



AFRH-GULFPORT

Remembering Pearl Harbor's 75th Anniversary

Story & Photos by Becki Zschiedrich, Public Affairs



In remembrance of the 75th Anniversary of Pearl Harbor, the Armed Forces Retirement Home held a very touching memorial ceremony in front of the building by the Freedom Pond in honor of those who served and died at Pearl Harbor, Hawaii, December 7, 1941. The ceremony started with the Infamy Speech recording by President Roosevelt. After a moment of silence, Music Therapist Susan Bergman played "Amazing Grace" on the bag pipes as she walked around the Freedom Fountain, near the flag pole.

Administrator Jeff Eads was the Master of Ceremonies and he spoke about that fateful Sunday morning on December 7, 1941. He spoke about how America's naval base at Pearl Harbor, Hawaii was attacked by aircraft and submarines of the Imperial Japanese Navy, killing 2,403 American military personnel and civilians and injuring 1,178 others. The attack sank four U.S. Navy battleships and damaged four more. It also damaged or sank three cruisers, three destroyers, and one minelayer. 188 aircraft were destroyed and 159 were damaged. The day after the attack, the United States declared war on Japan and entered World War II. President Franklin Roosevelt, in a speech to Congress, stated that the bombing of Pearl Harbor is "a date which will live in infamy."

Following Mr. Ead's welcome speech, Pastor Gibson presented the invocation. The Keesler Air Force Base Honor Guard respected the fallen heroes with a 21-gun salute and taps.

National Pearl Harbor Remembrance Day, is observed annually on December 7 to remember and honor all those who died in the attack on Pearl Harbor on December 7, 1941. We will never forget, and we will keep the memory of Pearl Harbor alive. We remember all who bravely served and died in defense of our great country.



AFRH-WASHINGTON

Wreaths across America

By Amanda Jensema, CTRS
Photos by George Wellman & Sheldon Shorthouse

Even an ice storm couldn't stop the holiday spirit and patriotism. Wreaths Across America accomplished its goal of placing wreaths on the graves of our military heroes at the United States Soldiers and Airmen's Home National Cemetery on Saturday, December 17th. Due to the weather, the time was pushed back to allow for it to warm up a little, and melt some of the ice. At 2:30 p.m. at our location, as well as Arlington Cemetery, and others around the country, all participated in this honored day of service. This year 3,600 wreaths were placed on graves around our cemetery.

Before placing the wreaths, a wreath laying ceremony was conducted. Residents Sheldon Shorthouse and Charles Felder placed wreaths for the Army and Marines. Afterwards all volunteers were dismissed so they could begin to place the wreaths. Even with the ice, the afternoon was a success and all wreaths were placed in selected sections. There are over 14,000 buried in the cemetery. We hope that one day we will be able to place wreaths on all graves. Thank you to all the volunteers who came to assist.



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AFRH COMMUNICATOR

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The AFRH Communicator is an authorized publication of the Armed Forces Retirement Home. Residents and employees are encouraged to submit photos, art, news items, and features. Materials will be edited by the *AFRH Communicator* staff for journalistic style and length. The articles included in this publication do not necessarily reflect the opinions or views of the management, staff, or residents of the AFRH.

Serving Washington, D.C. and Gulfport, Mississippi

AFRH is not just a place to live but a place to live more. Our model retirement communities are designed for residents to maintain an independent lifestyle in an environment designed for safety, comfort & personal enrichment.

Eligibility: Military veterans from each service branch can live at AFRH. The following persons who served as members of the Armed Forces, at least one-half of whose service was not active commissioned service other than as a warrant officer or limited-duty officer, are eligible to become residents of the Retirement Home:

- who are 60 years of age or over; and were discharged or released from service in the Armed Forces under honorable conditions after 20 or more years of active service.
- who are determined under rules prescribed by the Chief Operating Officer to be incapable of earning a livelihood because of a service-connected disability incurred in the line of duty in the Armed Forces.
- who served in a war theater during a time of war declared by Congress or were eligible for hostile fire special pay were discharged or released from service in the Armed Forces under honorable conditions; and are determined under rules prescribed by the Chief Operating Officer to be incapable of earning a livelihood because of injuries, disease, or disability.
- who served in a women's component of the Armed Forces before June 12, 1948; and are determined under rules prescribed by the Chief Operating Officer to be eligible for admission because of compelling personal circumstances.

To receive an informational brochure please contact the AFRH Marketing Office at 1-800-422-9988, or write to:
AFRH, PAO/Marketing, #584
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ARMY NAVY AIR FORCE MARINE CORPS COAST GUARD

AFRH-Gulfport waiting time for residency is
27-29 months from the date of application approval.

AFRH-Washington has no waiting time for residency.



The Joint Commission
www.jointcommission.org

A CARF-CCAC Five-Year Term of
Accreditation was awarded to the Armed
Forces Retirement Home. <http://www.carf.org>
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AFRH-W Veteran Highlight - Walter Cronin

By Christine Baldwin, AFRH-W Librarian

Walter Cronin was born in New Jersey and grew up during the Depression. He dropped out of high school at 16 and joined the US Army on his 17th birthday, with his parents' permission. When he took the aptitude test, Walter did so well, they had him take the officer Candidate Test. He passed this also, so was eligible to go to Officer Candidate School, after completing Basic Training, Fort McClellan, AL. He never did apply for this school.

Walter's first deployment was to Manila in the Philippines in 1946. His first assignment as an MP was to guard a daytime convoy. Another time on a very hot day, he and 2 other MPs were tasked to guard a vault. The other 2 stepped out and neglected to lock the cage where Walter was sitting. He got bored and started reading a book with his feet on the desk when he heard a "hrmp, hrmp". Looking up, Walter saw a full bird colonel, the port commander, looking down at him. Needless to say, all three were placed under arrest. So here was Walter, 17 years old and looking at a possible prison term. Whether it was the fact that Walter would see the Colonel and his family at Sunday Mass or someone just took pity on him; all charges were dropped. All Walter had to do was ten days of hard labor. Walter returned to Camp Stoneman, Calif. for an honorable discharge in 1947.

