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AFRH
Gulfport, MS

AFRH Communicator

AFRH
Washington, D. C.

Volume II
Number 12

Armed Forces Retirement Home
Gulfport, MS – Washington, DC

Christmas Edition
Thursday, December 23, 2004

Merry Christmas

to the residents of the

Armed Forces Retirement Home

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.

Editorial views and opinions expressed in these pages are not necessarily those of AFRH or the leadership of each Home.

Throughout the newspaper AFRH-G input will be denoted as (G) and AFRH-W as (W).

AFRH-W Editors Column

For information about residency at AFRH please contact us at 800.422.9988 or admissions@afrh.gov

CHRISTMAS ON THE HILL

By William Tobin (W)

'Twas the nite before X-mas at Home on the Hill
All things were quiet, 'twas really quite still
Most of the residents had long gone to bed
After brushing their teeth and taking their meds.
Their thoughts were of loved ones and X-mases gone
Of good times and bad times and others passed on
When out by the flagpole a vision appeared
Could it be Santa & 8 tiny reindeer?
Alas it was not, but 'twas a vision indeed
An old Army caisson pulled by 8 brawny steeds
The caisson was driven by Abe Lincoln in red
With no jolly red cap but a top hat instead
The caisson was loaded with all kinds of things
There was candy and cookies and watches and rings
The horses were dancing and prancing about
When old Honest Abe gave a mighty big shout
He got their attention and called them by name
What he had was a really big equine Hall of Fame
On Grant and Sherman, Up Barnes and Up Lee
Don't linger for we have a big job you see
On Pickett and Sheridan, Up Jackson and Lee
We've lots of presents for under the tree.
The horses lunged forward, and upward, and out
And for a short while they circled about
Then the Rail Splitter called as they sped out of sight
Merry X-mas to all, and to all a Good Night.

Message from the Chief Operating Officer

Well, it certainly is beginning to feel a lot like Christmas! In Gulfport the coast line is bedecked with holiday decorations and the Gulfport Home has been transformed into a wonderland of lights. In Washington the large candy canes have been hung in the lane and the holiday lawn displays announce the season. And, just two miles away the Capitol and National Christmas trees sparkle in the crisp night air.

Throughout 2004 many individuals and groups have generously supported the Home. However, I'd like to take this opportunity to personally recognize two groups that have made a positive impact on our residents during this Holiday Season. The first group is the fine folks at COSTCO (Northeast Region). This is the second year that they have placed the AFRH on the top of their "Santa" list. On Saturday, December 4th, Ms. Tonya Mitchell and Mr. Dean Roberts delivered two vans full of "goodies" for our residents. This year they contributed three large TVs, a microwave, twelve (deluxe) large rockers, clothe, games, pool sticks, ping-pong paddles, a coffee maker, shoes, slippers, and many, many more items. Tonya and Dean obviously have a super boss, Mr. Joe Potera, who is not only a personal supporter of our Home, but who graciously encourages his COSTCO staff to partner with us. We are indeed honored to have them as members of our AFRH "family."

The second group is the Veterans of Foreign Wars Foundation and the Ladies Auxiliary VFW. On November 9th, the Secretary of the Navy accepted the gift offered from the VFW Foundation, through Operation Uplink, to make 195,000 Military Assistance Communications Kits (MACK) packs available to Sailors deployed or stationed overseas. 1,600 of these packages have now been provided to the AFRH for our residents. The packages include holiday greeting cards and notepaper suitable for residents to send to their friends and family. Additionally, each package includes a 60-minute telephone calling card which will enable our residents to contact family and friends over the holidays.

As the 2004 calendar year draws to an end, I want to wish each resident, employee, friend and supporter of the Home a joyous and safe holiday. I look forward to the challenges and opportunities of 2005 as well as the privilege of serving the distinguished residents of the AFRH.

Timothy Cox

New residents at AFRH-G

Census: 594 as of December 20, 2004

Clarence A. McGee	USAF
James S. Borho	USN
Robert W. Greenwalt	USN
Barry L. Woolridge	USN
Charles MaGill	USA
Miles C. Medearis Jr.	USN
Julius W. Wenzel	USAF
Anthony F. Retel	USA
Joseph L. Lavryk	USA
Wilburn Ford	USAF
Charles W. Smith	USAF
Earl F. LaFlam	USN
Adell M. Condon	USN

New residents at AFRH-W

Census: 1003 as of December 20, 2004

Herman E. Clement	USA
Alvin R. Merx	USAF
Ray E. Bloom	USA
Michael Sipe	USN
Arthur W. Englund	USN
George J. Lang	USN
Marvin F. Taylor	USAF
Donald N. Stout	USN
James O. Cash	USA
Joseph R. Ceryak	USA
Joseph Peck	USN
William L. Miller	USA
Charles G. Kepreades	USA
Charles Davis	USAF

Christmas comes early in Washington, thanks to our good friends at COSTCO

Chuck Dickerson (right) lends a helping hand assembling rocking chairs with COSTCO representatives.

Office of the Director

The Gift of Life! The gift of life means many things to each of us. To some of us, the gift of life is our children or grandchildren, family members, and friends. There is a story about a man who punished his small daughter for wasting a roll of gold wrapping paper. Money was tight and he became angry when the child put the gold wrapped gift under the tree. This little girl gave the gift to her father the next day. The father was embarrassed by his display of anger, but he again was displeased when he opened the box and it was empty. The little girl told him it was full of love and kisses for him. He pleaded for her forgiveness. We as children, parents, family members, or friends have been given a present of unconditional love. There is no other possession more precious than this.

To others, the Gift of Life is one of donations, whether it is money, clothes, or organ transplants. It wasn't that many years ago that organ transplants were not possible. With the advances in the medical field, they are very prominent and will save the life of many people. Another story that comes to mind is one of a little girl who had leukemia. There were no bone marrow matches in her family and her parents decided to have another baby to harvest bone marrow in an attempt to save their first born. Against advice and ridicule, they had another baby and this baby, their gift of life, donated her bone marrow to her big sister, giving her a second chance at life.

During this holiday season, we think of Christmas and the birth of Christ as a Gift of Life. Millions of people, Christians, will celebrate their Lord's Nativity with candlelight, carols, and the smells of the season. We will retell the story again and again, the journey to Bethlehem, the arrival of the baby in the stable, the announcement to the shepherds in the night, the star in the East, and the mission of the Magi.

Even for those that do not share the Christian belief, the season's message of peace, love, and goodwill for all is meaningful. The joy and message of the season transcends religion and nationality. It embraces all of mankind. There is still something compelling about the story and the message even for those who regard it as just pretty fiction. This one birth can still act as a symbol of the human spirit and love and hope in a hostile and despairing world. The dream of universal brotherhood and love for all mankind is not confined to Christians; it is the dream of all people. I hope the love and hope that rests in the Christmas and Holiday season is yours and that we continue to share it with family, friends, and all of the AFRH family.

