply Specialist. “I didn’t do anything except go to Panama and refuel helicopters and earth movers for the humanitarian mission down there.” he said.

He later cross trained to become a motor transport operator. “That’s when I got deployed both times. We did convoy security, mostly.”

After his injury, Lindsey was medevaced to Germany and then on to Andrews Air Force Base, Md. The Army sent him to Georgia for rehabilitation.

His wife, Courtney, moved to Georgia to be near him. They met in middle school and dated, but broke up in high school. They reconnected when he was home on leave shortly before he was wounded.

“I don’t know what I’d do without her,” Lindsey said. “She’s amazing. I mean anywhere from buttoning my shirt to tying my shoes, she’s there. It’s amazing.”

Lindsey said he realized during rehabilitation that he had to make plans for the rest of his life.

“I’m never going to get my hand back,” he said. As soon as I realized that, I realized I can either mope around or do something. A lot of guys got their arm or leg or something blown off. Then they go straight onto Social Security and they don’t work anymore. That’s not what I wanted to do.”

Even while he was still in rehabilitation, Lindsey found a way to give back.

“I did a couple of speeches to raise money for Fisher House, because my mom got to stay at Fisher House for a couple of nights,” he said. “That was awesome. She could walk right across the street and see me. I tried to help out. I knew one of the higher-up people in the Wounded Warrior Program in Georgia, and she was the one who wanted me to do the little things. It was a pretty good gig.”

He was medically retired from the Army in May 2008 and soon realized that his retired pay wasn’t enough to make ends meet.

“I got a job right out of the Army. It was a 60-mile-a-day rural paper



**Nate Lindsey sorts through components for the headquarters computer network.**

route.” Lindsey said. “Also I was working another job at the same time as a truck gate guy — a security guard — at Proctor and Gamble in South Augusta, Ga. I had to sell my truck. I sold our RV and I sold a couple of other things because we just couldn’t afford them.”

He was on his fifth job since leaving the Army when the Veterans Affairs Seamless Transition Center in the Charlie Norwood VA Medical Center, Augusta, Ga., said there was an immediate opening for a Wounded Warrior.

“They helped me write my resume, but mostly they’re the people employers call if they’re looking to hire a veteran,” Lindsey said.

A contractor for Army Communications-Electronics Command hired him to teach soldiers at Fort Huachuca, Ariz.

“They put me through remedial training where I sat through this class every week for like 90 days,” Lindsey said. “Eventually I could teach it. My boss’ wife worked for the VA. I think that’s how they got my name. I’m not sure, because I was in the system looking for an actual job. I was making about \$8 an hour before that. The only reason I got the job, honestly, is because I got hurt.

“After 90 days, I started teaching basic IT networking and Cisco routing, which is the name of the class,” he said. “From there, I branched out and started teaching advanced routing. Then I started teaching Network+, Security+ A+, B+.”

After three years with Communications-Electronics Command, the chance to move closer to family arose with a job opening at USMEPCOM Headquarters.

“All our family is here,” Lindsey said. “I had been on Civilian Personnel Online because they weren’t going to be able to give me a government job in CECOM unless I stayed for like five more years. So, I put my resume on CPOL. That’s when I saw the job up here. They accepted my resume and I got the GS job.”

He was right handed before being injured, but he is adapting. Not much seems to bother him. He is not the kind of man to dwell on what might have been. One small thing that does upset him is some people’s reaction when they see a young man with a prosthesis.

“Since I’ve gotten hurt, the only thing that really agitates me is when you can tell people are looking at you,” he said. “I don’t want to say it’s rude, because it’s not something you see every day. I’d be much happier if somebody asked me what happened than if they were staring at me. I look at them and see they’re staring at me, and then they look away and don’t say anything.

“I play on a softball team called the Wounded Warrior Amputee Softball Team. It’s awesome,” Lindsey said. “Most of them are leg guys. About three others are arm guys. They all kind of feel the same way. You know, if you see something and you want to know about it, ask. Don’t worry about it, because most of us are fine with it.”



**Nate Lindsey inputs network data.**



Staff Sgt. Michael Morin (left) and Sgt. Jason Kwoka pose for a photo with Alex White (center). The two from Marine Air Control Group 48 visited the White family last Christmas to bring a special message to Alex. The fourth grader's wish was refreshingly altruistic.

## One soldier's speech and two Marines contribute to granting 9-year-old's wish

By Christine Parker  
*Messenger* Editor

USMEPCOM leaders at all levels “tell the Department of Defense story” throughout the year through public speaking engagements. These community contacts may have far from predictable consequences.

Eastern Sector Commander, Col. Todd Garlick served as guest speaker for the second time in as many years at a local Veteran's Day Ceremony Nov. 11.

The event took place in Lake Bluff, Ill., a village of about 6,000 people that's sandwiched between Great Lakes Navy Base to the north and Lake Forest, Ill., to the south. Both Lake Bluff and Lake Forest, a city of about 20,000, are at the northern end of a strip of communities along Lake Michigan, on Chicago's North Shore.

The American Legion Lake Bluff Post 510 hosted the event at the Gazebo of the Lake Bluff Village Green. State Representative Karen May, State Senator Susan Garrett, and Lake Bluff Post 510 Commander, David Cimarrusti joined Garlick in placing a wreath at the village's war memorial. On that crisp fall day, with damp, fallen leaves peppering the lawn, the setting was idyllic small-town America.

But this story isn't really about the ceremony. It's more about what happened later, because of Garlick's speech. And it's about a 9-year-old boy's Christmas wish.

On Dec. 13, Peter White visited USMEPCOM Headquarters and followed-up with an e-mail to Garlick. White attended the November ceremony and paid attention to Garlick's words.

He began his e-mail to Garlick with the colonel's own words, “BE BOLD. BE BRIEF. BE GONE.” In caps. Then White wrote, “Please indulge me to do the same.

“I come to you because of your finely crafted speech that day, my feeling that you are the type of man that will help where he can, and the fact that you are the only person I know in the active military.”

White explained that he lived in Lake Bluff with his wife, 13-year-old daughter, and 9-year-old son, Alex, who was — coincidentally — born on the 58th anniversary of D-Day, in Paris. Neither White nor his wife served in the military, but his father was in the Battle of Leyte Gulf in the Philippines, just a few months after D-Day. White's father was discharged from Naval Station Great Lakes.

Then White began to tell his story. In early December, he and his wife asked their children what they wanted from Santa.

“Our daughter replied casually with a list that had been methodically rehearsed for the occasion and Alex responded spontaneously that he really didn’t know. This was all the more surprising, because as a fourth grader, he still believes deeply in Santa Claus.”

The parents let time pass and then brought up the subject to Alex again, “with a little more prodding,” this time. Alex said he really didn’t want anything in particular, except maybe a water purifying straw — something his father said he must have seen in *Boys Life*. The straw would allow Alex to “drink water safely from Lake Michigan.”

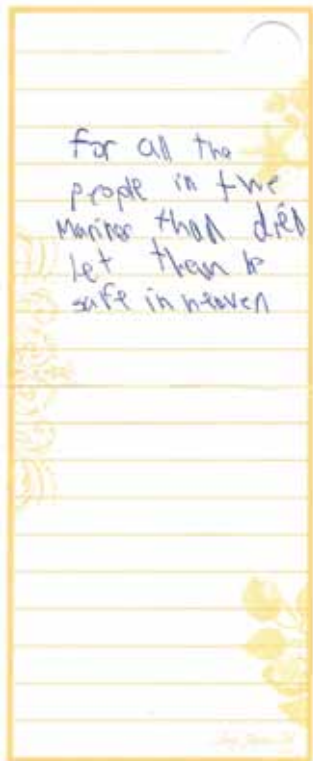
Within a few days, as Christmas drew near and Alex’s parents grew more anxious, their son informed his father he decided what he wanted.

Although happy to hear this, White wrote, “my frustration mounted when he told me he was too embarrassed to tell me.