In early 1951, Walter reenlisted into the Army for three years with the Army Security Agency, wanting to see action in Korea. He went to radio repair school at Camp Gordon, Georgia. While there, he heard about an infiltration course and signed up. Not only did he complete the course, but he went through it two more times, including one at night. He was then sent to a listening post in Chitose, Japan supervising three radio repairmen. One adventure Walter had was climbing up

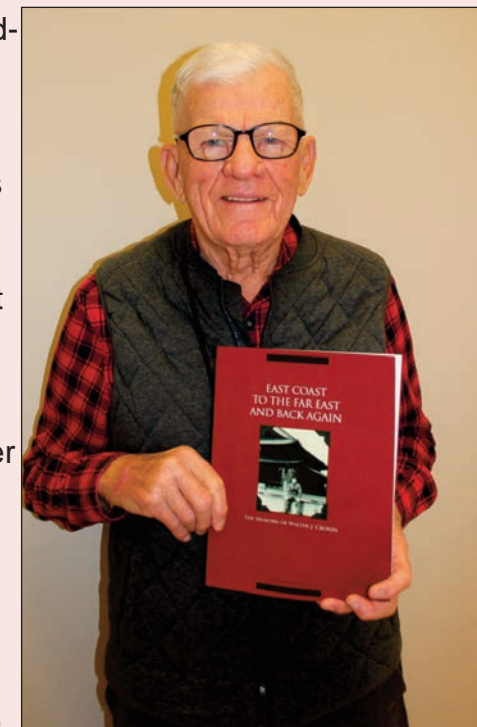
the side of a volcano by Lake Shikotsu with a friend. It was a rough climb and the smell of sulfur became very strong. It felt like the volcano could erupt at any time. Losing track of time, all of a sudden it was night and they had to come down the volcano. All Walter could think was "I hope there are no black bears out tonight!" They finally stumbled into a small Ainu village and using the one phone available finally made contact with their company.

Walter heard about a new project called low level voice intercept (LLVI), which consisted of three radio repairmen and three Chinese translators from Formosa. He applied for this and in 1952 (one year after arriving in Japan), he got his wish and was sent to Korea. He ended up going to the front line with the 301 Communications Reconnaissance Battalion in X Corps. When he arrived, the whole mountain was on fire and the captain in charge immediately put Walter in charge. Walter knew nothing about putting out forest fires, but there were some enlisted men who knew and they dug trenches to secure the fire. Next, Walter, along with a small patrol of GIs went to Heartbreak Ridge to put in a new enemy telephone voice intercept device. There were mine fields and napalm fields and in some places they were only 40 yards from the North Koreans.

Unfortunately, as day became night, a full moon started shining. This, of course, made the group easy to see, so they had to crouch down as they were moving. As he cleared the crest, Walter fell into a bunch of barbed wire, cutting him badly. They wanted him to go back, but Walter said no and the medic patched him up as best that he could. A couple of

highlights for Walter was seeing Cardinal Spellman, Bob Hope and eating dinner with General George Patton's son. Walter was discharged in January 1954.

Walter's next career was working 36 years with IBM at their New Jersey branch. He worked in various areas such as repair key punch and sorter machines, helping customers in the engineer area, and becoming a product field engineer. He got a promotion to work in San Jose, Calif., and he, his wife and two daughters moved there in 1964. But they didn't care for the West Coast and Walter applied to work as a product assurance specialist in Poughkeepsie, NY. Walter had begun having problems with his eyesight as early as 1954. In 1967, he was diagnosed with Best's Macular Dystrophy. He went to the local VA and got into their Low Vision Rehabilitation Clinic that supplied him with many visual aids. Walter was even featured on a VA brochure explaining these services. He retired and moved to Maryland in 1994 and his wife died in 1999. With family living in Maryland, Walter decided to move AFRH-W in 2009.



Walter Cronin, pictured with his book, *A Memoir about his time in the military.*

AFRH-G Veteran Highlight - Gordon Stewart

By Lori Kerns, AFRH-G Librarian



Gordon Stewart was born in the rural area of Blytheville, Ark. He and his half-sister grew up on a farm that his parents owned. Once Gordon completed the eighth grade, he decided to help his parents by working full time on their farm. In 1940, the 17 year old decided to join the Army as an escape to his impoverished lifestyle.

Back then, there was no boot camp for new Army recruits. He was sent straight from Arkansas to Hawaii where he worked in communications. This was quite a change for a small town boy who had never seen the ocean before. On December 7, 1941, Gordon happened to be standing on the banks of his fort when he witnessed Pearl Harbor being attacked.

After about three years of service, Gordon got out of the Army but re-enlisted in the Air Force. Again he was placed in communications. His first post was in Greenville, S.C. While stationed here he met Betty. The couple married and travelled together to his next assignments, which included going overseas to Japan and Germany. While in Germany, the couple adopted a

German boy. About six months later, Betty gave birth to their daughter.

Gordon's last duty station was in Texas. He retired in 1964 as a first sergeant. The family moved to Memphis where they had previously purchased a farm. Gordon talked Betty into moving to the farm to build a nice house. They purchased a convenience store and ran it for a couple of years. They sold the convenience store to buy a grocery store. The family owned and ran this store for a few years and decided to sell so that Gordon could retire altogether. Because he loved fishing, the couple moved to Charleston, S.C. so that he could take up salt water fishing. After a while, they decided to move back to Tennessee where Gordon delved into freshwater fishing. Once they settled back in Tennessee, the couple found out that they were expecting their second son.

As their youngest son grew older, Betty developed Alzheimer's disease. Gordon became her full time caretaker until they felt it best that she go live at a facility equipped to handle her dementia. She managed with Alzheimer's for about seven years but sadly passed away.

Gordon had been living alone in a three bedroom house. The house and yard became too much for him to take care of on his own. He always knew that money had been drafted from his military paychecks for the Old Soldiers Home (now one of the AFRH campuses). He and his daughter decided to take a look at AFRH-G. The home was way above his expectations. After two years on the wait list, he was welcomed into the home. Gordon enjoys spending his time with his friends that live at AFRH-G. He also likes to read and watch TV.



Message from the Chief Operating Officer



Happy Holidays! This is among one of my favorite times of the year. Full transparency, I am writing this month's article from the comforts of home no; not Quarters One. I'm actually back in Michigan spending time with my loved ones. Don't tell them I said this, but I have truly missed my family and am overjoyed to be back in their presence.

Family is the theme of this month's article. AFRH is a unique federal agency. Based on our mission and customer base there is a true familial presence here. Our family is taking a few hits this month. Colonel John Spain, our Advisory Council Chair, retired this month. COL Spain was a true member of the AFRH family, seeing patients in the clinic, working resident issues, and chairing the Advisory Council. He did an outstanding job at all. COL Spain retired from the U.S. Army after decades of dedicated service and

we wish him well.

Dr. Karen Tillman-McCombs, the Corporate Performance Improvement Officer, is retiring after 15+ years at AFRH. Karen began at AFRH as a dentist and transitioned to lead our PI program and provided invaluable support in both steads.