CAPT Jerald Ulmer

To the residents and staff of AFRH-G - Time flies by and the year of 2004 is almost over. I hope that everyone is doing well and will have nice holidays. It's getting cold in Japan but I haven't seen snow here yet. It's been a year and a half since I finished by internship at the AFRH and came back to Japan. I had such great experiences during my internship. There are many things that I learned and those are useful for my current career. I am working at a long-term care facility located in Mito-City. Programming and facilitating activities for clients are my main jobs now. The oldest lady in the facility is 100 years old and she is so cheerful. Whenever I talk to any residents in the facility, I remember the residents of the AFRH and wonder how they are doing. So, it's always nice to hear about the residents of the AFRH. I hope that I can come to see you sometime soon. Please take the best care of yourself until then. Sincerely,

Hiroko Sato

Lest We Forget
Pearl Harbor veterans remember the day

AFRH-G Pearl Harbor veterans were honored at the Gulfport Campus on December 7. After sharing stories of their Pearl Harbor experiences, residents pose for a picture with Captain Ulmer. Pictured are (from left) Howard Reeves, Bruce Frye, Captain Ulmer, Haultain Smith, John Kees, Louis Richardson, and Robert Carson. Pearl Harbor veterans not pictured but residents of AFRH-G are John Walker, Clarence Rugger, William Locke, Harold McDaniel, Clyde Simpson, Wayne Nash, Edward McCullough and Thomas Buonfigli.

Office of the Deputy Director –Gulfport

Have you heard the buzz lately? I have…and it's very annoying. If you've heard it too you know what I am talking about. Those pesky little creatures that whine in your ears then have the nerve to bite you on top of it whether you tolerate them or not. The mosquito is not picky in choosing its next victim and with all the hype in the media about West Nile virus and other vector-borne illnesses it is no wonder that people are afraid to venture out at times. Female mosquitoes may live as long as three weeks during the summer and many months in the winter. They must have water in which to complete their life cycle as well. To humans and domestic animals, mosquitoes are a nuisance and a health hazard since they can transmit a variety of diseases such as malaria and the infamous West Nile virus. According to the Centers for Disease Control (CDC), there are several ways to "Fight the Bite" of the mosquito and avoid infection.

To avoid bites, you should apply insect repellent containing DEET to exposed skin when you go outdoors. Even a short time outdoors can be long enough to get a mosquito bite. When possible, wear long sleeves, long pants and socks when outdoors. They may bite through thin clothing, so spraying clothes with repellent containing DEET will give extra protection. Do not apply repellents containing permethrin directly to your skin and do not spray repellent containing DEET on the skin UNDER your clothing. Also, be aware of peak mosquito hours which are from dusk to dawn for many species. If there is standing water around the home, you should drain it since mosquitoes lay their eggs in standing water. You can also install or repair screens.

Okay, how can you help out your local community? By reporting dead birds to local authorities. Dead birds may be a sign that West Nile virus is circulating between birds and the mosquitoes in an area. However, it is very important to know that birds die from many other causes besides West Nile virus. Here at the AFRH-G, our Campus Operations team has added additional protection by purchasing and installing 12 (9 currently functional) Mosquito Magnets less than two years ago. These high-powered wonders are scattered throughout the grounds with each one covering over two acres in providing protection. Mr. Ralph Marshall states that before the installation of these Magnets, mosquito bites were quite noticeable and residents were discouraged to go out at peak hours. I therefore consider myself lucky to have this luxury as a quarters resident. For those of who are still concerned about contracting West Nile, please rest assured with the steps taken above, your changes are slim.

Fewer than one out of 150 people who are bitten by an infected mosquito get severely ill, according to CDC. In most cases, people who are infected never become sick or have only very mild symptoms for a few days. The virus can in rare cases cause encephalitis and death. Currently, there is no specific treatment for this disease. In a serious case, an individual may be hospitalized for good supportive care. Most people infected with this disease have no symptoms. Of those that become ill, symptoms include fever, headache, nausea, body aches and mild skin rash. For those that simply get annoyed by the bite and subsequent itching, applying soap to the area will usually bring instant relief.

Do you have any more remedies you want to share? Next time you hear the buzz, remember these tidbits!

LT COL Wendy VanDyke

Office of the Deputy Director-Washington

Staying the Course!

Hello, it's been a couple of months since my last article as the Ombudsman, Mr. Al Mori, has started to share time with me in this Communicator slot. Al will be submitting articles every other month as we go forward. As for this month, I've chosen to review several previously proposed changes to help update you on where we are. Let's review those changes and see how we are staying the course to reach our desired destinations!

Let's start with the Business Center which was set to move on or around December 15th, this should have occurred by the time you read this. They have relocated to the ground floor of Sheridan along the common hallway that stretches along the fitness center and bowling alley. The Ombudsman Office has also relocated to ground floor of Scott directly across from the Chaplain's Office in Room 1010. The construction of the new Dental and Ophthalmology clinic, work is well underway! The hallways down in west end of the Scott ground floor, right behind the Auditorium, have been blocked off to prevent Residents and Staff from entering the construction zone. The expected completion date for this project is still April of 2005. The Dental and Ophthalmology Clinics would move into the new Scott Building spaces on ground floor west end the following month of May 2005. The new clinics will be modern facilities in closer proximity to a greater number of Residents, which will be a major QOL improvement!

The Pipes move-out plan is proceeding well. We have funded the renovation of spaces within Scott to create a new Assisted Living (AL) area. The creation of this AL area on the 3rd floor of Scott, east wing (currently empty) is scheduled for completion on or around January 31st, 2005, this is a fast tracked effort! We will also create a new clinic area on the 1st floor of Scott and also relocate Medical Records there as well. We have also funded the upgrade to the support systems within a 2nd floor wing in LaGarde so that it can be used to house Memory Support/Dementia. Bottom line is Pipes should be emptied out by Mid-February 2005 with the bulk of Residents and functions moving up to the Scott building with the exception of Memory Support Dementia and non-ambulatory AL Residents who will both be moved into the Lagarde building.

On the persistent problem of Sheridan hot water flashes, we have funded and completed a test project that replaced toilets within 14 Sheridan rooms. We did this limited test to see if the replacement of existing toilets would stop the flashes of hot water within the Sheridan building. We discovered the hot water flashes were still occurring, not randomly with toilet flushes as they once were, but instead they now occurred every thirty to forty-five seconds as if a pump were causing it. By the time you read this, we will have brought in a mechanical systems expert to help troubleshoot this hot water flash problem. Obviously, this will be worked until corrected.

The new Defend-in-Place Fire Drill procedure is moving forward as well. Many of you have noticed the conspicuous placement of colored fire zone signs throughout Sheridan Building. Sheridan is divided into five fire safety compartments using colors of Green, Blue, Red, White, and Yellow. In general, if you can see a color sign such as the "Blue Zone", then you are within the Blue Zone. We also have the ability to announce over a public announcement system within the Sheridan during a fire. For example, if there is a fire within the Red Zone, then the announcement will say something similar to "Fire in the Red Zone, 3rd floor, evacuate the "Red Zone on the third floor, all others remain in your colored zone area". This will be repeated several times to ensure everyone

See Washington Deputy page 18

Although he's retired....

Retiring is something Pete's never quite done

By Mary Kay Gominger (G)

When you think of a retirement community you typically envision residents taking leisurely walks around the grounds, enjoying spectacular views of the sun setting over the water, and sitting among friends drinking coffee making plans for a trip out into town. Or you think of residents bowling, fishing, or attending one of the many activities offered by the Leisure and Wellness folks like an ice cream social, a dance or such. Rarely do you picture in your mind residents rushing off to meetings, reaching for their calendars to see when they can fit you in for an interview or a two-week wait for a free minute to talk. But that's what retirement is like for eight year resident Laury Arturo Carter or Pete as he is called around here. He's definitely a man with a plan and to know the man is to know that he is not nearly retired, he is as active as he has ever been and shows no sign of letting up.