“I let this pass for a time and at dinner a couple days later we suggested, if he was still too embarrassed to tell us, perhaps he might write his request down on a piece of paper and give the note to us.”

That evening, Alex did just that. He dropped his list on the table and ran to his room. In his “wildest guesses,” White said he never would have anticipated what he was about to read.

Alex’s wish for Christmas from Santa consisted of the following few words: “for all the people in the Marines that died let them be safe in heaven” [a copy of the note is below].



White said he got choked up — quickly. “I don’t know if it was better if he had seen my reaction or not, but in the end he didn’t,” he wrote.

His dilemma then became how to help Santa meet his son’s wish. “Eternal peace for those that have served our country so valiantly. Obviously, this is no simple task,” he wrote.

White devised a plan that involved his family extending an invitation for Christmas dinner to two Marines who couldn’t travel to their homes for Christmas. At the White’s home, they could pass along — to Alex — Santa’s assurance of the Marines’ safety in heaven and then join the family for dinner.

“I decided I had no choice but be bold in executing the plan and reach out to you and your staff for help,” White explained. So on Dec. 13, White visited Eastern Sector’s Headquarters in North Chicago, Ill., and spoke to Linda Hoover, Eastern Sector command secretary, who directed him to speak with the USMEPCOM Public Affairs Officer, Gaylan Johnson.

White showed Alex’s note to Johnson, who then made several phone calls and committed to doing what he could. There is only one Marine assigned to USMEPCOM Headquarters, and he would be gone for the holidays. So, Johnson sent an e-mail to a local Marine Corps recruiting office, requesting their help. And, Garlick called Marine Air Control Group 48, located down the street from USMEPCOM Headquarters.

In his e-mail, White wrote, “I’m afraid, reading back, I haven’t been brief, for which I apologize, but anything that you might be able to do under your sphere of influence to make Alex’s humble and pure-hearted Christmas wish come true would be deeply appreciated.”

Well, it worked out. The commanding officer of MACG 48, Col. Michael Ouzts made it possible for two Marines, Staff Sgt. Michael Morin and Sgt. Jason Kwoka to visit the White family and pass along Santa’s message to Alex.



Gifts surround the ‘Star Tree’ at USMEPCOM Headquarters. Participants chose a star with a child’s name, and provided gifts, based on suggestions on the star. This year, Debra Nicolazzi, Shari Reilson and Jamie Theys, who work in the HQ Support Branch of Resource Management, coordinated the event. The program provided gifts for 75 children through One Hope United, a private, nonprofit human service organization dedicated to protecting children and strengthening families. *Photo by Art Heintz*

# Lansing gives food, toys, receives much more

By 1st Sgt. George Hunter  
Senior Enlisted Advisor, Lansing MEPS

Since Shawn Hoskins began working at Lansing MEPS a few months ago, he expressed a strong interest in helping others in the community. During the holiday season, Hoskins teamed up with Marine Corps Sgt. Jason Schowalter to put their words into action.

The two spearheaded a Thanksgiving food drive and another food and toy drive in December. Both drives were for The City Rescue Mission of Lansing, a 100-year-old mission that helps meet the needs of people in the state capital area.

The mission provides food, shelter and clothing to those who are homeless or low income, and relies solely on gifts from individuals, churches and organizations. So the staff of Lansing MEPS stepped up to become one of those organizations.

Their efforts afforded several families the opportunity to enjoy nutritious meals during the holidays and provided gifts for children. After the first drive, donations nearly tripled and the station donated more than 500 food items and more than 50 toys, including several bicycles.

Hoskins, who is a transportation clerk at the MEPS, has been in the Navy Reserve for seven years and was on active duty in what he calls “the world’s greatest Navy” for 10 years. He’s originally from Toledo, Ohio, and has lived in the Lansing area for three years.

He said the main reason he got involved was because he was raised and taught to help the less fortunate. “If I have it to give, I give it ... it’s my duty, will and desire to help. If I were in that position, I would hope that I could seek help.” Hoskins said.

“I felt proud knowing that I was doing good in my community, helping my fellow man and bringing joy and happiness to someone, especially children. They’re innocent and don’t really understand. I remember the excitement and joy I used to feel as a kid on Christ-



Sgt. Jason Schowalter, processing NCO, and Shawn Hoskins, transportation clerk, pose with the items Lansing MEPS donated to a local mission.

mas morning. I want every kid to feel the same way,” Hoskins said.

Schowalter, a processing NCO at Lansing MEPS, has served in the Marine Corps for almost five years. Before that, he was the administration chief for the Infantry Officer Course at The Basic School in Quantico, Va. He’s originally from Flint, Mich.

“Helping others in time of need and during the holidays is a Marine Corps tradition that goes back over 200 years,” Schowalter said. “I just wanted to make my imprint like many others before me and show the community that we do care.

Schowalter said he couldn’t explain the feeling he had when he, along with Hoskins and 1st Lt. Andrew Cremonte, dropped off the toys. “Knowing that, on Christmas morning, children of all ages will be able to open presents is an amazing feeling,” he said.

“The look on the faces of the workers at the mission was priceless. That definitely is the reward for all the work — knowing we did something not just for ourselves, but others,” Schowalter said. He added that it was especially rewarding to help others — anonymously.

The efforts of these men and the entire MEPS staff in building relationships with their local community represent the “A” for ambassadorship in the Eastern Sector F.L.A.G. Program [Family, Leadership, Ambassadorship, Growth].



# Team Jacksonville impacts the community

By Capt. Gregory and 1st Sgt. Alan Cline  
Jacksonville MEPS

For the third year, “Team Jacksonville” has helped feed local families.

In 2009, Jacksonville MEPS’ Willie Fleming and Wendell Scott first met with guidance counselors at Englewood Elementary School, who identified 10 local families in need of a Thanksgiving meal. Fleming and Scott immediately took action, orchestrating a drive to raise enough funds to deliver an entire holiday meal to all 10 families.

In 2010, they delivered 15 full meals, and four additional turkeys.

This year, with continuing economic hardship, 73 families at the school needed a Thanksgiving meal. Five of the children were homeless. Without hesitation, Fleming and Scott signed on to feed 20 families, because they knew they could count on the MEPS family to help. They raised more than \$1,200 dollars.

Then they went shopping and created Thanksgiving meal baskets that included a turkey, potatoes, stuffing, yams, corn, gravy, dinner rolls, and much more. Each basket cost \$45, so they were able to feed 23 families.

Team Jacksonville didn’t stop there. They purchased and brought in clothes to help the five children who were homeless.

Team Jacksonville continuously devotes time and resources to helping the community. They work at a soup kitchen, participate in numerous cancer awareness events, donate school supplies for children at the beginning of the school year, and support “Toys for Tots.”

Fleming is a champion at work and away. As the MEPS lead human resources technician and subject matter expert on processing issues, he is consistently sought out by liaisons and MEPS staff for any questions about applicant processing. He is also a model for outstanding customer service and practices Red Carpet Treatment in all of his interactions. In fact, an applicant’s mother returned to the MEPS to deliver cookies to him for going above and beyond to help her son. He settles for nothing less than to make customers satisfied with their experience at the MEPS.

Outside of work, Fleming is a true ambassador for the MEPS. In addition to supporting various charities, he recently spent more than 120 hours coaching a local youth football team, where he provided much more than instructions on how to tackle and score a touchdown. He provided young men a positive role model to follow and consistently highlighted the importance of doing well in school.

Fleming received the Eastern Sector F.L.A.G. Award, as the person who best exemplifies Eastern Sector values of *Family, Leadership, Ambassadorship, and Growth*. He embraces and lives the motto of the *F.L.A.G.*, and continues to lead this charge for Team Jacksonville.

He has created a family atmosphere at the MEPS, and encourages everyone to get involved, including service liaisons and friends. Because of this ability to lead, he recently was selected to serve as the MEPS readiness support group president.

Team Jacksonville and Willie Fleming show that one person — or one MEPS — can change people’s lives.