Janet Ritter, Corporate Credentialing Specialist, is retiring after 35+ years. Janet has held a myriad of positions at AFRH in her decades of service and accomplished all with aplomb. She will also be missed.

Rebecca Newton, Public Affairs Specialist, has accepted a promotion with the National Institutes of Health. Rebecca has been with the Home a little over a year and absolutely hit the ground running. She filled in as the Public Affairs Officer when Sheila Abarr was the Acting Administrator, AFRH-Washington. We wish Rebecca well with her new challenge.

An additional loss, one which I'm still coming to grips with is my Executive Officer, Chuck Hollings. Chuck was offered a promotion and is leaving us for the Department of Defense. Chuck has only been with AFRH three years but has definitely left his mark.

Please, please, enjoy your holidays. As this is my final article of 2016, let's pledge as an organization to put aside any differences we may have and begin 2017 on a collective positive note working towards our vision: a retirement community committed to excellence, fostering independence, vitality and wellness for Veterans, making it a vibrant place in which to live, work, and thrive. See you soon...

Dr. Timothy Kangas



Have a wonderful retirement Dr. Tillman. Thank you for over 15 years of service.



Best of luck to Janet Ritter. Your 35 years of dedication will never be forgotten at the AFRH.



Congratulations Chuck Hollings on your promotion with the DoD. I'm sure you'll never forget meeting President Obama and the First Lady at the AFRH.



Good luck in your new career Rebecca Newton. You will be missed.

The Army's Old Guard Fife and Drum Performance

By Steven Briefs, Supervisor of Recreation Therapy

On Tuesday, December 6th, members of the Army Old Guard Fife and Drum band joined us in our Community Center for a wonderful musical program. They've been visiting our Home for many years. In addition to playing a variety of patriotic and holiday music, they took time afterwards to speak to our residents. It's great to see the young and old veterans sharing their personal stories and memories.

The band was dressed in uniforms that represent the time period of the American Revolution and their song selection was just what our residents wanted to hear during this special holiday season. Thank you Army Old Guard!



Residents view rare artist books

By Lori Thompson, AFRH-W Art Specialist

On Wednesday, November 23rd, residents were given complimentary tickets to the National Museum of Women in the Arts. We began our visit with a talk given by Krystyna Wasserman, NMWA's Curator of Book Arts, in the Pop-Up exhibit. Next residents were given a docent-led tour of the museum. Our visit culminated in NMWA's library, where we viewed a miniature book exhibit. Ms. Wasserman then brought out the books of several rare artists and gave a brief presentation on each book. Residents had the opportunity to then look around the library and handle several books.

If you are interested in bookmaking, their library is an incredible resource for ideas and techniques. This winter we will have several bookmaking classes. To introduce basic book covering, the Crazy Artists Club created post-it books on November 30th. We will also be creating altered books this season.

Thank you to Krystyna Wasserman and NMWA staff for your time and consideration in educating residents about the book as art. Your exhibits and talks really inspired us to delve deeper into bookmaking.



Residents pictured in the NMWA library with Krystyna Wasserman, Curator of Book Arts.

Residents create Santa's Village in the Dining Hall

By Becki Zschiedrich, Public Affairs



For the last several years during the Christmas season one of the Dining Hall employees would put up multiple train sets along with village buildings in the Dining Hall. Unfortunately that employee, Stephanie Livermore, moved to Washington State earlier this year. As Christmas approached this year, the Dining Hall was not feeling the same without it. So, residents Peter Behl, Benjamin Smith and Clifford "Smitty" Smith had an idea to build a new village display. Our art director Milton Williams coordinated everything.

The display is half LEGO® materials, and half Disney® Village items. There are over 5,000 pieces of LEGO bricks built in the LEGO half of the display. This was all an effort by staff, staff family members and residents who all pitched in and

helped. The LEGO trains were provided by Benjamin Smith. Clifford "Smitty" Smith donated the nativity set and also built the train tunnel. Peter Behl got the two villages together.

Peter has worked over 100 hours putting LEGO bricks together. His favorite pieces are in the Disney Village half of the display, which features unique Disney collector items. He will be working on putting a Disney LEGO Castle together for next year's display. At 29 inches tall and 4,080 pieces, it will be the biggest item on the table. He said, "The Christmas display will be a work in progress. Every year we'll add something and next year the castle will be the main feature."

Peter retired from the Army in 1988 but stayed in Korea until 1998. When he left Korea he moved to the Orlando area and worked in Disney World Resorts for over two years. His time there is what inspired him to add the Disney items to Santa's Village.

Peter said, "For me this was a therapeutic project and we all hope the residents and their families enjoy the display during this Christmas season. The village crew will enjoy seeing our fellow residents' grandchildren enjoy the display. That's the reason I put the Disney stuff out. They all seem to know Mickey Mouse no matter what age they are."



From the AFRH-W Administrator



Dear Residents, family, friends and staff,

Thank you for making 2016 such a memorable year at the Armed Forces Retirement Home-Washington! The end of the year is as fitting a time as any to look back on some of the important milestones we've crossed and make resolutions for the New Year. Below is a summary of main events we've experienced together as a community in December.

On December 6th we got together to sing Christmas carols during the annual holiday tree lighting ceremony. Our tree, an 18' Norway spruce harvested in Maryland, was trimmed and decorated to make the season bright. Musical acts by Creative Minds International Public Charter School, 42nd Street Singers, and Jazzy Blu were performed for residents' enjoyment on a cool and rainy, yet festive evening.

December 7th was National Pearl Harbor Remembrance Day and we again gathered to pay tribute on the 75th anniversary of the attack. One of the most humble men I've met is Mr. Ed Davis, a resident here who is a survivor of the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor. He told me his story of eating breakfast in the mess hall when the bombs began to drop. He and his buddies assumed it was an Air Force exercise but the explosions continued and they quickly realized they were under attack. Ed described the planes buzzing overhead creating chaos and destruction. He took cover behind columns outside the mess hall as bullets strafed the columns and area around him. As a civilian I am consistently amazed by the stories of experiences had by our nation's veterans. It is a privilege and honor to work with those who were willing to pay the ultimate sacrifice in service

to their country. The Home has a very important mission!

December 9th was the annual Ladies Tea event hosted by the AFRH agency staff. Santa and Mrs. Claus made an appearance at the party thrown to celebrate the lovely veteran women living here at AFRH-W. Wrapped gifts, trivia, finger sandwiches, fish, quiche, cookies and mimosas all added to the holiday spirit. It was our wish to make the women veterans of the Home feel special with the theme, Hollywood Divas.