Pete Carter (left) stops to chat before proceeding to yet another meeting.

Pete joined the Army in 1943 and immediately was sent to England. His first assignment was infantry school but during the first week he was there, the Commanding Officer learned of his skills in the kitchen and he served the remainder of his school time cooking, much to the delight of the camp personnel. Pete's family owned a restaurant and he had been in and around the business as a child growing up so Pete was no stranger to the kitchen and served delicious meals, something very foreign to this particular group of soldiers.

Pete ultimately was assigned in field artillery working with tanks and protecting ground forces in North Africa and Italy until the war's end in 1945. He got out two years later and went to work at a shipyard, fusing metal, for a few months and decided to go back into the Army. Back to Germany he went, this time working in military police, a career choice that following him throughout his career in the military and beyond. After about five years with the Army, he was recruited by the Air Force and spent the next 15 years working as a military police instructor in Air Force bases in Europe, North Africa and England, and at stateside locations in Louisiana and North Dakota. Pete also got involved in club management, working in various base clubs throughout his career, always in addition to his primary job of security. Pete's business saavy and his knowledge of the food industry always found its way to base commanders and they repeatedly called on him to help out.

Upon retiring from the Air Force, Pete put all his efforts into his public relations and marketing business that he had dabbled in during this last years in the military. It was called Angel Enterprise and in the 38 years he was in business he represented people like Jimmy Dickens, Hank Thompson, Billy Walker and Bobby Baer to name a few. He also is friends with TV celebrity Regis Philbin, Robin Roberts and country singer Barbara Mandrell. He has autographed photographs of every Republican president since Nixon in his possession and is a life member of the Presidential Task Force, one of the many organizations he is presently active in.

The list could go on and on but to mention a few, Pete holds active membership with the Veterans of Foreign Wars, Disabled Veterans Association, American Legion, Elks Club, the Scottish Rites, Knight Commander Court of Honor, the the Loyal Order of Moose (Legion of the Moose, Fellowship Degree, and Pilgrim Degree), Blue Lodge Masonic Riders, York Rites, NCOA, Retired Enlisted Association, Shriners of National Sojourner, and the local Chamber of Commerce – just to name a few.

Most days, Pete can be seen rushing in and out of the building, dressed in a three-piece suit (Pete is a certified custom tailor having attending Norfolk State University but that's a whole other story), on his way to a meeting, or a luncheon or an awards ceremony. On the day of this interview, he was on his way to D'Iberville to deliver U.S. flags to replace tattered ones that were being flown over the city. He also works part-time as a Security Guard for the AFRH-Gulfport contracting company Paragon Security.

"All my life I've worked two or more jobs at one time," said Pete. "I have been very fortunate to have been able to travel and see the world and meet the people I have throughout the years. Today I'm still traveling and meeting new people and working several jobs. It's what I've always done and all I know."

"Get in the Swim"at Catholic University

By Jerry Carter (W)

On Tuesday, November 2, residents here at AFRH-W participated in swimming program at Catholic University. Not only did the residents have fun, but many enjoyed the chance to swim and stay healthy at the same time. Join us on Tuesdays and Friday's, departing in front of the Sheridan Building at 1:30pm and returning by 3:30pm.

Ruby Boomer (left) along with other resident enjoying a dip in the pool.

A message from the AFRH-W Resident Advisory Committee (RAC)

Members of the AFRH-W Resid-ent Advisory Committee: Warren Toogood, Robert Hill, Homer Ruther-ford, Grace Carpenter, Russell Smith, Jo Soboleski, Edith Ellington and Miriam Rivkin. Members not pictured are Arthur Albritton, William Jentarra-KHC Ombudsman, Henry Johnson, Peter Setcoski, James Webster and Russell Catlett.

To represent the residents to the best of our ability, we will reach out to you.- to find out and deal with your concerns and interests- So do your share and reach out to us. We'll be wearing white tags with black print- and we'll have a suggestion and survey box with suggestion forms by the dining room.

After this first 'minutes delay'- we expect to have the minutes posted within 10 days of our meetings. Why so long? Because they are once again going through the administration departments FOR THEIR RESPONSES! By the time they are posted, you will know what the RAC has done and what the administration has done for us. We wish us all happy holidays and a more relaxed and joyful New Year.

'Residents Itching to Buy' RAC sponsors first resident Flea Market

ON THE GOOD SIDE

Submitted by Mike Longwell (W)

Retired Marine resident Bill Adams enjoys chatting with Corporal Jerry Caraway from Henderson Hall.

Resident Phil Fellow enjoys a Martini in the Scott Lounge with his daughter Kristin. They just finished a great Thanksgiving mean in the dining facility.

Black Jack Game Show Is A Big Hit

By Keith Turner (W)

Over 40 residents signed up to participate in the first Black Jack Game Show held Monday, November 29, 2004 at the AFRH in D.C. The game show contest had a "Price Is Right" style mixed with a "Casino" style and hosted by Keith Turner and Ed Underwood, the game show was another smashing hit. "I had just as much fun watching as I had playing. These new game shows are excellent and a lot of fun, and the only reason why I didn't win this one, was because I wasn't sitting in the lucky seat." Every contestant won money but it wasn't easy because even when it seemed obvious that the resident was going to take home the big pot by showing a total of "20" on their cards over and over, Turner (as the dealer) would pop up with

"21". There was a great battle going on between Mr. Robert Cavanaugh and the dealer.

Three times Cavanaugh displayed a winner's hand showing "20, 19, and 20" in that order and losing to the dealer "21, 20, and 21" in that order. However, in the end Mr. Cavanaugh had the last laugh as he took home the big bucks. "Play it again Sam" he replied, as he walked off into the sunset waving his prizes he had just won.

The request was immediately made to do this again next month. Unfortunately, it will have to wait in line. Special thanks to the residents for supporting our newly designed activities and for making it fun, especially Mike Longwell who helps to gives that true game show atmosphere. And to all of the many residents who have supported our game shows for 2004, you all are great We really love designing events for you. Thanks Laura Fogarty for letting us try our ideas. Bring on 2005.

U.S. Marine Corps Birthday Celebration

Capt. Soares celebrates the USMC birthday with former and active duty Marines.

Attention to Colors! Marine Corps Color Guard is on hand for this traditional event.

Bridging the Digital Divide

By Edward Underwood (W)