Jacksonville MEPS staff (kneeling, left to right) Chief Petty Officer Laknesha Cooperwood, Roberto Hernandez, Capt. Gregory, (standing, left to right) Cmdr. Karen Sray, 1st Sgt. Alan Cline, Wendell Scott, Sgt. 1st Class Serina Marler, Willie Fleming, Capt. Tara Maddox, Ernest Dawson, Donald Rocker.

2nd  
Battalion

## Boston MEPS



Lt. Cmdr. Richard Schmitt

**Hometown:** Corvallis, Ore. “It’s a small college town of about 60,000 people. My alma mater, Oregon State University is there.”

**Fond childhood memories:** “I have family in Montana. My dad’s family has a ranch. My own personal memories of that area is being able to explore outdoor activities, nature stuff, going camping. A little different than the metropolitan life style I’ve had since I joined the Navy.”

**What was your favorite toy when you were a kid?** “Legos. You can kind of be imaginative you get to create something new each time. It satisfies curiosity and shows you how to make things.”

**Education:** Bachelor of science degree in business management from Oregon State, master of business administration from the University of North Florida.

**Why did you join the Navy?** “My dad was in the Navy. A lot of it was probably his experiences, seeing pictures of him in Greece. The heritage part played a little bit of a role. I just liked what the Navy does, being at sea. I liked the adventurous part of it.” His father was a data processor who served 3 1/2 years and served two deployments to the Mediterranean. “He saw a lot of activity in a short amount of time.”

**First impressions of the MEPS and command:** “I’m very impressed. We got a great team of people who are dedicated to the mission. I felt very welcome here. I came here from recruiting where its 99 percent military. Here it’s the other way around. There haven’t been any issues out of the ordinary. That’s a good thing.”

**The other side of the fence:** His previous assignment was with the Seattle Navy Recruiting District, where he served as the enlisted programs officer and then operations officer. “It certainly shortens the learning curve, especially for Navy folks. Having a background in recruiting makes me more effective quicker in dealing with the recruiting services. It helps me build relationships with the recruiting services. I understand what their problems are and it helps them to expeditiously process applicants.”

**Favorite assignment:** “Even though it was the hardest, it was aboard the USS Detroit as communications officer. It’s such a vivid memory since it was right after 9/11. It was ported in Leonardo, N.J. It has to do with the people I met there; they were really outstanding. We deployed right after 9/11 and were off the coast of Pakistan for six months.”

**Remembering 9/11:** “I was in my CMS vault. I was the cryptographic custodian. We went to security alert right after the second tower was hit and got underway. It takes a lot of time for a boiler to get up to steam. We got underway that evening. It was kind of eerie because you could see the towers over the horizon, but not much else. My leading petty officer came down and notified me. It was a pretty isolated pier; about two miles long. We were pretty much secure so it was just pretty much get the ship ready to deploy.”

**Future military career plans:** “I plan to stay in, I made it a career. I’ll stay until they ask me to leave. I like joint environments. I deployed to Afghanistan a few years back, so I got to work with the Air Force and Guard units. I like the jobs where you get to learn about the other

services and what they do. I like having the experience of learning new things. I also like leadership opportunities. To be an O-4 and be in command is pretty cool. I’d like to have more leadership opportunities.”

**What do you want to be when you grow up?** “I still have a lot of time to figure that out. I always saw myself doing something to give back like teaching or something like that.”

**What do you do when you’re not a commander?** “We just moved to the area, so we’re still exploring Boston. We try to treat each duty station as a new place to explore and immerse ourselves in the culture.”

**What’s your leadership style?** “I like for people to work through an issue. I like to be able to facilitate them to get to a desired end state. I think for the development of new professionals, the 100 percent answer is ideal, but sometimes 90 percent can be great. I want people to feel like they can take actions, and if they need minor course corrections from the skipper, that’s what I’m here for.”

**What do you like best about your job?** “I truly love the interaction with the staff. Getting out there and doing swear in ceremonies and seeing the excitement on an applicant’s face. It kind of keeps me young in that regard because I was them 12 years ago. You develop an emotional bond very quickly with them because their future is wide open. It’s a great thing to be a part of that.”

**What do you order when you eat out?** “Boston has the north end. The Italian food is amazing. It’s good to be back in a place that has authentic Italian food. There wasn’t much of that in Seattle.”

**What’s your guilty pleasure?** “When we go out to eat, we splurge. We don’t splurge much on a day-to-day basis. Also, when we travel we like to make the best of it.”

**What is your least favorite sport?** “Synchronized swimming comes to mind now that Olympics are coming around.”

**Tell me something people would be surprised to know about you.** “I play racquetball. I’m kind of a laid back person, but I’m pretty aggressive on the racquetball court.”

**What is your favorite all-time movie?** “Monte Python and the Holy Grail. Pure comedy genius.”

**It’s 2 o’clock Sunday afternoon. What are you doing?** “If it’s football season, I’m probably watching the Giants. During the summertime, we’re probably out exploring the area, absorbing the culture.”

**What are you reading now?** “I’m currently enrolled in the Joint Professional Military Education series. I’m working through those books.”

**What’s your ideal vacation?** “My wife and I have been to Italy several times together. Even though we’ve been to Rome three times, I would go back again. I could sit at a cafe and drink cappuccino and watch people all day long.”

7<sup>th</sup>  
Battalion

## San Diego MEPS



**Cmdr. James Walsh**

**Hometown:** Sioux City, Iowa. “It’s a great place to grow up and have a good education. You’ve got Dell computers. That’s where they started out. There’s Sue Bee Honey and Jolly Time Popcorn. They’re two of the biggest providers in the industry.”

**Fond childhood memories:** “Water skiing at Lake Okaboji. Going to

World of Fun in Kansas City. What kid doesn’t like an amusement park? On a day-to-day basis, I spent my youth outside shooting BB guns and throwing dirt clods at my little brother. We were only 18 months apart.”

**What was your favorite toy when you were a kid?** “A Cox Airplane that was on the end of string. I used to fly it down at the school. That and my Schwinn Scrambler. It was a dirt bike, a trick bike.”

**Education:** Bachelor of science degree in aviation operations from Jacksonville University, Jacksonville, Fla.; master of business administration degree, also from Jacksonville University.

**Why did you join the Navy?** “I went Navy because in my junior year of high school I was introduced to scuba diving. I took my certification my senior year. The whole reason I did that was to go to Navy Dive School. I enlisted at the Sioux Falls MEPS.” He served six years enlisted time as an electrician’s mate/Navy diver.

**Previous assignment:** Navy Recruiting Command Headquarters, Millington, Tenn., as naval special operations program manager. He was also senior watch officer for Capt. Eric Johnson, then Navy Recruiting Command chief of staff and now USMEPCOM commander.

**Favorite assignment:** SEAL Delivery Vehicle Team 1. “We performed Submarine lockin-lockout operations, operating submarine systems to launch SEALs and special warfare units covertly under water.”

**Future military career plans:** “To continue my career in the Navy and have a major command.”

**What do you want to be when you grow up?** “That’s easy. I want to be a commercial pilot.” He is a commercial pilot with about 600 flight hours and is working on his certificate flight instructor rating.

**What do you do when you’re not a commander?** “Lots of scuba diving. Surfing. Hanging out with my two

daughters, 18 and 20. We hang out, go diving, and play paintball.”

**What’s your leadership style?** “Collaborative. Teamwork.”

**First impressions of USMEPCOM:** “I’m actually impressed with the Army. I never worked with their systems, forms, evaluation system and the way they do things. It’s pretty efficient. Also, the folks here at MEPS San Diego. My executive officer, my secretary, my mission specialist, I couldn’t do it without them.”

**What do you like best about your job?** “The people. The staff. I love them to death. The liaisons. They’re all hard-working good people.”

**Being a battalion commander:** “It’s great. I came in on the ground floor with standing the battalions up. I love it because of the diversity and the fact that we’re in a phase of being more and more like a battalion.”

**What do you order when you eat out?** “Pizza and burgers. Who doesn’t like Chick Fil-A and McDonald’s?”

**What’s the best present you ever got?** “It was when I was a kid. My parents bought me a dual rail sled for Christmas.”