Lastly, the AFRH Holiday Dance was celebrated December 16th. This event included a gift raffle, food and drinks in our Defenders' Inn pub, music, dancing, as well as active duty military volunteers from the Naval District Washington and the National Capital Region. We are always so thankful to the current generation of military service members who continually turn up to extend their support to our residents by way of volunteering.

Thank you to all the dedicated staff who extended meaningful efforts to make residents feel at home in 2016! Your care is appreciated and does not go unnoticed! I hope your holiday season is filled with joy, love, and laughter. 2017 is about to be underway!

Shaun Servais



Holiday Tree Lighting Ceremony

By Constance Maziel, Lead Recreation Specialist
Photos by Resident Doug Carroll



On Tuesday, December 6, 2016, AFRH-Washington celebrated their Annual Holiday Tree Lighting Ceremony. Residents, AFRH staff, family members, community members, and The Friends of the Soldiers Home all participated in the event. The evening began with welcome remarks from the Lead Recreation Specialist Constance Maziel, followed by a heartfelt holiday invocation from Chaplain John Goodloe. The event proceeded with the Creative Minds Band student's performance, which really set an exciting tone for the evening. The Creative Minds performance was followed by the 42nd Street Carolers, who are the most sought after caroling group in the D.C. and Virginia area. They stunned the audience in their classic Victorian costumes and with their beautiful melodies. Next was an exciting

presentation given by Mr. John Hughes on behalf of The Friends of the Soldiers Home. They donated a neon Budweiser sign lined with AFRH-W detailing for the Scott Defender's Inn. All residents and guests were delighted by the donated sign and showed gratitude for the continued support of The Friends of the Soldiers Home. The last performance and highlight of the evening was the Jazzy Blu Band! The Jazzy Blu Band is an extremely versatile jazz/dance band who play everything from easy listening jazz to "get the party started" dance music! The band spread holiday cheer as they performed holiday tunes with a jazzy twist. The Holiday Tree Lighting Ceremony concluded with holiday remarks from the Administrator Mr. Shaun Servais, followed by the lighting of the tree! A special thank you to the residents, community guests, Friends of the Soldiers Home and the AFRH-W staff who came out to celebrate such a remarkable event. Happy Holidays!!!



Notes from the AFRH-W, Chairman, Resident Advisory Committee



Season's Greetings!

On the first of this month, about 125 volunteers from Joint Base Myer/Henderson Hall came to the AFRH-W to help with our Christmas decorations. In a single day, they put up and decorated more than a dozen trees, and decorated the rest of our Home as well. On December 6th, the Old Army Fife & Drum Corps played for our residents, performing a medley of holiday songs. On the same day, the ceramics shop held their yearly Arts & Crafts show/sale. We ended that day with the lighting of the official AFRH-W Christmas tree. Preceding the lighting, the children's band from the Creative Minds International Public Charter School performed for us and, as always, we were visited by Santa and Mrs. Claus themselves.

On December 7th, we observed Pearl Harbor Remembrance Day in the Hall of Honors. The ceremony included the playing of President Roosevelt's "Day of Infamy" speech of December 8, 1941,

during which he formally asked Congress to declare war on Japan, thus marking our entrance into the Second World War.

December 10th was a day to remember! After the longest losing streak in Army-Navy history, the West Point Black Knights beat the Navy Midshipmen with a score of 21-17.

Both of our annual Christmas dances were held on December 16th. Members of the local DAR chapter were here in the afternoon, and gave out gifts to the residents of the Home. The evening dance featured a large selection of all kinds of music by our own resident DJ, Billy White. There were large turnouts for both events.

Lots of residents will be leaving the area for the holidays, and some will be welcoming their families to the Home for visits. Whether you're going or staying, visiting or hosting, we wish you a Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year.

This month in history:

-December 5, 1933 - The 18th Amendment (Prohibition Amendment) to the U.S. Constitution was repealed. For nearly 14 years, since January 29, 1920, it had outlawed the manufacture, transportation, and sale of alcoholic beverages in the U.S.

-December 7, 1941 - The U.S. Naval base at Pearl Harbor, Hawaii, was attacked by nearly 200 Japanese aircraft in a raid that lasted just over one hour and left nearly 3,000 Americans dead.

-December 13, 1862 - During the American Civil



Sheldon dressed as Santa Claus.

War, the Battle of Fredericksburg occurred in Virginia as the Union Army of the Potomac under General Burnside suffered a costly defeat, losing 12,653 men after 14 frontal assaults on well entrenched Rebels on Marye's Heights. "We might as well have tried to take hell," a Union soldier remarked. Confederate losses were 5,309. "It is well that war is so terrible - we should grow too fond of it," stated Confederate General Robert E. Lee during the fighting.

-December 16, 1944 - American big-band leader Glenn Miller disappeared in a small plane over the English Channel and was presumably killed. Best remembered for Moonlight Serenade and In the Mood.

-December 16, 1944 - During World War II in Europe, the Battle of the Bulge began as the Germans launched a big counter-offensive in the Ardennes Forest along a 75-mile front, taking American troops by surprise. Aided by foggy, snowy weather, the Germans penetrated 65 miles into Allied lines by the end of December. The German advance was eventually halted by Montgomery on the Meuse and Patton at Bastogne. As the weather cleared, Allied aircraft attacked German ground forces and supply lines and the counter-offensive failed. There were an estimated 77,000 Allied and 130,000 German casualties.

-December 30, 1803 - The Stars and Stripes flag was raised over New Orleans as the United States took formal possession of the territory of Louisiana, an area of 885,000 square miles, nearly doubling the size of the U.S. The territory had been purchased from France for approximately \$15 million.

-January 1, 1863 - The Emancipation Proclamation by President Abraham Lincoln freed the slaves in the states rebelling against the Union.

Sheldon Shorthouse



Sheldon with volunteers from nearby Andrews Air Force Base.

From the AFRH-G Administrator



Greetings and Merry Christmas to all Gulfport Residents, staff, families, and friends! I must share with you 2016 has been one of the greatest years of my life. The year I got married and the years my children were born will always be my best years. But, 2016 ranks right up there because of the wonderful residents and staff, both federal and contract, that help make AFRH-G the special place it is. This has also been the quickest year of my life as it seems like January 13th, the day I first arrived on campus, was just last week. Thank you to all who have made me feel welcome by showing me southern hospitality at its finest.