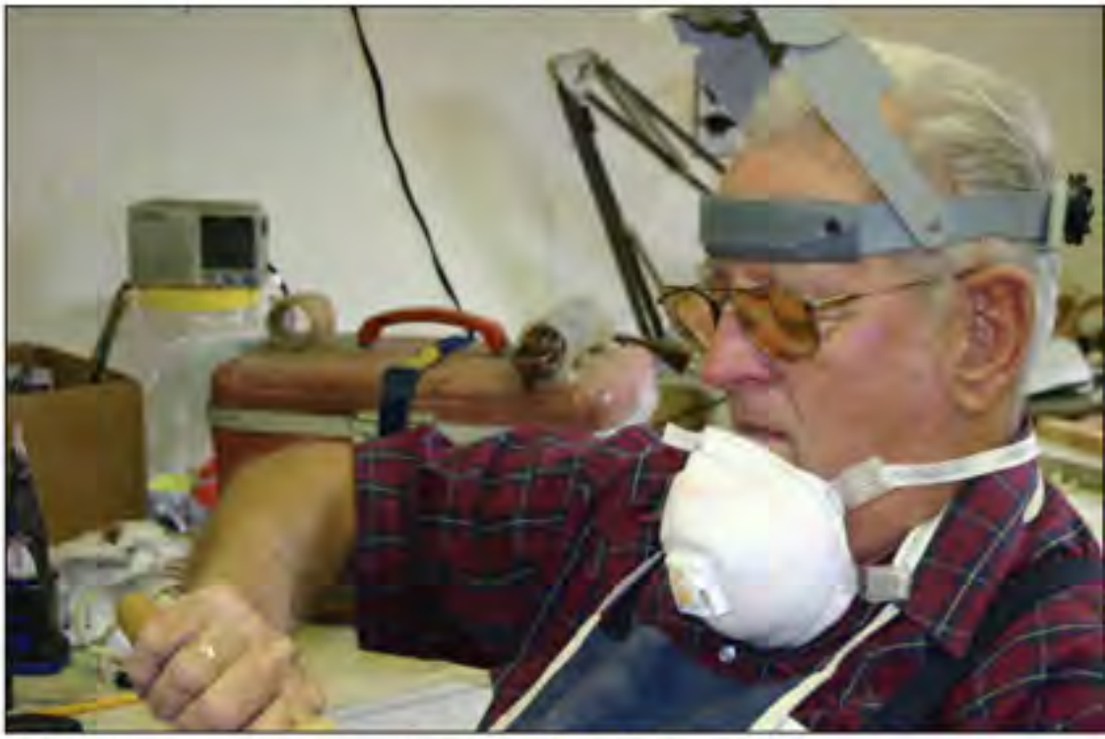
On Tuesday afternoon, November 30, 2004, there was a buzz of excitement at the AFRH-W. Representatives of the E-Bay Foundation, the Jewish Council for the Aging and SeniorNet descended upon AFRH-W to dedicate the first SeniorNet Computer Learning Center to feature Assertive Technology devices. The technological devices were donated by the E-Bay Foundation to the AFRH-W Computer Learning Center to mention a few: two 19" monitors to be used in Recreational Therapy and two computer tables for the Computer Lab in the Scott building and other devices allowing easier access to the computers for residents in wheelchairs and other maladies that would ordinary lessen the use of computers by seniors. The E-Bay Foundation, SeniorNet and the Jewish Council for the Aging hopes the donations and curriculum will enhance the lives of the residents and generate an interest in computing.

Members of the District of Columbia Assertive Technology Center and other groups from the metropolitan area were in attendance. The event commenced with refreshments provided by SeniorNet during the time allotted for Registration as the residents and others gathered in front of the Scott auditorium. The event kicked off with an introduction by Jane Adkins, Regional Representative for SeniorNet followed by an official welcome to the AFRH by Captain Paul A. Soares, Deputy Director AFRH-W.

Leslie Smith a member of the SeniorNet Board of Directors and Brian Bieron, Senior Director of Federal Affairs for the E-Bay Foundation Presentations made. There was a pen point Curriculum presentation by Jan Adkins, which gave an overview of how the adaptive technology devices will enable seniors to use computers. After the event tours of the Computer Lab were given to those interested.

May the Peace of the Season be with You and Yours
And
May You have a Bright and Prosperous
New Year 2005

New resident enjoys making creative art for all to enjoy



Billy Williams works on a project at the Wood Hobby Shop.

By Mary Kay Gominger (G)

Billy Williams moved into the Armed Forces Retirement Home in Gulfport in October and already he is starting something! A good something, that is. Billy is starting beginner wood working classes for any resident interested in learning how to whittle. Why wood working you might ask? Billy explains how he got into it.

"After I retired I used to go to bluegrass festivals and rodeos all over the country, particularly in Texas and Oklahoma. I'd see old fellars sitting around whittling away on a chunk of wood, not necessarily making anything, just passing the time. I picked up a piece of cedar and starting whittling and before long I had made a dolphin. The craftsmanship wasn't that great but the colors in that particular piece of cedar were spectacular. After that, I was hooked," said Billy.

Billy retired from the Air Force then retired from the VA before he donned his tools and started whittling.

"After I retired for good, I spent the next 19 years on the road in my RV," Billy said. "I traveled all over the country, going to bluegrass festivals, rodeos and wood carving shows. That's when I really started doing a lot of wood working.

"I figured I needed a hobby that was small enough to put in my RV and cheap enough that I could do it on my retiree budget. Wood working fit me just right," he continued.

Now Billy has completed hundreds of pieces, some he sells, some he keeps, some he even gives away to friends and family.

"When I start a piece I have no idea of how it is going to come out," Billy explained. "As I work on it, it begins to take on a life of its own. I just follow my instincts.

Billy said he remembers hearing about the AFRH back when .50 was being deducted from his paycheck.

"I knew about the Washington home but never realized there was a place like this in Gulfport. Then several years ago I was passing through and saw this place and I liked what I saw. I thought that when I was ready to park my RV, here was a place that I would be interested in living," Billy said. Now that he's here, Billy has nothing but great things to say about the place. "I love it here," he said. "How could you beat this?" he exclaimed. "The beauty of the area, the location of the Home on the beach, the grounds are kept so nice and the upkeep and cleanliness of the building is outstanding,"

If you are interested in finding out more about wood working or in signing up for a wood working class, contact Billy Williams at ext. 8333 or stop by the Wood Hobby Shop, he can be found there most days.

Santa's helpers in concert

Children from the Naval Construction Battalion Center's Child Development Center brought Christmas cheer to residents in the Health Care Center recently. While here the children sang Christmas carols and enjoyed cookies and punch. The refreshments were provided by the Seabee Center's Officer's Spouse Club.

AFRH-G brings Christmas joy to local children

Below - Resident Walt Hutchins, decked in Santa gear, hands out candy canes to children of Moore Community House, a subsidized day care in Biloxi, Miss. Right - Chaplain Thompson hands out gifts to children. Below right - Resident Irene Smith tells Santa what she wants for Christmas. Irene, a long-time volunteer at the Chapel, has spearheaded this event for the past four years. Through the collection of donations from Protestant and Catholic services, $500 was raised to purchase gifts for the Moore Community House children.

Celebration at AFRH-G

Marine Corps celebrates 229 years

Residents of the AFRH-G joined active duty Marines in birthday celebrations here on Nov. 19. Below, couples step out and enjoy dancing. Right, Capt. Justin P. Wilhelmsen (left) and Oldest Marine John Taylor Jr. and Youngest Marine PFC M.A. Duque cut the cake.

Washington vs Gulfport Spelling Bee

Capt Soares presents Jackie Haslem with the first place trophy.

By Laura R. Fogarty (W)

Thursday, December 9 will be a day to remember for all those in attendance either as a participant or spectator at the first AFRH Spelling Bee between the Gulfport and Washington campuses. The event began with the Washington campus team consisting of Ida Simpson, Al Linton, Bobby Cook, Dewitt Evans, James Hart and Jackie Haslet. These six people were given an assortment of words to spell narrowing down the contestants to one final resident who would compete against Ms. Hogan from Gulfport. (Although others from Gulfport were given the opportunity to come and participate they declined the offer.)

Keith Turner congratulates Lois Hogan on her 2nd place finish.

