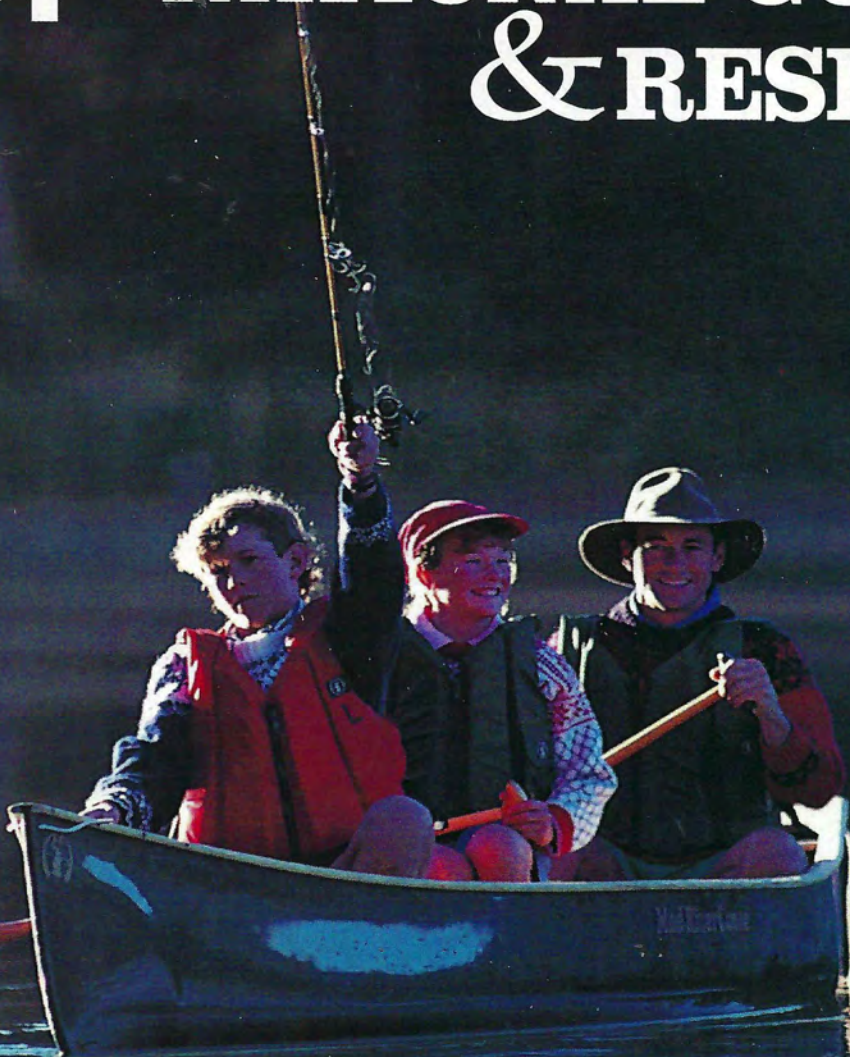


FALL 95

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an ideal location; and conven-  
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lated enough to get away  
from the hustle and bustle.  
We were very pleased with  
the hotel and look forward  
to our next visit. It's home  
away from home! There are  
no painted on faces... here,  
people like what they're  
doing. This is the best hotel  
experience I've had. To sum  
it all up into four words...it  
was just wonderful. It was  
the best vacation I've had in  
years. Our only regret is  
that we had only booked for  
one week and not two. My  
family and wallet thank you.  
We will be distributing your  
literature all over New York-  
you're just what we need in April. The hotel and the  
grounds are beautiful;  
and I traveled a bit. My  
stay was made much