Two major accomplishments the staff earned the past year is receiving accreditation from both The Commission on Accreditation of Rehabilitation Facilities and The Joint Commission. Reaching our goal of passing both surveys with flying colors was accomplished because of the committed and caring culture the staff has created to make this Home the special place it is day in and day out. I know I am repeating myself by saying how special this place is, but I speak the truth. I have had the privilege to open two homes from the ground up and know first-hand how hard it is to find the right people to create a culture like this one. I have learned and often said, "We can teach people how to perform a

task but we cannot teach people to care." To walk in here on day one and see that the caring culture already existed was truly a blessing to me.

I look forward to another great year in 2017 and wish each of you a Happy New Year!

Jeff Eads



Jeff Eads congratulates resident Sally Blythe by presenting her a certificate for first place in the Christmas door decorating contest. Photo by resident James "Tom" Peeks.



Jeff Eads with Music Therapist Susan Bergman at the Pearl Harbor Remembrance Ceremony.

Santa shows up for Tree Lighting Ceremony

Photos by Becki Zschiedrich, Public Affairs

On December 8th Santa made a surprise appearance at the annual Tree Lighting Ceremony in Gulfport. He brought many smiles and hugs to the residents while they were singing Christmas carols.

Music Therapist, Susan Bergman started off the caroling as she strummed on her acoustic guitar. Thank you Santa for showing up during your busiest time of the year.



Notes from the AFRH-G, Chairman, Resident Advisory Committee



Greetings,

I was asked the other day why I say 'thank you for all you do' to the employees on the serving line when I am exiting the dining facility at the end of the evening meal or when I pass our custodial employees as they prepare to retire for the day. The answer is really simple. They can do the job hired for or they can DO the job. As we are all aware when someone feels appreciated for what they do, they tend to put forth extra effort. I personally feel that the AFRH-G is very fortunate to have employees that seemingly go above and beyond expectations. Thus, I let them know their efforts are noticed and appreciated.

To that point, I want to express a huge THANK YOU to all of the medical staff as well as every other employee here at the AFRH Gulfport for the phenomenal effort expended during the recent outbreak of the Norovirus. The medical staff noticed almost immediately that something unusual was occurring and procedures were put into place to thwart off new cases. A facility this size takes a lot of manpower to have every doorknob, railing, elevator button, door push button, etc. wiped down and sanitized frequently day after day. It is a lot of extra work to make up single serve salads, vegetable bowls, jello cups, fruit cups, bags of cookies, etc. Going floor to floor numerous times a day, day after day, to deliver soup, jello, and other liquids, to the residents who had the unfortunate experience of being stricken by the Norovirus, takes a lot of manpower. It was very inspiring to see the dedication of the staff to ensure that the residents' needs (and desires) were met in a safe and sanitary manner. I would be remiss to not also give a huge THANK YOU to the residents for cooperating with the temporary measures put into place to prevent new cases.

I've been asked why I do not recap the different events that have occurred during the month. Quite honestly, I feel that our events are adequately covered by the PAO and in other articles in the Communicator and anything I say would be redundant. What I try to do, as I stated above, is make sure I thank those who coordinate events, and are seamless behind the scenes, ensuring that the AFRH Gulfport is a premier place to reside. We have choices where we live. We make choices what activities in which we will or will not participate. We opt to attend ceremonies and town halls or miss them. It is readily apparent, to me, and I hope to you too, that the quality of life of the residents is paramount.

The vision of a retirement community committed to excellence, fostering independence, vitality and wellness for veterans, making it a vibrant place in which to live, work and thrive is not just words put out by the agency. The mission to fulfill our nation's commitment to its veterans by providing a premier retirement community with exceptional residential care and extensive support services is evident.

When I go beyond the gates of the campus I am a huge proponent and cheerleader for 'our Home'. I assure you that I and the floor representatives do not hesitate to take on the issues of importance and see them through to a mutual, agreeable, and satisfactory resolution. Living

here is not a right, it is a privilege. Utilizing or not utilizing available services is a choice. I encourage you to seek out all the great things that occur daily on campus. I have publicly said I, or we, can always find something to complain about. When I do have an issue I take it forward and try to end the meeting on an upbeat note. It helps when everybody works together for the common good. I can assure everyone that it takes a lot less effort to work for the betterment of our community that it does to continually express dissatisfaction.

As always, please feel free to stop by my office to discuss something you would like me to address in my column. I absolutely encourage you to submit questions to the RAC box in the mail center, for which I will use this space as a question and answer forum.

I hope you all are having a safe, happy and healthy holiday season.

Phil Ford



Santa (aka Darren Jones) visits Phil Ford during the annual Christmas Tree Lighting Ceremony.

AFRH-W Activities

Army-Navy game

By Jerry Carter, Fitness Specialist
Photos by Doug Carroll, AFRH-W resident

On Saturday, December 10th Army-Navy met on the gridiron for the 117th time. Army defeated Navy in a very close and competitive game. This game was shown in the Scott Community Center and residents enjoyed the action packed game. This is one of the most traditional and enduring rivalries in college football. Army-Navy embodies the spirit of the inter-service rivalry of the United States Armed Forces. Recreation Services thanks the Edward Buchanan Law Firm for sponsoring this event. Volunteers provided beer, pizza, barbecue pork and chicken, and tasty desserts! All had a good time watching the Army-Navy football game.



An annual tradition continues

By Rebecca Newton, Public Affairs

For many years, AFRH-W's corporate staff has treated the female residents to an extraordinary Ladies' Tea. This year was no different. "Hollywood Divas" was the chosen theme. The ladies were greeted with a warm welcome by Administrator, Shaun Servais and Erin Carlson-Mast, Executive Director of President Lincoln's Cottage. They also received a visit from Santa and Mrs. Claus (Chief of Resident Services Ron Kartz and wife, Jenny).

To kick things off, Michelle Martz of President Lincoln's Cottage hosted trivia games where the ladies had to guess the actresses' birth names. Then they had the chance to win prizes for guessing movies and their leading ladies.

Staff served tea, coffee, water and mimosas while the ladies kicked back and had fun. They also took advantage of the "Crazy Photo Booth," where they could pose with an empty frame prop.

The Hollywood Divas cuisine featured: Angelina Jolie fruit and cheese tray, Jennifer Lopez quiche, Marilyn Monroe tea sandwiches, Lena Horne antipasto tray, Jennifer Aniston over the rainbow desserts, Whitney Houston hot tea, Madonna "Like a Virgin" mimosas and Maye West bottled water.

Each lady received a raffle ticket and Mr. Servais called out the numbers. Every lady present received a fantastic gift!