Jackie Haslem (W) and Lois Hogan (G) were the two residents to compete for the championship spelling bee title and trophy for their campus. As the rounds continued each resident carefully spelled their assigned word one by one. The anticipated excitement grew amongst the participants and even throughout the audience. The final outcome: 1st place went to Jackie Haslet from Washington winning $100.00 and Lois Hogan from Gulfport took 2nd place receiving $25.00. All the contestants displayed great sportsmanship and it was a fun time had by all. Thank you to Tonya Brown, Mike Longwell, Keith Turner and our community volunteer Debbie for helping to make this event a success.

Ladies enjoy Christmas tea party on Washington campus

Lady residents Marion Marques (left) and Lee Miggins (right) add their own special touch in decorating the tree in Quarters One.

A night to remember...

The Holiday Dance

By Laura R. Fogarty (W)

The AFRH-W holiday dance was held on Friday, December 10th this year. The event was spectacular with glistening lights from the tree and the surrounding decorations. Residents and guests enjoyed dining and dancing throughout the evening as the U.S. Navy Commodores played and the Flying Feet Dancers mingled amongst the guests. A great time was had by all. Special thanks to the following volunteers and Leisure and Wellness staff for their hard work in making this event a success: Alice Garrymore, Bernice Goldstein, Arthur England, Marion Marques, Audrey Hughes, Don Egolf, Jean Ringuette, Keith Turner and Jackie Bell. In addition a big thank you to the Dining hall staff and our AAFES Lounge Manager Scotty for all their hard work as well to make this event a success. Thank you!

Season Greetings!

Conrad family donation will grow for years

By Jeff Anderson (W)

A generous donation of plants from a resident's children has turned Main Street of Lagarde building into a garden.

Mark and Debra Conrad donated many beautiful palms, Hibiscus and other large plants to King Health Center. Allowing their father, William Conrad, to continue his interest in gardening. Mr. Conrad has been an avid gardener for many years and enjoyed working in the vegetable gardens this summer behind KHC.

Bill can be seen on Main Street watering and caring for the plants each day, which puts a smile on his face. "I love to see things grow", which is evident in the way he cares for the plants.

Mark and Debra are very proud of their father; the donation enables Bill to continue to spend his leisure time in a positive manner.

We would like to express our thanks to Mark and Debra for their generous donation, and special thanks to Bill for keeping the Main Street of KHC looking like a tropical garden.

William Conrad pours care and love into the beautiful plants in the KHC main street area.

Stanley Sagara's Efforts Clearly Seen By Others - THANK YOU for your donations!

By Stanley Mataichi Sagara (W)

Yes, THANK YOU for all the donated used eye glasses. Used eye glasses are urgently needed to meet the increasing need for eye glasses worldwide. With your help, the Lions Club members are encouraged to support the work of the Lions Clubs International Eyeglass Recycling Program.

On 20 September 2004, a box of 200 pairs of pre-sorted donated eye glasses were delivered to Lens Crafters in Silver Springs, Maryland. They will be shipped to the Lions Eyeglass Recycling Center of Northern Virginia at 212 North West Street, Falls Church, Virginia 22046, where volunteers will process the eye glasses and prepare them for eye clinic missions in Third World countries.

The Lions Recycling Center of Northern Virginia is one of seven Lions recycling centers in the United States. There are five additional Lions recycling centers in Australia, Canada, France, South Africa and Spain.

Several organizations such as Lens Crafters and Volunteer Optometric Services to Humanity (VOSH) International distribute recycled eye glasses in Third World countries at no cost.

VOSH was organized in 1972 by Dr. Frank Harms, OD, and consists of eye doctors and lay personnel who conduct free eye clinics around the world. There are some thirty-eight VOSH chapters, including chapters made up of senior college optical students and several in foreign countries.

VOSH chapters conducted over one hundred eye care mission in the year 2004 to various areas of the world where improved vision is needed for people who cannot afford eye glasses or eye examinations. I will accompany an eye care mission to Zacapa, Guatemala in March 2005 and another one to Iquitoes, Peru in May 2005 as a lay person assisting eye doctors conducting eye examinations and dispensing eye glasses, at no cost, as a gift of the American people. All complete eye glasses are welcomed. We cannot use eye glasses with missing parts or loose lenses. We do not need eye glass cases because they take up to much room in the shipping boxes, which are sent as checked baggage and we live out of our carry-on luggage. Non-prescription sun glasses are also collected since most of our eye care missions are in tropical climates where high levels of ultraviolet rays are a concern that damages the eyes.

National Family Volunteer Day CELEBRATED

By Laura Fogarty (W)

Saturday, November 20th marked another year of fun, socializing and "grunt work" for some with Department of Defense employees and their families.

National Family Volunteer day is a day when families are encouraged to volunteer as a unit to perform community service and to instill the value of volunteering in children. Due to the success of the first visit 4 years ago, the program has continued each year thereafter. All of the participants really enjoy the interaction with one another and share stories of the past and the presents.

The following activities and projects were apart of this years' program: Bingo, games such as backgammon, checkers and chess, pool, bowling, ceramic mold pouring, fish ponds and garden clean up and a woodshop and art project for children. Special thanks to those resident volunteers and staff who assisted to make this event once again a success. They are Jesse James, Jim Adams, Charles Felder, Mike Longwell, Tom Carras, Edith Ellington, Homer Rutherford, Joe Williams, Jerry Carter, Steven Briefs. Your efforts are appreciated.

Homer Rutherford (right) works on a few woodworking projects with a young volunteer.

Ankle deep in leaves! Joe Williams (center) works hand in hand with this group of volunteers.

New Administrator in Health Care Services eager to meet residents' needs

By Mary Kay Gominger

You may have noticed a new person on the block at AFRH-G, located in the Health Care Center. He's Ken Brown, AFRH-G's new Administrator and Chief of Health Care Services. Ken has been on the job here for about three months but he brings with him over 16 years of experience in health care management. He was previously the President and CEO of Gulf States AHSA (Association of Homes and Services for the Aging), headquartered in Baton Rouge, Louisiana, and is currently a member of their board of directors.

"Our major role at AHSA is advocacy for seniors at the local and national level," Ken said. "We assisted retirement communities (not-for-profits) in finding services and funding and we lobbied to Congress for retiree benefits and entitlements. We were the 'go to' for long-term care providers when they were looking for programs and services related to retirement homes, nursing homes, assisting living communities and even adult day care."

Prior to his work at AHSA, Ken was the CEO of Presbyterian Retirement Community in Atlanta, Ga., for two years and was the COO and Administrator of St. James Place in Baton Rouge, La., for four years. Ken led both organizations through major expansion programs and to the bond market. Ken holds a bachelors degree in finance and nursing and prior to his studies in nursing, he worked in banking and public accounting.

"I worked for a bank initially and that evolved into work with a CPA firm. We had several retirement homes and clinics as clients and strangely enough, that is how I got my first start in the health care world," Ken recalls.

"Through my representation of health care companies and subsequent audits and work associated with retirement communities, it allowed me to learn about how communities operate, what requirements, licenses and certifications they need and costs associated with running them. This is where my interest in senior health care started and I returned to school and got a degree in nursing, doing clinicals in such places as Barnes Hospital in St. Louis, and Oschner's in New Orleans in cardiac critical care. I've also done graduate studies in psychology and bio-medical science." Ken said. Ken is also a licensed Administrator, a Certified Marketing Professional and is credentialed in critical care.

Since arriving at the AFRH-G, Ken has kept himself busy getting familiar with the staff, the residents and the day-to-day operations of the Health Care Services.

"One of the first things I noticed about the staff here is that they are very dedicated to their jobs and they have good interaction with the residents," Ken noted. "I have been very pleased with how well they all work together.