**What’s your guilty pleasure?** “Dr. Pepper.”

**What is your least favorite sport?** “Equestrian events.”

**What is your favorite all-time movie?** “The very first Star Wars. My dad took me. It was the first movie I ever saw. It’s sentimental because my dad took me and it was the first movie I ever saw. I was 6 or 7.”

**It’s 2 o’clock Sunday afternoon. What are you doing?** “Chores.”

**Last book you read?** “‘The Mote in God’s Eye.’ It’s a science fiction novel about an extraterrestrial race.”

**What’s your ideal vacation?** “Diving the Great Barrier Reef in Australia. I want to do that because of my love of diving.”



**Hometown:** Houston. “Personally, I never lived anywhere for more than four years in my life. I lived there for my last three years in high school. We call it home. My parents are still there.”

**Fond childhood memories:** “Going to my grandmother’s house in Milwaukee. It was a lot of family, a lot of cousins. It was a big family event. The snow. And the actual Christmas Day. We used to build a lot of snowmen, having big snowball fights and going to the park and sledding. When you look back at it, almost like you would see in a movie.”

**What was your favorite toy when you were a kid?** “I spent a lot of time on my Huffy bike. I kept it for several years. Memories range from riding around on the trails in Illinois to delivering papers in Rochester, New York.”

**Education:** Bachelor of science degree in history from the United States Naval Academy; master of arts degree in business and leadership, from Webster University.

**Why did you join the Marine Corps?** “I started working on the pistol range at the Naval Academy my sophomore year and started to respect the relationship between the officers and enlisted on the range. I decided on the Marine Corps the night of the service selection. I actu-

ally intended to become a naval aviator, but I changed my mind based on the interaction with the Marines on the range. My goal in life starting in the fourth grade was to be a naval aviator so it was a big change for everybody. Now I’m Marine Infantry.”

**Previous assignment:** Assistant chief of staff for operations 1st Marine Division, Camp Pendleton, Calif.

**Favorite assignment:** “My most enjoyable assignment was when I became an advisor in Iraq. It was a unique experience, different than what I trained for. I learned a lot. I also met a Marine officer who became a mentor for me.”

**Future military career plans:** “Hopefully, pin on colonel and stay in the Marine Corps until they kick me out.”

**What do you want to be when you grow up?** “My wife asks that question all the time and I still haven’t figured that out. It’s a running joke in my family. We have a lot of fun with it in the family, but I haven’t made any decisions yet beyond the military.”

**What do you do when you’re not a commander?** “It’s fun to be a father. I’ve got two boys in competitive soccer and one who’s a gymnast. I go to their events. I enjoy trail running and going to the movies with my lovely wife.”

**What’s your leadership style?** “Even keeled and a good listener. Not one to jump to conclusions right away. But I will hold people accountable and I believe everyone can work toward the top. There’s always a drive to improve oneself and as an organization.”

**What do you like best about your job?** “This is the first time that I’ve had exposure working with a primarily civilian work force in a joint environment. I like working with the young people who are enlisting, their parents, their recruiters. I like being involved with the schools and getting involved in the community where I

never really have before during my military career.”

**First impressions:** “I enjoy it. I think it’s a great time to be in the organization because it’s a time of change, a time to be innovative and to make a change in how the military and the community work with each other. Where we want to go as an organization. Real time processing. To be part of that innovation. I’ve got an unbelievable staff here, so it’s been easy to step into.”

**What do you order when you eat out?** “I am the least picky person about food, but if I have a preference, it would be Japanese. A spicy tuna roll.”

**What’s the best present you ever got?** “It would probably be what I received on my 21<sup>st</sup> birthday. A 9 mm Smith and Wesson from my parents. It was a big surprise for me.”

**What’s your guilty pleasure?** “Ice cream, chocolate chip cookie dough.”

**What is your least favorite sport?** “Golf. One, I can’t play it, two, I don’t enjoy watching it. It’s boring to me.”

**Tell me something people would be surprised to know about you.** “I build Lego projects. When I was growing up, I built a lot of models, but as I kept moving, they got damaged. With the Legos, I can move them. I go to on an online community and build one of a kind projects and provide instructions. Most of mine are sci-fi, so I spend my time with Battlestar Galactica and Star Wars.”

**What is your favorite all-time movie?** “‘Star Wars.’ I remember when it first came out going to see it as a family. I’m a big science fiction fan. It kept my attention.”

**It’s 2 o’clock Sunday afternoon. What are you doing?** “Typically as a family we have just returned from church and we go out and grill dinner. And my dog is right at my heels.” (She’s an English springer spaniel.)

**What’s the last book you read?** “That was a series. I read the Hunger

Games. It's about a young teenage girl who is selected to represent her sector and they fight to the death. It has some parallels to the way we view war, the counter insurgency fight. It's fun because I can sit down with my three boys and talk about it."

**What is your ideal vacation?** "My wife and I both want to take a trip up to Alaska. We're both fans of the mountain regions. She's from Utah. I've always seen the pictures and had friends who were pilots up there. I want to see the wilderness."

8<sup>th</sup>  
Battalion

## Montgomery MEPS



**Senior Master Sgt.  
Robert Jones**

**Hometown:** Talladega, Ala. "It's a small town, known for a race track."

**Fond childhood memories:** "Going to high school, hanging out with friends, going to Panama City Beach, Florida, for vacation. Fishing."

**What was your favorite toy when you were a kid?** "Probably either a bicycle or an electric race track."

**Education:** Associate degree in human resource management from Community College of the Air Force. He is pursuing a bachelor's degree in resources and technology management from Troy University.

### Why did you join the Air Force?

"It's the first recruiter I went to and that's all I can think of. I wanted an office professional job. I processed through this MEPS 23 years ago."

**Previous assignment:** Air Force Logistics Management Agency, also at Gunter. He was the first sergeant and personnel manager.

**Favorite assignment:** "I haven't really had any bad ones. I think my favorite is the one I'm in. I've been in Montgomery for a long time, but never more than three years in. After three years, I'm ready to move on. This is my latest favorite just for the new opportunities."

**Future military career plans:** "I just got here. I'm at 23 years time in service. If I don't get promoted I'm bumping up against high year of tenure in three years. If I get promoted I'm open to whatever the Air Force needs me to do."

**What do you want to be when you grow up?** "I was just talking to somebody about that. I still don't think I know. I'm trying to finish my degree. I don't think I want a sit around the office kind of job like the ones I've had all these years. Maybe some kind of travelling."

**What do you do when you're not a senior enlisted advisor?** "We have a camper on a local lake that we hang out on the weekends. Fish. Hunt. Go to school, which takes a lot of time. Homework."

**What's your leadership style?** "I'm kind of a laid back, personable kind of guy. I think you can get results with that kind of style than with a more forceful, direct style."

**What do you like best about your job?** "I like interacting with the different services. This is the first joint job I've had. Being able to help the other services and influence them in different ways. Learning the lingo, the terminology, is kind of neat."

**MEPS then and now:** "They seem to be a little friendlier to the applicants than they were when I came through. We were just kind of herded here and herded there, hurry up and wait. The applicants are treated with more respect now because of the Red Carpet treatment."

**What do you order when you eat out?** "Pizza. We usually get a combination pizza, which is pretty much everything but anchovies."

**What's the best present you ever got?** "The gift I was most excited about when I was a kid was an Atari."

**What's your guilty pleasure?** "Cheesecake. Plain cheesecake with a graham cracker crust. It's hard to beat."

**What is your least favorite sport?** "Probably basketball. It's kind of monotonous. If you watch the last minute of the game you can see pretty much everything you need to see."

**Tell me something people would be surprised to know about you.** "I like gardening. I like vegetable gardening, planting trees, that kind of thing. We raise our own tomatoes and cucumbers and that kind of thing."

**What is your favorite all-time movie?** "I like the 'Outlaw Josey Wales.' Clint Eastwood. I like the history part of it. It's hard not to like a good shoot 'em up Clint Eastwood movie."