The food service staff, which prepared a unique menu, and the corporate staff worked diligently to ensure the success of the event. All of the ladies in attendance expressed what a wonderful time it was, laughing and enjoying each other.



Holiday Arts and Crafts Fair a hit!

By Lori Thompson, AFRH-W Art Specialist

Our crafters really outdid themselves this year on spreading holiday cheer. Employees and residents alike were buying wares before we could even finish setting up the fair's tables! As we ran out of Santa's and trees, residents had several requests to create more this season. In order to fulfill these wishes, two days after the fair, the residents took a ceramic supply trip and stocked up. They also bought several new holiday molds. The studio is hopping with folks pouring and glazing. If you didn't get a chance to attend the fair, items may still be purchased from the display windows, which we are having a hard time keeping filled! Thank you to all who came out to support AFRH-W artists and crafters!



Live with Kassie - "Music & More"

By Carol Mitchell, Recreation Therapist

The residents of AFRH-W had a special holiday performance on Friday, December 2nd in the Scott Community Center. Cassandra Sandacz and friends gave an exciting and interactive live holiday musical extravaganza! Upon arriving, residents were greeted with holiday pins and necklaces. Kassie sang beautifully and her musician friends truly enhanced the performance.

Kassie is in the process of creating a non-profit organization called "Voices of Vets Inc." Her goal is to perform at all veterans' homes across the nation. She regularly performs at Charlotte Hall Veterans Home and we hope that the Armed Forces Retirement Home-Washington will become a regular stop in her future travels.



AFRH's Holiday Dance

By Steven Briefs, Supervisor of Recreation Therapy

On Friday, December 16th residents, staff, family and volunteers all gathered in our Scott Community Center for our annual Holiday Dance. We enjoyed a nice selection of music by Billy White. A delicious variety of refreshments were provided by our dietary department, lots of volunteers from our area military installations, family members and guests of our residents.

There was dancing, seeing old friends and meeting new ones. Lots of smiles, handshakes and goodwill were shared by all. Shelton Shorthouse held down the bar in the Defender's Inn, while Jerry Carter and Matthew Roberts, from our Recreation staff, mingled with the residents. It was once again a nice event with everyone looking forward to next Christmas!



Patriot Cruise

By Carol Mitchell, Recreation Therapist

On Thursday, November 22nd the healthcare and independent living residents enjoyed a fantastic boat cruise and Thanksgiving luncheon as they sailed along the Potomac River. The event is an annual function on the Odyssey Cruise boat donated to our veterans and troops by Entertainment Cruises, Inc. Residents had a great time dancing, socializing, and mingling with other veterans and active duty military personnel. We look forward to this event every year.



RT Dance & Social with the Navy "Country Current" Band

By Carol Mitchell, Recreation Therapy



On Friday, November 18th the AFRH Recreation Therapy department hosted the RT Dance and Social with the United

States Navy band, Country Current. We were honored to have this nationally known band come out and provide a fun-filled performance for the veterans of AFRH-W. This eight piece Navy band was awesome. They had residents up and dancing, toes tapping, hands clapping and everyone having a great time. We also had the incredible Nam Knights of the Capital Chapter attend and sponsor a fantastic open bar.

AFRH-W Food Service had some great appetizers to include: fried chicken wings, cheese and crackers, fresh fruit, and more.

Volunteers from Friends of the Soldiers Home (FOSH) and the 89th Airlift Wing/Andrews AFB helped in making the event run smoothly and brought smiles to all.



AFRH-G Activities

Army Wins!! The crowd goes wild!!

By Jen Biernacki, Recreation Therapy

On Saturday December 10, 2016... it was rival day once again: Army vs. Navy. With the projection TV on, the volunteers in place, the wings on the warmers and the pizzas hot in boxes, the residents enjoyed the afternoon in the Community Center watching the Army-Navy football game, eating and cheering.

Hooters donated the chicken wings, t-shirts and gift certificates to add to the special day. During the commercials, tickets were drawn for Hooter's T-Shirts as the prizes. The USS Ramage sailors served and volunteered throughout the event, making sure our residents did indeed have a good time. For the first time since 2001, Army wins. The crowd went wild. Rahhhhhhhhh!!!!!!



USM History, KAFB PAE, 81st CS & WINGS bring holiday cheer!



By Susan Bergman, MT-BC, Recreation Therapy Services

In October, KAFB 81st Communication Squadron and KAFB PAE began to coordinate the Adopt a Veteran Holiday Stocking Project. The project, now in its fourth year, paired residents with military volunteers, employees, and families who bought personalized items based on a list of specific resident interests, requests, and needs. KAFB PAE, Dawn Hazen along with 81st CS SrA Albert Dusseault, SrA Cody Stoll, A1C Jacob Cliborn, and Mr. Jose Fuertes helped coordinate the Christmas stocking items by pairing items up with resident names. We cannot thank these groups enough for their continued generosity as they went above and beyond a filled stocking to individualized gift bags. The priceless smiles and joy will brighten the lives of our AFRH Healthcare veterans on Christmas Day and carry on into the 2017 New Year.

For its fourth year, the University of Southern Mississippi returned to Valor, Loyalty, and Allegiance Hall on November 23, 2016 for the annual Decorating Holiday Stocking Event. Phi Alpha Theta (History Honors Society), Alejandro Gomez-del-Moral (Assistant Professor of History), Dr. Douglas Bristol (Associate Professor Department of History), Dr. Lee Follett (Associate Professor of History), and seven college students assisted residents with decorating their Christmas stockings with paint. Residents reminisced about their military history while the painters added personal details about their interests to their stockings. After lunch, several volunteers stayed to help set-up and fix holiday trees and lights. We look forward to this annual event which continues to thrive as a community partner.

Another community partner, Lynn Meadows Discovery Center WINGS Performing Arts Milky Way group under the direction of Jamie Shedden, donated shoe boxes for veterans as their holiday community service project. On Friday, December 9, 2016, the group donated 20 decorated shoe boxes which included much needed special items in each one for a resident veteran this holiday season. Thank you to all the individuals, groups, community partners, employees, volunteers, and residents for making this a holiday to remember.

Fresh baked cookies for the holidays

By Jen Biernacki, Recreation Therapy Assistant

On Saturday December 17th, the smell of the holidays filled the air on Valor Hall as fresh baked cookies were made. As soon as the cookies were cooled, residents from Valor Hall and Loyalty Hall decorated the cookies with icing and sprinkles. Shapes of trees, initials and poinsettias were seen on top of the cookie creations. "You have to decorate cookies," said Eva Downs. "That's what makes them real good," she added. What a perfect way to spoil a Saturday afternoon lunch during the holidays.