"One of the things that drew me here was the mission. I was attracted to the idea of serving those who served us," Ken continued. "My goal is that we continue to look for ways to improve and to provide better service and meet the needs of our residents. We should all be advocates for our veterans and in my position, I am ready to do all I can to ensure their needs are met."

If you haven't had a chance to meet Ken Brown, stop by the Health Care Center and introduce yourself. He's a welcome addition to our AFRH-G family.

Ken Brown discusses health issues with Dietician Jam Woodham.

Gulfport Holiday Clinic Schedule

The Outpatient Clinic and the AFRH Pharmacy will be closed on 12/24 and 12/31

Check doctors schedules.

Keesler Satellite Pharmacy will be closed on 12/23 until 12/25 and 12/30 until 1/3

Please get refills in early.

Crime Prevention Is Everyone's Business

By Ronald H. Braswell (W)

Preventing crime is not soley the job of law enforcement and security. Every member of society has a responsibility to contribute to crime prevention. No single group or organization can possibly prevent crime on behalf of all. Each person has the potential to prevent crime and to spur others to action.

Some of the best ways for citizens to participate in crime prevention is to secure property to make it less vulnerable to be removed or taken, working together to reduce crime as a community to restore pride, and look out for suspicious activity.

Stanley M. Segara

A POIGNANT PORTRAIT

Heart Mountain Relocation Cener in Cody, Wy. during the winter of 1943 & 44.

"Mac" McCarty (W) — At the outset of World War II, Americans of Japanese ancestry were prohibited from enlisting in the US Armed Forces. Those already in US military service were given early discharge. It wasn't until the Japanese-American Regimental Combat Team was eventually created that eligible Japanese-Americans were again allowed to apply for enlistment.

It was under these circumstances that AFRH-W resident Stanley Mataichi Sagara began his 20-year US military career. Ironically, he failed the Japanese language test given at Ft. Leavenworth, Kansas, and was directed instead to Infantry Basic Training at Camp Shelby, Hattiesburg, Mississippi. On his first pass from the army post, Stanley felt the need for a restroom immediately after getting off the bus. The only restroom signs he saw, however, read "Whites Only" and "Blacks;" nothing in between. Luckily, the local (and color-blind) USO made no such distinctions, resolving his urgent dilemma.

Stanley's parents and siblings were housed in a Government concentration camp near Cody, Wyoming at the time of his enlistment. Toward helping them cope with their restrictive situation, Stanley volunteered to become a paratrooper in order to draw "jump pay," virtually doubling his monthly income. The extra money enabled him to comfortably send a larger portion of his salary to his parents on a monthly basis.

The end of the war in Europe found Stanley in D Company, 506th Parachute Regiment, 101st Airborne Division, then located in Austria. He and seven other Japanese-American soldiers were transferred to the 82nd Airborne Division, which remained in Europe, while the remaining 6000-plus Japanese-American soldiers were assigned to various Army units in the Pacific as interpreter-translator specialists. These specialists were each provided with two burly and clearly Caucasian GI bodyguards, who accompanied them around the clock, as a safeguard against their being mistaken for infiltrated Japanese nationals.

Pvt. Sagara, USA stationed at Ft Benning Ga, 1944.

Following the end of World War II, Stanley transferred to the newly formed US Air Force, from which he eventually retired.

Sagara's first name, "Stanley," was virtually bestowed upon him by his schoolteachers. Equally affected were all of the children of Japanese heritage in his classroom, simply because the teachers (of Western origin) had difficulty pronouncing and remembering Japanese names. Consequently, Stanley and his young counterparts embraced and kept the Christian names by which they were identified and addressed.

The very congenial and eloquent Stanley M. Sagara has traveled to some 66 countries, in and out of uniform, during his 81 years on the planet. Several of those travels have been in support of his passion for Volunteer Optometric Services to Humanity (VOSH), a far reaching organization through which doctors and lay personnel examine patients and provide those in need with recycled eyeglasses free of charge. If you see Stanley about the AFRH campus, say "hello" to him. You'll be glad you did.

Washington campus awards new contract

By Rachael Hatten (AFRH)

As many of you are aware, the result of the A-76 study was announced in September 2004. Effective January 21, 2005, dining services will be provided by Gulf Coast Enterprises. On that date you will see new faces mixed in with familiar faces but most importantly, there will be plenty of food available for everyone.

Gulf Coast Enterprises is the current contractor for the Gulfport facility and they also provide services to several military facilities in Florida. They have been contracted to provide all labor associated with Dining Services, from the ordering of the food to the clean-up process. The Government will provide over-sight in all aspects of the contract process, including menu development and ensuring that the quality and quantity of food purchased meets your needs.

Many of you may have met Gary Murphy and Fred Hornsby during the week of November 29. They were here to conduct interviews with the current Dining Service employees and to meet with key Washington staff to begin what is called the phase-in process. During the phase-in process, the contractor's key staff will shadow the current dining service staff to learn the ins and outs of our organization. This process will ensure a smooth transition on 21 January.

There will be a lot of work going on behind the scenes for the next several weeks. The contractor will complete their hiring process and begin some training with them. Meetings have been scheduled for the key contract staff to meet with Government staff and food vendors. Food orders will be developed in advance and deliveries scheduled. Menus are already in the system and available for the contractors use. It will be a busy time for all.

Be sure to come visit us on January 21. Dining Services looks forward to serving you!

Christmas To Me
By Leslea Pidgeon

Once a year, I feel like a kid again-it's that special time of the year when you feel Happy and Jolly, it's presents music, food, snow, decorations, extra shopping and aglow. Visits, church, party, travel, plays, Santa Claus, ballet, a Christmas tree, and cards. Poinsettia, holly and mistletoe.

Sharing the Security/Safety of our veterans

By Robert Locke (G)

When the Armed Forces Retirement Home-Gulfport was challenged earlier this year to share the responsibility in providing security and safety to the many outstanding residents of the Home, its quality staff and our guests from the community with a privately owned security company, the selection of Paragon Systems definitely appears to be the "right choice." Recognizing that the overall quality of delivery of security and safety is directly related to the professional service rendered by the Home's Security staff and our partner Paragon Systems, the basic tenets of promoting "total" resident care and awareness are being achieved. Paragon has demonstrated that the company can and has attracted quality personnel presently on site at the Home.

Paragon Systems is a widely respected multi-disciplined company headquartered in Huntsville, Alabama, our next-door neighbors. The company possesses a distinguished legacy for providing professional security services and maintaining a professional posture with other security professionals, recognized law enforcement agencies, and other professionals with whom they conduct business. Paragon's contract with AFRH-G fits the Paragon Systems profile and is easily supported with the proximity of other contracts it currently has in the areas surrounding the Mississippi Gulf Coast.

Tony Allen, Project Supervisor, gives a car the go-ahead to enter at the front gate.

Security Officer Shelley Wildman checks a visitors drivers license and insurance at the front gate.

The new contractor has "jumped right in" assuming the responsibility for the 24/7 coverage at the main gate of the Home and Paragon is responsible for providing roving patrols on the Home's grounds. The residents are readily accepting the "new folks" in their Home and the contract staff is making every effort to work very closely with the Home's Security staff.