**It's 2 o'clock Sunday afternoon.** "What are you doing? Probably either studying or watching football. I have a detached garage I use for a shop and work on this, work on that so I might be out there."

**Last book you read?** "Fundamentals of Finance (for school) It's about managerial finance."

**Ideal vacation?** "We go to Melbourne, Fla., once a year and that's where my son lives now. That would probably be our favorite vacation. It's down around the Cocoa Beach area."

11<sup>th</sup>  
Battalion

## Kansas City MEPS



Master Sgt. Shawn Hall

**Hometown:** Monroe, La. “Monroe is a very family-oriented town. Family means a lot. There’s a real focus on community. People know who your mother is, brothers, sisters, father. People speak to you whether they know you or not. You are expected to speak to people when you’re in Monroe.”

**Fond childhood memories:** “They always made you realize how important family is because we were always doing something on the weekend, extended family getting together on the weekends. Fish fries, hanging out with family on the weekend. Going to church on Sunday and then going out to dinner as a family.”

**What was your favorite toy when you were a kid?** “Army men. Little plastic army men. When I said I was going into the military, they said it figured because I was always playing with little plastic army men. I would spread them out all over the room and play with them.”

**Education:** Bachelor of liberal studies in psychology from University of Mary Washington in Fredericksburg, Va.

**Why did you join the Marines?** “When I looked at the Marine Corps, they seemed to add a little more challenge than the other branches of service. They threw out there ‘are you physically and mentally tough enough to be a Marine?’ It made me look at myself.

I wanted the challenges. I wanted to be the best, so I looked for the one that challenged me the most.”

**Previous assignment:** Curriculum developer for the Marine Corps Sergeant Course with Enlisted Professional Military Education, Quantico, Va.

**Favorite assignment:** Being a curriculum developer. “I liked the challenge that the colonel gave to my team. He wanted us to move away from the bubble sheet and A, B or C answers and challenge our sergeants with a curriculum that would help them make critical decisions on the battlefield, to be critical thinkers and aid with the decision making process.”

**Future military career plans:** “I would like to get promoted to master gunnery sergeant and go back out with the operating force and serve in one of our administrative shops and give back to some of the Marines that influenced me throughout the years and be a part of the transformation that is occurring throughout the Marine Corps. I’d like to be the administrative chief in charge of an admin shop.”

**What do you want to be when you grow up?** “I wanted to have my degree in psychology, and I did that. My initial plan was to get my master’s and work with young men and women. That is my goal. Whether that ends up me being a counselor, I want to work with kids 10-18 and impact their lives in a good way.”

**What do you do when you’re not a senior enlisted advisor?** “I try to be a big kid at home with my family. I love interacting with my three kids that are here. I love spending time with my wife and kids. This is some of the best time of my life to see them grow.” His oldest daughter, 20, lives in Louisiana. His 14-year-old daughter, 11-year-old daughter, and 7-year-old son live with their parents in Kansas City.

**What’s your leadership style?** “I am more democratic. I like for people to be involved in the process. I think it goes better than me being authoritarian. I want to receive their feedback. I want them to be involved in the

decision-making process. The more buy-in I get from them, the better I can get them involved in the command helping me to give good advice to the commander.”

**What do you like best about your job?** “The ability to interact with the applicants day-in and day-out. To look at them and get a glimpse of me 20 years ago. I ask them why they joined. These are the leaders of the both military and civilian world for years to come. I look them in the eye and thank them for stepping up.”

**What are your impressions of the command so far?** “From what I’ve seen, and from speaking with other senior enlisted advisors, we have a good staff there. We have people who are hungry. We have people who have embraced the military culture. They are willing to go the extra mile to accomplish the mission. I call them civilian Marines. They embrace the esprit de corps, the spirit of the Marine Corps. It’s their teamwork, their willingness to step out and get the applicants processed. They embody so many things the military instills when you go to boot camp. They embrace it.”

**What do you order when you eat out?** “Seafood. I love seafood. I try to get some shrimp or some fish.”

**What’s the best present you ever got?** “My wife presented me with a DJ mix turntable about two years ago. It’s one of my favorite toys.”

**What’s your guilty pleasure?** “Candy. Twizzlers. I know I’m not supposed to eat them that much, but I can eat a whole bag. I feel guilty when I do it.”

**What is your least favorite sport?** “Baseball. They take too much time when they come up to bat. They take too long. They swing at the ball then tighten the glove and tie their shoes. Then they swing again and do it all over again. Then they call for time. It takes too long. It becomes a ritual.”

**Tell me something people would be surprised to know about you.** “Most people may not know how much of a jokester I am. I’ll be the serious Marine, but at the end of the day, I

love playing jokes. I love telling jokes. Most people I work with don't get to see that side of me."

**What is your favorite all-time movie?**

"'The Color Purple.' I saw the movie when I was 13 or 14. I remember the movie had such an impact on me. It made me realize the sacrifices people made over the years to get us where we are now. I have an obligation to go out there and be the best, because people have died so I can have that opportunity. It affected me in a huge way."

**It's 2 o'clock Sunday afternoon. What are you doing?**

"I'm probably watching the Dallas Cowboys if its football season. When it's not football season I'm probably cooking." His specialty is a honeyed ham. He makes his own glaze. He also makes sweets and cakes.

**What is the last book you read?**

"'Gung Ho.' It's about how to get people motivated in your organization."

**What is your ideal vacation?**

"My dream vacation would be for me and my wife to get on the railway and go across country on the train. A nice slow, scenic trip. Just take two or three weeks and just go cross country on the trains."

10<sup>th</sup>  
Battalion

**Atlanta MEPS**



**1st Sgt. Mae Dyous-Rawlings**

**Hometown:** Preston, Ga., right outside of Plains. "It's rural. Country. Very small. No stoplights."

**Fond childhood memories:** "We lived on a farm. My memories are being outside, bare feet, with my seven brothers and sisters. There was always something to do. We didn't have much money so we pretty much had each other."

**What was your favorite toy when you were a kid?** "Actually, I didn't have one. We just played."

**Education:** Associate degree in computer programming and systems analysis from Griffin College in Seattle. She is about seven credits short of finishing a bachelor's degree in degree in human resources from Baker College.

**Why did you join the Army?** "I always wanted to go into the military. When I was 16, I passed the ASVAB." She tried to enlist when she was 17 but it didn't work out. "It took both parents to sign. My dad would, but my mom said the Army was no place for females. So, I got married instead. My ex-husband was in the Army but said he didn't want his wife in the Army." She joined after he got out.

**Previous assignment:** Brigade Human Resources, 165<sup>th</sup> Infantry Brigade, Fort Jackson, S.C.

**Favorite assignment:** Central Identification Lab in Hawaii. "I went on some of the missions for repatriations. We went to Cambodia and Vietnam. I got a chance to travel. When I got stationed there I wanted to go a little bit beyond. You sign the chain of custody. You bring the remains back. They were lost years ago and they're coming home now."

**Future military career plans:** "I would love to make sergeant major, but I just got master sergeant last year, so I've got a while to go. After that, I plan on retiring and settling down with the grandkids."

**What do you want to be when you grow up?** "I want to be self-employed. I own a couple properties and I just want to manage that myself and branch out a little more when I have time."

**What do you do when you're not a senior enlisted advisor?** "I'm a wife and a grandmamma. I spend a lot of time on the computer, just relaxing."

**What's your leadership style?** "More of a supervisory role, than being involved in everything. If you asked me a couple of years ago I would have said I have to be in charge of this and this and this. There such a thing as a mental burnout. I don't like going there any more."

**What do you like best about your job?** "Just being able to meet new people every day. With every new day comes a new challenge. Working to see that the MEPS staff and the liaisons get along, that they meet at a happy medium."

**What do you order when you eat out?** She likes Olive Garden and Red Lobster. "When I go to Red Lobster I get shrimp or some other kind of seafood."