USM Elves deliver Christmas Cards

By Melodie Menke, Volunteer Services

Eleven elves from the University of Southern Mississippi, School of Social Work came to the AFRH-G with baskets of hand signed Christmas cards and candy canes and delivered cards to over 500 residents. USM Clinical Instructor, Karen Aderer, LMSW and our own social worker, James DeDeaux, MSW, LCSW teamed up to lead this merry group. We thank all the students and look forward to more fun volunteer visits in 2017.



Amazing Magnolia Quilters!

By Susan Bergman, MT-BC, Recreation Services

On Tuesday, December 20, 2016, the Magnolia Quilters delivered an amazing donation for the veteran healthcare residents at AFRH. Each year, the group focuses on special projects which include, clothing protectors and walker bags for AFRH, quilts for CASA, and infant quilts for Memorial Hospital's NICU. The 24 member group of quilters meets twice a month with the first meeting of the month being a business night and the second meeting of the month being a project night. The project then continues with individuals making items on their own, collecting, and delivering for donation. Coastal Sew & Vac and others assist throughout the year with fabric donations for the various projects. The Magnolia Quilters also host a quilting show in September where money raised at the event helps in the cost of the supplies for future projects, too. You can ask to be a friend on the Magnolia Quilters Facebook page for more information or get involved. The wonderful items donated for the third year in a row will be handed out to healthcare residents to bring holiday cheer on Christmas day and throughout the 2017 year. We thank President Rhonda Hepler, Michele Martin, and the many Magnolia Quilters along with Kim McKeithen of Coastal Sew & Vac for coordinating these handmade items with love and care.



Sharing talents, a true holiday spirit

By Jen Biernacki, Recreation Therapy Assistant

The Northwood Church Carolers from Gulfport, Mississippi shared their talents with our residents on Saturday December 17, 2016. The group sang holiday songs and jingles, played the piano and visited with our healthcare residents. "This Home was on our list this year. We are very glad we had this opportunity to sing here for our Veterans," stated Hope Griffith. The Northwood Church created this small group of carolers to sing and travel around the immediate Gulfport area spreading the holiday spirit. The group did just that, they sang into the hearts of our residents. A special thank you is expressed to the Northwood Carolers.



Resident shops at the AFRH clothing store and discovers great items for a cold vacation

By Melodie Menke, Volunteer Services



When Mr. Boyd told me he was leaving for Wisconsin for Christmas, I immediately thought brrrrr. Robert Brodeur had the perfect solution for Mr. Boyd's winter vacation. Robert is the volunteer manager of the AFRH-G Clothing Store and got Mr. Boyd a down vest, stocking cap, scarf and a heavy jacket with a price tag that made everyone smile. All residents shop for free in the Clothing Store. Items are gently used, clean and expertly merchandised. Thanks Bob for having such great shopping deals and warm travels to Mr. Boyd. We want to hear all about your "chilly cheesehead" vacation when you get back to the warm Gulf Coast.

NCO/PO Visit at AFRH-W

By Amanda Jensema, CTRS

Photos courtesy of EOCS(SCW) Denise Demontagnac

On Thursday, December 1st the Christmas spirit came early thanks to the help of NCO/PO's who came to AFRH-W. There were representatives from all five branches. A total of 120 students, who were in DC attending the Joint National Capital Region Noncommissioned Officer (NCO) and Petty Officer (PO) Professional Development Course (PDC), came to help where needed. They arrived at 9:00 a.m. and attended a briefing, where they learned about the history of AFRH, as well as heard from current residents. They were then split into groups. Half of the group assisted at the golf course, and at the garden and pond area doing landscaping and clean-up. The other sixty assisted with decorating the Scott and Sheridan building for Christmas. They set-up and decorated eighteen trees, as well as placed other decorations in areas such as the Defenders Inn, Community Center, and the Scott Living Room. After all of their hard work they joined residents in the Mess Hall for lunch before being dismissed.

The course they were attending was sponsored by SGM John W. Troxell, Senior Enlisted Advisor to the Chairman (SEAC) of the Chairman Joint Chiefs of staff (CJCS). The vision for the Joint NCO/PO PDC is to provide students the basic knowledge and skills necessary to be successful small unit leaders in the ever increasing Joint operational environment. In order to develop this joint mindedness, the course will provide our NCOs/POs a distinct understanding of service cultures, and integration to support the profession of arms.

We would like to thank the NCO/PO's for all of their hard work which helped us accomplish several tasks that would have taken a week or more to achieve on our own. It is because of volunteers like them that we are able to provide exceptional customer service to our residents and help them achieve a high quality of life at the AFRH-W.



Wheelchair donation

By Lynn Holt, Director Rehabilitation Services

On December 13, 2016, representatives of the Disabled American Veterans, Department of the District of Columbia, donated 20 brand new manual wheelchairs to residents at AFRH-W. The manual wheelchairs were distributed among residents in Long Term Care, Memory Support, and Assisted Living levels of care. A couple of the donated wheelchairs will be stored in the Wellness Center for "Emergency" use.

This is the second year that Commander Nachee Miller ensured the veterans at AFRH-W have new manual wheelchairs for Christmas. Resident Joseph McHale stated that the wheelchair is very comfortable and light weight for getting around and appreciated the generous gift.



RT winter wonderland

By Carol Mitchell, Recreation Therapy

The second annual RT Winter Wonderland kicked off the Holiday season at AFRH-W on Tuesday, December 6th. This indoor/outdoor program was held throughout the month of December on Tuesday nights.

- December 6th - Opening night with live music by resident Waymon Lucas
- December 13th - Holiday songs performance by Brownie Troop #982
- December 20th - Holiday classics flute performance by Renee Lee & Melissa Flavell

While the entertainment was playing, residents, family, friends, and volunteers were able to tour the Scott 3 Terrace Winter Wonderland and enjoy the sights and lights. Back inside, all were treated to hot chocolate, special desserts by Sarah Kenan of the Recreation Therapy Department, and donated desserts by the Daughters of the American Revolution. Special thanks to the Magruder High School JROTC, Friends of The Soldiers Home, and local volunteers for helping to make this event joyful for the residents of AFRH-W.



RT Annual Holiday Celebration with Daughters of the American Revolution

By Carol Mitchell, Recreation Therapist



It was an exciting afternoon at the Armed Forces Retirement Home- Washington on Friday, December 16th. The Recreation Therapy department hosted their Annual RT Holiday Celebration with the Daughters of the American Revolution (DAR). This is an event that the residents look forward to every year with great enthusiasm.