The Home's Security staff will be adding two new members to our Security family very soon. The two new positions are the Investigator position and the Assistant position. I would personally prefer that we call them "jobs" and not positions, but we will live with this too. The new Investigators position will be responsible for directing the day-to-day operation of the Security Division. The Investigator will serve as the lead Security Officer and he/she will direct the actions taken in response to fires, disasters, VIP security, criminal acts and will be the lead Security Officer in ensuring the finest customer service to our residents, staff and guests as well as assisting in developing plans, policy, and procedures for handling these incidents. It has been two years since the "old Chief's position" has been permanently filled and we are pointing towards hiring the most qualified person for the job. The Assistant position will manage the front Security Desk and assist in orchestrating the day-to-day operation of the Security office.

Winning teams simply do not just happen, whether they are on the playing field or on the job site. High-powered teams are composed of creative employees who have learned to motivate, inspire and assist each other in performing to the top of their capabilities. The current staff members are actively involved in the day-to-day operation of the Security Division and are committed to tackling tough challenges and they strive for quality results. The following staff members are recognized for their dedication to the residents of the AFRH-G David Jernigan; Jasper Rhodes; Mark Coggin; Charles Hollins; Mary Dorris; John Puglia; James Collins; William Keech; Chalfin Nave; Horace Haywood and John Childers.

In today's rapidly changing workplace, it is easy to become consumed by the barrage of paperwork, pressing deadlines and other job related tasks and we lose sight of the big picture. The highest priority for the Home's Security staff is the residents. Achieving Security's highest priority is all about personal effectiveness and productivity. This wonderful group of Security personnel and their new contract friends are striking a balance of handling the day-to-day crises in a large Continuing Care Retirement Community with professionalism and by providing a secure and safe environment for the residents, staff and visitors. The Security staff is conveying an image of professionalism that is conductive to good Home relations.

The big hunt ...."I remember the day..."

By Jim Pankey (G)

When Mitch was 14, he decided to go after his first whitetail deer. It was rut season in the autumn of the year in southern Missouri, and he had all the paraphernalia with which to get a nice buck for his wall. He had the rifle, a .243 Remington with 4x scope, the clothes, woodland camouflage, a pair of deer antlers, and buck attracting scent. Plus loads of inexperience and the wildly exuberant expectations of youth.

When he reached the knoll he wanted to hunt, due to a nice rub he had seen the week before, he knew there was a big buck by the size of its tracks and the diameter of the bush he rubbed. So he staked himself behind the bush and poured parfum de la femme vamp whitetail all over himself, using the whole bottle. He waited and rubbed the antlers together, eager with the excitement of his first hunt. His rifle lay beside him.

Clack, clack, clack--he pretended he was a big buck fighting another buck over a female, and, of course, he smelled like Wilma Whitetail in oestrus.

It wasn't long before he was nudged to his feet from the rear, causing him to fall into the bush. He turned and saw a huge 10-point buck staring wantonly at him, pawing the ground and snorting heavily. The big buck chased Mitch around and around the bush, and Mitch had forgotten the reason he was here. He knew he had to get away, so he climbed a tree. The mixture of the bottle's contents mingled with his own fluid now, but he couldn't get down to go to the bathroom. To say he was uncomfortable is putting it mildly.

The big buck kept up his frustrated antics by pawing the earth frantically, snorting, and frothing at the mouth for an hour before he finally went elsewhere.

Mitch stayed in the tree, trembling, for another half hour and finally got nerve enough to get down to his rifle and bolt for home. Several times he thought he heard some animal following him and ran most of the way, with a wary eye over his shoulder.

The next year, 15 now and much wiser in the ways of the woods, Mitch went after the buck he knew was still in the territory. This time he had built himself a tree stand and positioned himself in it, and spread the parfum de la femme on the bush. No rattling antlers this time, just poised in the tree with his rifle at the ready.

Soon the big buck appeared and Mitch dropped him in his tracks with a well-placed shot to the heart. His first buck. He told me that he knew he had learned a good lesson and now had a great story to tell his grandkids of the fine buck mounted on his wall, rather than telling them of being mounted by a buck in rut.

Graduation Oak, so named by the cadets of the Gulf Coast Military Academy, stood in the center of the Academy grounds, now the site of the Armed Forces Retirement Home, Gulfport. This tribute to this magnificent tree was written by Brigadier General E.h. Kitchens, Class of 1936. See page 20 for a picture and story on our Graduation Oak.

Graduation Oak

Ancient oak I stand in awe and wonder
as I contemplate your
span of life and callings.
Explorers traced the trail beside you
when, as a sapling, you
sought your share of light.
Before you, top gallants above the sea
beyond, the British fleet
sailed in a war that was-
To a battle yet to be at Chalmette.
You saw the island fort, a prize of battle, become a dungeon hell
for soldiers of the gray.
In a better time, young men named you
as a symbol of a goal to
seek.
You served them well, thus, your name
will not die with them.
Your strength and massive spread now
legend, you were called
again to a high and worthy purpose.
To shade them as they realize their voyages past, these old
warriors of the sea.
Yes, I stand in awe and wonder, ancient
tree.

Graduation Oak, from page 20

such by cadets of the Military Academy because it provided much-needed shade for countless graduation ceremonies through the years, still stands proudly overlooking lush landscaping and surrounded by manicured grounds. The Oak no longer has to face the future alone, as the Campus Operations Department stands careful watch over it, ensuring that the Oak gets the care and attention it needs so that it will still be here for residents to enjoy in the years to come. Campus Operations' concern for the health of the Graduation Oak lead to the hiring of Nahlen' Arborist Services, during the fall of 2001 to ensure the best possible care of the tree was provided. Leonard W. Nahlen, a state certified arborist, is President of the Professional Arborist Association of Mississippi, and has been overseeing the care and treatment of the big oak.

During one of his recent visits, Mr. Nahlen likened the Graduation Oak to one of our residents.

"This tree is just like one of your senior residents," Mr. Nahlen said. "He's getting a little thin on top, doesn't stand quite as erect as he used to, utilizes some cable support systems to stand against the wind, and his root system isn't all that strong any more."

Mr. Nahlem has recommended the area beneath the drip line of the tree be covered with mulch, to keep the roots snug and comfortable, and is looking into a new treatment he learned about at LSU, concerning injections for the root system; sort of a Viagra treatment to instill new vigor in the tree.

And though it is several decades older, tattered and misshapen, the oak tree continues to offer beauty to the beholder, shade to the walkers by and hope to us all that this historic marvel will still be here 100 years from now and it will tell the people here then about what life was like in 2004.

Crafting a violin

By Ludwig Olson (W)

Producing a violin requires such a high degree of skill and patience that the term making a violin is hardly appropriate. Violins are crafted.

During my youth, I had thoughts of producing a violin, but gave it up when learning about the difficulties involved.

Master craftsmen in Cremona, Northern Italy, have been turning out violins since the 16th century. They follow tradition in crafting these fine instruments. Pine is used for the sound board (also called belly), maple for the back, sidewalls, neck, and bridge, and ebony for the fingerboard, tailpiece, and tuning pegs. The four strings are generally made from animal gut. Wooden parts are glued together. The bow is a long wooden stick with horsehair stretched across most of its length.

Blocks of wood for the various parts require long aging. Some are aged 10 years. Finetooth saws and a variety of different shaped chisels are used to form the sound board, back, sidewalls, and other parts. The utmost care is required in shaping the intricate curved surfaces. One slip of a chisel could ruin a block of wood that was aged for a decade! Many coats of special varnish are applied to the wood with drying periods between coats. The various craftsmen have their own ideas as to what varnish gives best results.