**What's the best present you ever got?** "Diamond jewelry from my husband."

**What's your guilty pleasure?** "Cartoons. I like Fred Flintstone, The Jetsons, Bugs Bunny, The Snorks. I like the old cartoons."

**What is your least favorite sport?** "Rugby. I don't understand it. It's complicated."

**Tell me something people would be surprised to know about you.** "That I'm not mean. My facial expression looks mean, but sometimes I don't realize it. I don't look in the mirror very often. How many people do? I really do have a sense humor."

**What is your favorite all-time movie?** "'Pretty Woman' with Julia Roberts and Richard Gere. He came to her rescue. He was a rich millionaire and she fell in love with him."

**It's 2 o'clock Sunday afternoon. What are you doing?** "Probably watching TV or cooking soul food."

**What is your ideal vacation?** "A seven day excursion to Paris. When I went before, we were in a rush. It was a three or four day trip. They really rushed you on and off the bus. I would like to have a little more time. I would like to go to the Bahamas, too, and hang out for while."

## Michigan governor shows support of ASVAB, CEP

Governor Rick Snyder proclaimed November 2011 Armed Services Vocational Aptitude Battery Career Exploration Awareness Month in Michigan in a public ceremony at his offices in Lansing, Mich.

Snyder supports the ASVAB-CEP, because he recognizes that the career development needs of our youth are a vital concern to the state of Michigan.

With the signing of this proclamation he sets Michigan's education system apart as an up-and-coming leader that uses innovation and resourcefulness to increase career satisfaction, adaptation to occupational change, enhanced educational experience and enriched personal lives among its students.

In conjunction with this nationally used, valid and reliable multiple-aptitude testing program that measures current skills and abilities and estimates what a student can

accomplish with further education and training, Governor Snyder released his "talent message" on Nov.



Michigan Governor Rick Snyder (left) and USMEPCOM commander, Capt. Eric W. Johnson hold up the proclamation making November 2011 ASVAB-CEP Awareness Month in Michigan.

30 and indicated that the ASVAB-CEP might have immediate and relevant application in the state of Michigan.

Attendees and supporters included adjutant general of the Michigan

Army National Guard, Maj. Gen. Gregory Vadnais, state command sergeant major and senior enlisted advisor of the Michigan National Guard, Command Sgt. Maj. Delbert Husband, USMEPCOM commander, Capt. Eric W. Johnson and USMEPCOM senior enlisted advisor, Command Sgt. Maj. William Lindo

Lansing MEPS was represented by Lt. Cmdr. Steven Rodriguez, 1st Sgt. George Hunter, Capt. John James, and education services specialist, Edwin South-erland. Interservice Recruitment Committee attendees included Lt.

Col. Joan Sweeny-Dent, Command Sgt. Maj. Albert Crawford, and Command Sgt. Maj. David Marshall representing the Army, Lt. Col. Lavetta Bennett representing the Michigan National Guard, and Lt. Col. Wade Mueller and Command Chief Master Sgt. Laura Lindsey representing the Air Force.

## MEPS of Excellence

First Quarter, Fiscal 2012

**Category 1**  
Atlanta MEPS  
Baltimore MEPS  
Tampa MEPS

**Category 2**  
Fort Jackson MEPS  
Knoxville MEPS  
Nashville MEPS

**Category 3**  
Albuquerque MEPS  
Boise MEPS  
Portland, Maine MEPS

The MEPS of Excellence Program acknowledges military entrance processing stations that obtain a level of excellence based on criteria related to USMEPCOM core processes (medical, testing, applicant processing) and general military readiness.

The two requirements to become a MEPS of Excellence are:

- To be one of the top three MEPS in each category.
- To meet the overall threshold.

The 65 MEPS are divided into three categories, based on historical data. MEPS remain in the designated category the entire fiscal year.

The MOE points system measures up to 10 criteria per quarter. The criteria are:

- Timeliness of military evaluations and awards.
- Total students tested goal.
- Drug and HIV specimen processing.
- Clinical Laboratory Improvement Program.
- Physical fitness readiness.
- Height and weight standards.
- Electronic fingerprint capture station (unclassifiable fingerprints).
- Incidents of serious misconduct by military or civilian employees.
- Test loss compromise.
- Citibank travel card delinquency rates.



# Fisher House thanks Boston for contributing meals

By Diane Mihalko  
Boston MEPS

When Fisher House Boston hosted its annual Valentine's Day celebration Feb. 14., they invited Boston MEPS staff members in appreciation for their quarterly donations to its West Roxbury, Mass., location.

Beth St. Pierre, director of Fisher House Boston, and Jennifer Deluca, Fisher House board assistant, hosted the event, along with Blue Star Mothers and American Legion Auxiliary members.

Because members of the military and their families are stationed worldwide, and must often travel great distances for specialized medical care, the Fisher House Foundation builds and donates "comfort homes" on the grounds of major military and Veterans Affairs medical centers. These homes enable family members to be close to a loved one at a stressful time — during hospitalization for an illness, disease or injury. The homes provide a supportive environment as well.

The Fisher House program serves more than 10,000 families each year. There is at least one home located at every major military medical center. Families are not charged for their stays.

Fisher House Boston is the 46th house in the Fisher House Foundation. It has 20 suites, and each room has a private bathroom.

Since the Fisher House Boston opened in July 2009, the Boston MEPS staff has donated a meal and a dessert once each quarter. Typically, meals are not included in a Fisher House stay. Providing home-cooked meals can comfort these families, and it's one less thing for them to worry about while they care for their loved ones at the West Roxbury VA Medical Center.

Various Boston MEPS staff members make the quarterly trip to bring the meal. They comment that they find



Some of the Boston MEPS personnel at the Fisher House Boston's Valentine's Day celebration, held in honor of volunteers. (Standing, left to right) Lt. Jose Mercado, operations officer, Marta Fontanez, human resources assistant, Lindsay Weber, health technician, Capt. Tim Hunt, assistant operations officer, (seated) Diane Mihalko, medical supervisor, Sgt. Ryan O'Malley, processing section.

it a very rewarding experience and a chance to give back to the community.

Recently, Sgt. Ryan O'Malley made one of the trips with the group. He and his family stayed at a Fisher House in Germany during a family emergency. O'Malley wanted to thank the Fisher House staff and volunteers in person for the support he received during his time of need.

Boston MEPS staff members look forward to a long relationship and continued support to the Fisher House Boston.

## Upcoming 2012 Diversity Observances & Themes

**April 19** – Holocaust Remembrance Day

**April 15-22** – Days of Remembrance

*Choosing to Act: Stories of Rescue*

**May**

**Asian Pacific American Heritage Month**

*Striving for Excellence in Leadership,  
Diversity and Inclusion*

**August 26**

**Women's Equality Day**

**September 15 - October 15**

**Hispanic Heritage Month**

*Theme to be determined*

Resources available at [www.deomi.org](http://www.deomi.org)

## Buffalo MEPS unveils Warrior Board at Niagara Falls Air Reserve Station



Capt. Eric W. Johnson, USMEPCOM commander (center), joins Lt. Cmdr. Keith Archibald, Buffalo MEPS commander, and 1st Sgt. Dwayne A. Wood, Buffalo MEPS senior enlisted advisor, in cutting the cake after the Warrior Board dedication ceremony Nov. 17. (U.S. Air Force photo by Peter Borys)



Buffalo MEPS commander, Lt. Cmdr. Keith Archibald (right), New York Naval Militia Rear Admiral F. Robert Danni (center), and retired Navy Cmdr. Wayne Sorrentino (left), view the Warrior Board after the dedication ceremony. The Warrior Board honors military members who processed through Buffalo MEPS, and died serving their country. Buffalo MEPS is located at Niagara Falls Air Reserve Station, N.Y. (U.S. Air Force photo by Peter Borys)

## New York med tech shows off the duck walk at son's career day



Christopher Perkins demonstrates the duck walk (above) and shows a 'future doctor' how to feel for her pulse (right).

Christopher Perkins, lead medical technician at New York MEPS, accepted an invitation to give a presentation at his son's school's career day recently.