The party gets bigger and better every year with over 95+ residents and 30+ volunteers. The ladies of DAR donated an abundance of gifts

that were wrapped by the AFRH Wrapping Crew. The Wrapping Crew is led by resident Bill Jentarra. The DAR has been helping with this event for over 20 years! The event was made even brighter by the ladies of DAR, who volunteer at the event escorting residents to/from/during the event, serving appetizers and desserts, working the rolling beverage cart, mixing, mingling and dancing! The entertainment was provided by Rick & Melanie, who have been a main attraction for this event for many years. During the party Santa made an appearance and distributed the gifts to all with the help of the DAR elves! Our Food Service Department did an incredible job by providing the party with chicken wings, taco pie, chips, fresh fruit, shrimp cocktail and assorted cheese and crackers. The ladies of DAR topped off the event by also providing a wonderful selection of delectable desserts. Residents, volunteers and employees all look forward to future gatherings and fellowship. Recreation Therapy wishes everyone a very happy holiday season.



Supreme lunch and bingo

By Amanda Jensema, CTRS

What better way to help bring in the holidays than with a catered meal and bingo sponsored by the Supreme Foodservice Group. On Saturday, December 17th the Community Center was transformed into a banquet hall. Tables were covered in blue linen with poinsettias as center pieces. Christmas music was playing through the speakers. Everyone was socializing and having a great time. Brisket, fried chicken, potato pancakes, corn salsa, salad, corn bread, macaroni and cheese, fruit, and cupcakes were served by Windows Catering Company. A wide variety of beverages were also served from juice, soda, and beer. Residents returned to the tables for seconds, and some even thirds! "The food was delicious," was a comment I received multiple times throughout the meal.

The Supreme Foodservice Group was started in 1957 when a U.S. Army foodservice soldier detected the need to provide food supplies to U.S. military installations in Germany. From there they have expanded to providing supplies to U.S. military installations around the world, including Iraq and Afghanistan. They provide critical and life-sustaining services that empower military forces to accomplish missions in challenging environments around the globe. Their headquarters are located in Dubai, with satellite offices in the Netherlands and Switzerland, and here in the USA. This is the second year that they have sponsored a lunch and bingo, and it was already stated they will be back next year! On behalf of the residents who attended, THANK YOU!



WASHINGTON

Pearl Harbor Remembrance

Story & Photos by Rebecca Newton, Public Affairs

Hundreds gathered for the 2016 Pearl Harbor Remembrance Day 75th Anniversary Commemoration, held at the WWII Memorial in DC. A brisk, yet very bright day, brought out some of our nation's greatest heroes. Residents Edward Davis, a Pearl Harbor survivor and Harry Miller, who served with the 740th Tank Battalion during the Battle of the Bulge, were honorary wreath-layers.

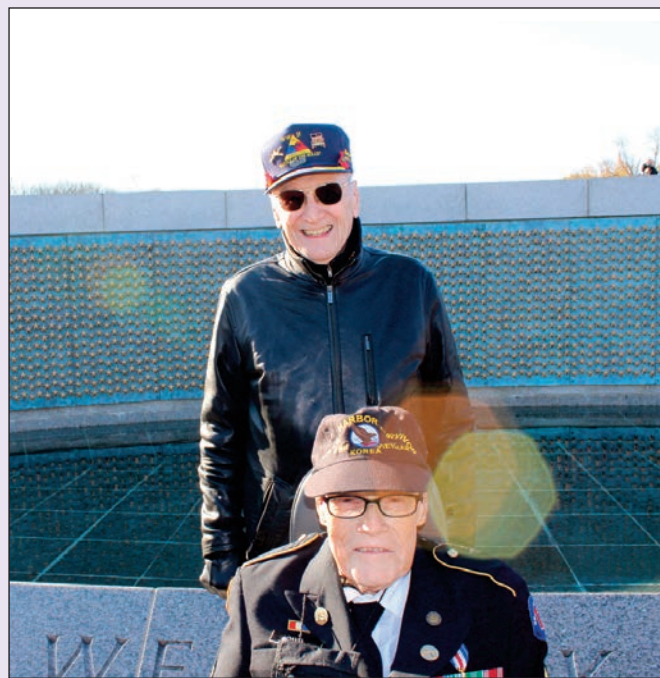
Davis, an Army veteran, went on to fight in WWII, the Korean conflict and the Vietnam War. He remembers, "How easy it is to die." Now 95-years old, and in his ninth year at AFRH, Davis gets around very well.

Miller, who served in the United States Air Force during WWII and was involved in the planning of B-52 strikes in Southeast Asia during the Vietnam War, has been very active at AFRH since his arrival three years ago.

The Navy Ceremonial Band serenaded the crowd with bellowing tunes of patriotic music. The Armed Forces Color Guard presented the colors, as the crowd, which included an Honor Flight from Austin, stood with their hands over their hearts. Quilts of valor were bestowed upon each of the WWII veterans, while voiceover of the CBS broadcast of the bombing of Pearl Harbor played in the background. Keynote speaker, The Honorable John McCain, a retired Navy captain, whose father and grandfather were both four-star admirals, gave a first-hand account of his time as a naval aviator and his brushes with death.

The laying of the wreaths happened on the other side of the Rainbow Pool, in front of the wall of 4,048 gold stars. Each one represents 100 American military deaths. That means that more than 400,000 soldiers, sailors, marines, airmen, and military personnel lost their lives or remain missing in action in World War II.

Finally Taps was played, as the ceremony concluded while Mr. Bruce Allen, President of the Washington Redskins and Vice President-Elect Mike Pence, who were also present to participate in the ceremony, looked on.



GULFPORT

Holiday cookout delivers holiday joy!

By Susan Bergman, MT-BC, Recreation Therapy Services
Photos by Becki Zschiedrich, Public Affairs

We were thrilled to be joined once again by Santa, Mrs. Claus, and Rudolph for the Valor, Allegiance & Loyalty Holiday Cookouts. Special guests included Santa (aka Chris Alexander), Mrs. Claus (aka Jennifer Biernacki), and Rudolph (aka Susan Bergman). Red polo embroidered veteran t-shirts were handed out to each resident in healthcare along with holiday cheer, smiles, and customary "Ho, Ho, Ho!" A resident went quickly to put on her new shirt, came back all lit up, and said, "They made this especially for me...it fits perfectly." Dining offered a wonderful array of delicious food and employee holiday helpers and elves arrived to assist with serving. Thank you to all for making the day "Bright and Merry with Holiday Joy!"