By far the most famous violin craftsman in Cremona was Antonio Stradivari (1644-1737). He is often known by his Latin name Stradivarius.

It is claimed that his violins have an especially rich sweet tone because of the special varnish used on the wood. The secret formula for that varnish was lost. Violin producers have tried for many years to find it, but without success.

Genuine Stradivari violins are marked with the interlocked initials AS, and/or a label bearing the Stradivarius (Latin) name. It is likely that some violins bear fake labels.

Violins have been produced in several other countries, most notably France, Austria, Germany, Norway, and Bohemia (now part of the Czech Republic). They vary in some respects from those crafted in Italy, and many have bone or ivory inlays to enhance the appearance. Those turned out in Norway are generally called Hardanger fiddles after the Hardanger region where they originated.

Crafting a violin would be a wonderful project for the Arts and Crafts people at AFRH (W). I have examined the beautiful exotic wood pen barrels turned out by resident Wendell Chapin, and I have a feeling that he is capable of producing a fine violin. His brother, Orville, in Michigan, crafted a high-quality violin several years ago.

Thanks to my cousin, Judith Anderson, who lives in Canada. She is learning how to play a Hardanger fiddle.

Washington Deputy, from page 5

gets the message. When the fire is over, everyone will be told it is safe to move about the building. The goal is not to evacuate the entire building, but instead to keep you away from the fire area. We will be conducting our first drill within the Sheridan Building in the very near future. After completion of efforts within the Sheridan, we will shift our focus to the Scott building to complete their transition to the Defend-in-Place concept.

On a separate and new topic, the cost of meal tickets for visitors, staff, guests, etc…, will be going up to $6 per meal effective January 3rd, 2005, to reflect the actual cost of providing meals. Since Residents do not have to purchase meal tickets for themselves, this will not impact your daily meal costs. But it will affect family and friends who visit you and want to have their meals within our Dining Facility. This increase is a break even amount, AFRH won't make money on selling meal tickets, but we should also stop losing money as we currently do now with the current $4 dollar price.

We have also had several successful recreation events this past month. The Spelling Bee contest went very well with a local AFRH-W Resident, Ms. Edith (Jackie) Haslam winning the first prize as the best speller, great job! Thanks to Mr. Keith Turner for doing such a fantastic job on setting this event up. We also had a very nice Christmas Dance this past December 11th, the decorations, band, guest dancers, food preparations were all handled exceptionally well. Special thanks to Mrs. Laura Fogarty for all her effort on this event, it was a class event! We enjoyed two separate Holiday Tree lighting ceremonies as well, one at LaGarde that deserves a special thanks to Carol Mitchell with help from Rick Langford, it was nice affair. The Tree Lighting within the Scott Building went very well also and we extend a special thanks to Keith Turner again for his efforts. We had Crafts Fair that was well received, thanks to Jackie Bell for all her work in pulling that together. We enjoyed the dedication of a new Computer Learning Center which is part of the SeniorNet program, thanks to Mr. Ed Underwood for pulling all that together in an effort that has spanned over a year! We held a Guest Room Open House that had a large attendance and was spearheaded by Tonya Brown and a Boy Scouts Christmas Caroling that Steven Briefs helped pull together, we simply couldn't do these events without our dedicated staff members such as Tonya and Steven. We also held the Norwood Intergenerational Bowling event supported by the efforts of Jeff Anderson and Carol Mitchell, thanks guys! Last, but not least, we had a Rocking Chair Donation by CostCo where several staff members assisted on a Saturday with the assembly to include Rick Langford, Al Mori, Chuck Dickerson, Steven Briefs, and Jerry Carter, keep up the good work! Well, that about wraps it up for this month, wish everyone a Happy Holidays and a joyous new year.

CAPT Paul Soares

Gold Star Wives visit AFRH-W

The Gold Star Wives (GWS) started on December 15, 1945, when they were incorporated into the state of New York. On December 4, 1980 they were granted a federal charter by Congress recognizing there organization as being "unique" and capable of providing a service not available from any other organization.

They volunteer in our military and veterans hospitals, welfare projects, churches, school and community activities as well as AFRH-W.

'Tis the Season'

By Ricky Langford (W)

On Tuesday, Dec 7 at 10 a.m.. the residents and staff of King Health Center kicked off the holiday season with the annual lighting of the Christmas tree. Dr. Radar did the official honors.

Residents were entertained with caroling by the KHC singers as well as an excellent performance by The Herald Trumpeters of the Old Guard.

Refreshments of gingerbread treats and apple cider contributed to the festive occasion.

By Laura R. Fogarty (W)

This year the Tree lighting program went off well with the Army Brass Band Quintet and the AFRH resident chorus performing for us. Familiar holiday tunes were played as the audience reminisced in their own minds about their holidays; those spent far away from loved ones as well as those special home gatherings.

As our tree was lit by our Chief Operating Officer, Tim Cox and resident William Abernathy the band chimes in with a rendition of "Oh Christmas tree". Once lit, the rotating tree brightened up the theater for all to enjoy. Thank you Keith for decorating the tree, it is perfect! The following chorus members under the direction of Ms. Jackie Bell did an outstanding job and we are grateful for their involvement with this traditional program; Catherine Sheehan, Edward Stites, Edith Ellington, Sam Brabson, John Mallernee and Ray Anderson. As a special note John's solo performance was outstanding and straight from the heart-keep up the good work John.

The program concluded with some gingerbread cookies and apple cider as the band members, guests and residents mingled with one another.

If trees could talk

From students to seniors, the Graduation Oak lives on

By Mary Kay Gominger (G)

Just west of the Chapel stands a huge tree. Not just any tree mind you but a larger-than-life live oak tree that is well over 100 years old, stands at least 50 feet tall and has a limb span of about 80 feet. This grand old tree witnessed, in 1921, the birth of the Gulf Coast Military Academy, a four-year military prep school for boys that once graced the grounds that eventually became the U.S. Naval Home and now the Armed Forces Retirement Home. The Academy was organized into two divisions, this campus being the senior division and the junior division campus was where William Carey College now sits just east of this property. The two campuses were connected by a covered walk through the wooded area behind the houses on the beach. The first year boasted 98 cadets and through the years cadets came, graduated, and moved on all the while the oak stood quietly swaying in the Gulf breeze as the Academy grew through the 20s, 30s and early 40s. enrolling between 350-400 cadets. At the height of World War II enrollment exceeded 500.

Throughout this journey, the majestic tree stood silently silhouetted in the background as cadets learned to march, to play, to study and most importantly, it watched as boys were transformed into men. Laughter, sighs of determination and squeals of delight echoed off the lofty limbs as cadets struggled to find their way, their place in the world. Then, for whatever reason, a decline in enrollment began in the late 40s and by 1951 it was decided to close the Academy.

The property sat vacant for a time, just a scattering of brush and trees, empty buildings and a lot of sand. Time, neglect, the relentless sun, and the perils of mother nature eventually took its toll on what was left of the once-thriving Academy campus. Even the Graduation Oak, ever mighty and strong, suffered damage and injury from relentless winds, storms and hurricanes that swept over the grounds, its proximity to the Mississippi Sound ensuring no shelter from the full force of what mother nature had to offer. Eventually, the property was leased by the Air Force and was used as an annex to Keesler Air Force Base for several years until it was eventually acquired by the Navy Department and developed to meet its present purpose.

Today, the Graduation Oak, dubbed

See Graduation Oak page 17