That day children dressed to portray the profession in which they'd

like to work someday.

Perkins told the children about both of his jobs — as a medical technician at the MEPS, and as an Army first sergeant with the 145th Surface Maintenance Company in the New York National Guard.



Perkins ran the pre-kindergarten and kindergarten students through the orthopedic maneuvers. "They loved it," he wrote.

Also, Perkins showed a future doctor how to feel for her pulse.

Perkins was able to give the children military promotional items as well.

# Command loses Tampa chief medical officer, military processing devotee, friend

By Christine Parker  
*Messenger* Editor

After Tampa MEPS chief medical officer, Dr. Christopher Yoong-Choong Hee died Dec. 8., all you needed to do was read an online tribute to him to realize how special he was — to so many.

Navy Commander Nicole DeRamus was the Tampa MEPS commander from 2007 to 2010. On his memorial site, she wrote, “Dr. Hee was a precious gem ... I am grateful for Dr. Hee’s dedication and loyalty to his family and to his Tampa MEPS family. He always put others first, working long hours and going to other MEPS if his assistance was needed.”

DeRamus said she admired most his “willingness to take time to explain things to applicants. He treated each one of them as a person, not as a name tag or a file ... He was a brilliant man with great ideas, compassion, and genuine passion for his job ... I greatly valued his advice and guidance ... His word was, without question, the expert opinion.”

Hee was the CMO for 26 years, and was fondly known as “Chris” or simply, “Doc.” His work at Tampa MEPS followed more than 15 years of medical experience in Malaysia.

## **Early life, studies, work**

Christopher Hee was born Aug. 30, 1940, in the town of Kulai, in the state of Johor, Malaysia.

According to his daughter, Vivienne Hee, “He always aspired to be a doctor and had strong support and encouragement from his mother.”

He attended medical school at the University of Sydney, Australia.



**Dr. Christopher Hee**

While on vacation in Melbourne, Australia, he met Rosita, who was training to become a nurse. They married in Sydney, in 1966, and shared 45 years.

After graduating from medical school in 1967, they returned to Malaysia. Hee began his residency in Malacca General Hospital. Upon completion of his training, he went into private practice as a family physician in Tampin, [state of] Negeri Sembilan. During the next 15 years, along with two partners, he built a practice that expanded to four clinics.

In addition to a busy practice, Hee was involved in the Tampin community. He was a Rotarian and served as president in 1972 and 1976.

Vivienne said her father was multi-lingual and very approachable, which made it easier for him to reach out to diverse groups of people. This was especially helpful during a major outbreak of Dengue Fever in 1973. Hee helped the Public Health Department calm the public’s fears by promoting awareness and prevention of the fever.

He was appointed to the advisory board for the Drug Rehabilitation Center of Tampin, where he worked on drug addiction and prevention. Also, he was on the board of governors for various Tampin schools and active in fund-raising for school expansion.

For his many services to the community, Hee received the Meritorious Service Medal from His Royal Highness The Yam Tuan of Negeri Sembilan.

*Continued on page 36*



### From Malaysia to Tampa

Malaysia is shown in light tan on the map. Dr. Christopher Hee was born in the state of Johor. Malaysia's coastal plains rise to hills and mountains. With a population of about 29 million, its land is only slightly larger than New Mexico. (Central Intelligence Agency map)

### New country, second career

The Hee family moved to the United States in 1982. Hee began working at Tampa MEPS in 1985.

Another co-worker, Dennis Anderson wrote, "the care and pride 'Doc' Hee took daily to ensure the future of the U.S. Armed Forces was second to none. When it was time to get down to business, he did. When it was time to laugh, he would. He set the example, and gave many the opportunity to learn and in turn, set the example as well."

People from all over the world, including Illinois, California, Hawaii, Germany, commented on his memorial site. Chief Petty Officer Abraham Cardona worked with Hee from 2008 to 2010. He wrote, "If anyone can teach you the value of dedication it would be Dr. Hee. Every day he came to work, he made sure every young man and woman ... was treated respectfully and well taken care of as he would his own children. Even years after these young men and women join the military, they would remember him when they came through the MEPS."

"He always spoke of his family and the reason he worked was for them ... He was truly a great man, father, husband and mentor, Cardona wrote.

Retired Navy Capt. Gracie L. Thompson, Tampa MEPS commander from 1988 to 1991, wrote, "From the moment I met him, I knew he was special. He was a consummate professional and the pride he exuded daily was unequivocally phenomenal. He was the kind of chief medical officer that every MEPS commander longed for,

and even now I thank God that I was fortunate enough to have him on my staff! No one loved their job and the MEPS family more than 'Doc' ... he was the 'best of the best!'"

LaPonda Pittman, from Tampa MEPS wrote, "It was a pleasure and an honor to work with Dr. Hee. It is more an honor to call him a friend."

A couple weeks after his death, Pittman said she woke up in the morning to get dressed when she touched a shirt and began to laugh. She wrote, "The last time I wore it, Dr. Hee told me the shirt was too small and I should not wear it anymore ... I could only say, 'Doc, you didn't have to bust me out like that!' I will cherish all these memories and more."

On the memorial, Lori Roth, USMEPCOM Headquarters Medical Directorate, said, "Your smile will be

missed at every medical conference from now to eternity." Also from the same directorate, Robert Clayton referred to him as a friend and mentor.

"Dr. Hee gave us the best life advice," Lainey Guenther, Tampa MEPS health tech wrote. "He advised us to dedicate and take pride in our work and never stop striving for the best quality, even if you do the same thing



A 1998 photo of Dr. Christopher Hee, part of a *Messenger* feature published that year, titled, 'Civilians: cornerstone of continuity.'

Dr. Christopher Hee was born in Malaysia, and about 72 percent of its population live in urban areas. These 88-floor Petronas Twin Towers are in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia's capital, home to about 1.5 million people. Completed in 1998, they are the tallest twin towers in the world. A two-story skybridge [the highest two-story bridge in the world] connects the towers on the 41st and 42nd floors. They use a double-decker elevator system in the towers — the bottom part for odd floors, the top part for even floors. (*Central Intelligence Agency photo*)



every day. But he said, most important is family first, and that Mrs. Hee and his children and grandchildren were his greatest love and achievements.

Hee supported his MEPS family as well. “Every time that I came to him to talk, he would sit and listen to me. He would say to me, ‘Ana, don’t worry, things are going to be just fine, you’ll see.’ Ana Gonzalez Perez, a health tech, now at San Juan MEPS, wrote.

“He never turned his back on anyone, he was always willing to help whenever help was needed. I will personally miss how his eyes would light up whenever he spoke of his family and his upcoming badminton tournaments.” 1st Sgt. Leona McKoy, Tampa senior enlisted advisor, wrote.

“Dr. Hee was a superstar and a mentor to many across all of USMEPCOM — he set the stage for others to follow!” McKoy said.

## ***Crabs with black bean sauce ...***

Vivienne Hee said her father was known for his culinary skills. Some of his friends’ favorite dishes were fried rice, egg rolls and crabs with black bean sauce. “Cooking was his way of relaxing. He also enjoyed gardening. His pride and joy were his Lychee, Longan and Mango trees. He had been known to commandeer the

neighbors’ barbecue grills to provide heat to his beloved fruit trees during the cold spells in the winter,” his daughter, Vivienne said.

## ***Badminton, Basketball, Squash***

Hee was always active and played badminton, basketball and squash. In the early 1970s, in support of the young men and women of Malaysia, he raised funds and organized a national basketball championship, held in Tampin.

In the later stages of his life, he was an active badminton player. In the summer of 2011, he and his doubles partner, Pravit Choonit, won a silver medal for the 70 to 74-year-old age group at the Summer National Senior Games in Houston, Texas.

Dr. Hee enjoyed the challenge of playing badminton and the friends he met through the sport.

## ***Dedication to family***

The Hee family includes three children, Vivienne, Adrian and Marianne, and four grandchildren, Olivia, Julian, Evelyn and Isla.

“What is important to my father is MEPS, family, friends, food and badminton.” Vivienne said.

His son, Adrian Hee wrote, “He taught me what it meant to be a man, to be a good husband, and how to be a friend to everyone. He will always be to me a man of character ... how he lived with honesty, honor and integrity with a strong sense of responsibility to family and friends.

“He found happiness in the simplicity with which he lived, with the purpose of finding dignity in living and to have the few things in life he so cherished ... his grandchildren, mom, us, badminton, steam fish and black bean crabs, and his closest friends and the MEPS.

“In work he found tremendous sense of pride in the MEPS and the work he did ... I often asked him why he continued to work when he could spend more time with the family. He would say that he wouldn’t know what to do with his time when he wasn’t with us. But it was more than that, it was important to him as a man to work, be useful, and have purpose ... He found lasting friends ... caring people with the same sense of duty and honor.”

His son continued, “He was proud to work at the MEPS and as you know it showed in the work he did. No shortcuts or as we say in Malaysia, ‘tak chin-chai chin-chai’ ... loosely translated ... ‘sloppy.’ He loved you all.”



Family, friends and public officials unveil the Kevin Houston Park at Cedarwood. Chief Petty Officer Kevin Houston was killed in action in Afghanistan.

## From Amarillo, commander ensures his friend, fallen SEAL, is memorialized in Virginia

By Skip Wiseman  
*Messenger Associate Editor*

What is the best way to honor a friend and former neighbor who made the ultimate sacrifice in defense of the nation?

That was the dilemma Lt. Cmdr. Steven G. Millard, commander of the Amarillo MEPS faced when Chief Petty Officer Kevin Houston was killed in action in Afghanistan.

Millard decided the most appropriate thing to do was rename a park where Houston had often played with neighborhood children in his honor.

Houston was one of 25 SEAL Team Six members who died when their Chinook helicopter was shot down Aug. 6. Insurgents took credit for shooting down the aircraft.

Millard, who had known Houston and his family for about seven years, met them when both men were stationed in Virginia and lived in the same neighborhood in Chesapeake.

"I met him shortly after he became a SEAL," Millard said. "They moved into the neighborhood the same time we did. They were right across the street from us."

Houston had often gone to nearby Breeze Wood Park with his children and others from the neighborhood. Renaming the park Kevin Houston Park seemed like an ideal way to honor a fallen warrior.

There was only one fly in the ointment. City rules called for a three- to five-year waiting period before naming a city facility in someone's honor to ensure it was ap-

propriate. Millard and his allies from the neighborhood weren't giving up.

He contacted the mayor, city manager, city council, parks and recreation advisory board, and the parks and recreation director.

In the process, Millard became well acquainted with Michael J. Kalvort, the parks and recreation director.

"I was in constant contact with the city, got introduced to the parks manager," Millard said. "He and I got to know each other pretty well. He told me what the process was and about the waiting period. I said I didn't think that was necessary in this case. He said, 'We'll get it done,' and cut through the red tape."

Getting to city meetings in Virginia wasn't an option for Millard. He enlisted the help of neighbors still in the area to attend and press the case. He helped one woman put together a presentation for the parks and recreation board meeting.

Millard was in touch with the city council and trying to determine what information they needed to make a decision about renaming the park when he found out by chance there was going to be a meeting that night. He didn't want



Lt. Cmdr. Steven G. Millard, Amarillo MEPS commander

to wait another month to get the ball rolling.

"I talked to one of the secretaries I knew and found out about the city council meeting that night," he said. "I had about a half an hour to write the letter. I understand it brought tears to all the council members. The vote was unanimous and the mayor stipulated that it be done in 60 days."

Besides going to the park with the neighborhood kids, Houston had helped make sure the city kept the park in good condition, Millard said.

"He was always interested and pitched in when we were poking at the city to get the park up to snuff," Millard said.

A small ceremony was held Oct. 29 and the park was officially named Kevin Houston Park at Cedarwood. A Black Gum tree was planted in Houston's memory. The leaves are thin enough that in the fall the sun produces a bright red effect when shining on them.

The tree planting was suggested by one of the young people whose life Houston touched, Travis Faller. Millard said Faller was very emotional as he was planting the tree.



Travis Faller

## Chief Special Warfare Operator (SEAL) Kevin Arthur Houston 1975-2011



Chief Special Warfare Operator (SEAL) Kevin Houston was born Sept. 20, 1975, in Atlanta. He graduated from Barnstable High School, Hyannis Port, Mass., in June 1994.

Chief Houston enlisted in the Navy Jan. 26, 1995, and reported to Naval Recruit Training Command, Great Lakes, Ill. He completed basic training April 22, 1995, and reported to Airman Apprentice School. Upon receiving his apprenticeship, he reported to his first duty station, Strike Fighter Squadron 195 aboard the USS Independence in June 1995. Chief Houston transferred to Helicopter Anti-Submarine Squadron 2 in July 1996.

On July 24, 1998, he entered Basic Underwater Demolition/SEAL Training in Coronado, Calif. After six months of grueling, demanding training, he graduated with Class 221 Feb., 16, 1999, and reported to Basic Airborne School at Fort Benning, Ga.

Kevin was assigned to his first SEAL team, SEAL Team 4, from May 1999 to December 2005 and Naval Special Warfare Group Two Training Detachment 2 from December 2005 to January 2007. The training included the Close Quarters Battle, Military Free Fall, Tactical First Response Medical Training, Survival Evasion and Escape, Combat Pistol, and Rifle Courses. After completing the courses, he reported to Special Warfare Tactical and Development and Evaluation Squadron 3 in December 2007. Chief Houston completed numerous deployments around the world and combat deployments to Iraq and Afghanistan.

Chief Houston was a highly decorated combat veteran whose military awards and decorations included two Bronze Stars with Valor, Purple Heart, Joint Service Commendation Medal with Valor, two Navy and Marine Corps Commendation Medals, Navy and Marine Corps Achievement Medal, Iraq Campaign Medal, Afghanistan Campaign Medal, Global War on Terrorism Expeditionary Medal, two Combat Action Ribbons, two Presidential Unit Citations and numerous other personal and unit decorations.

Chief Houston is survived by his wife Meiling, sons Michael and Ethan, daughter Jaina, his parents Janette Anderson and Arthur Houston, brother Craig Anderson, other family, friends and teammates.

To learn more about the

# Tuskegee Airmen

National Historic Site

visit the National Park Service website at [nps.gov](http://nps.gov)



**Nancy Leffner**  
Lieutenant-Colonel  
First African-American in Army  
Nurse Corps, Air Force flight  
nurse and former Tuskegee  
Airman.

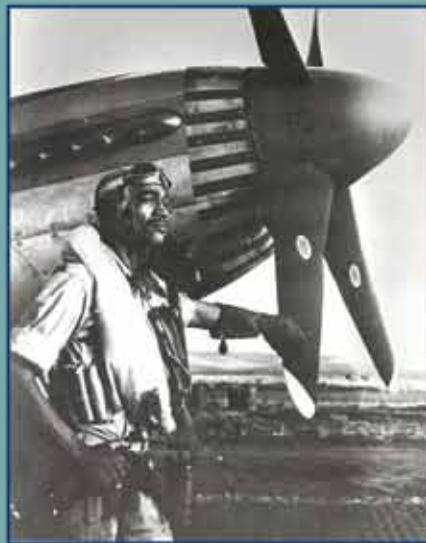
**Clarence D. "Lucky" Lester**

African-American pilots from the 332nd Fighter Group, the "Tuskegee Airmen."



**Benjamin O. Davis Jr.**

One of the first Tuskegee Airmen  
went on to become first  
African-American general in U.S.  
Air Force.



**Lt.Col. Lee Archer**

Tuskegee Airman. He and his unit  
were brought to life in the George  
Lucas film "Red Tails."



**Artist Roy LaGrone**

He depicted the Tuskegee Airmen  
through illustrations, was himself one  
of the group during World War II.