Attention National Guard and Ready Reserves

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more enjoyable by the helpful  
staff. Can't wait  
to return with  
more of our  
friends and maybe  
have a reunion with friends stationed all over. We had a  
wonderful stay at Shades of  
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friendly staff and great  
location. The transporta-  
tion service was so conven-  
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everything we could have  
asked for and is a credit to  
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the best family vacation we  
have ever had. Pricing by  
rank is great. Wish we had  
made reservations for a  
longer stay. Your staff was  
superb as well as your ser-  
vice and prices. We really  
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WALTER B. RIOS
DAGMAR M. RIOS
PUBLISHERS
JIM SHAW
EDITORIAL DIRECTOR
GARY BURCH
MANAGING EDITOR
ERIC MINTON
CONTRIBUTING EDITOR
JO MOLNAR
SENIOR EDITOR/TECHNICAL EDITOR
MEREDITH GORDON RESNICK
JUSTINE LETT
ASSISTANT EDITORS
BRITTA BONETTE
ART DIRECTOR
DIANA TYO
PRODUCTION MANAGER
RONALD SIU
MANAGER/SPECIAL PROJECTS
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CIRCULATION DIRECTOR
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MARKETING MANAGER
BRIAN DUNBAR
BILL GORDON
ALLYSON M. HUGHES
DEBORAH ESTRADA
REGIONAL SALES MANAGERS
DAN CHAROBBE
DIRECTOR, SALES & MARKETING

EDITORIAL & CORPORATE OFFICES
OFF DUTY Enterprises, 3303 Harbor Blvd., Suite C-2, Costa Mesa, CA 92626. Tel.: (714) 549-7172. Fax: (714) 549-4222. e-mail: OD Mailbag@AOL.COM

ADVERTISING OFFICES
Los Angeles: Off Duty Enterprises, 3303 Harbor Blvd., Suite C-2, Costa Mesa, CA 92626. Tel.: (714) 549-7172. Fax: (714) 549-4222. Dan Charobee, Director, Sales & Marketing; Deborah Estrada, Western Regional Sales Manager; Linda Anderson, Marketing Manager; Diana Tyo, Production Manager.

Philadelphia: Brian Dunbar, Eastern Regional Sales Manager, 25 Crooked Billet Road, Hatboro, PA. Tel.: (215) 773-0414. Fax: (215) 773-0415.

Dallas: Allyson M. Hughes, Southeastern Regional Sales Manager, 381 E. Las Colinas, #1004, Irving, TX 75039. Tel.: (214) 506-0176. Fax: (214) 506-0179.

Chicago: Bill Gordon, Midwestern Sales Manager, 415 S. I-Oka Ave., Mt. Prospect, IL 60056. Tel.: (708) 259-0911. Fax: (708) 259-0961.

Frankfurt: Rios Werbung GmbH, Eschersheimer Landstr. 69, 60322 Frankfurt (M), Germany. Tel.: (069) 590805. Fax: (069) 5962227. Chuck Emerson, General Manager; Thomas A. Lipton, Michael J. Mitchell, Regional Sales Managers; Ursula Hirschhauser, Business Manager.

Honolulu: Florence V. Parma, Regional Sales Manager, 3771 Anuhea St., Honolulu, HI 96816. Tel./Fax: (808) 737-5129.

Hong Kong: Off Duty Publications Ltd., 1605 Pacific Plaza, 410 Des Voeux Road West, Hong Kong. Tel.: (852) 2517-2063. Fax: (852) 2540-4023. Robert Bonds, General Manager; Bryan VanDale, Advertising Manager.

Tokyo: Japan Trade Service Ltd., 2-24-1-302, Ohashi, Meguro-ku, Tokyo 153, Japan. Tel.: (03) 3413-2671. Telex: J26955 SUZUKIM. Fax: (03) 3419-2622. Midori Suzuki, President.

Seoul: Kaya Ad Inc., C.P.O. Box 1089, Seoul, Korea. Tel.: (82) 32-523-2884. Fax: (82) 32-502-3343. S.H. Hwang, President.

Okinawa: A.J. (Jack) Arends, Sales Representative, ISA 3-20-5, Ginowan City, Okinawa, Japan 901-22. Tel: (81) 98-898-7822. Fax: (81) 98-898-6635.

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We wish to give thanks to our contributing editor Eric Minton and all the public affairs offices who made this issue possible.

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# ★★★ Vacation Delights ★★★

**V**acation time is coming for your family and this year you want to get away instead of just catching up on chores around the house. You don't want hassles, decisions or even effort. Sounds like a beach will do just fine. So, you visit an on-base contract travel office, where you tell the agent only that you want to spend a week on a beach, you don't care where, as long as it's good and you can afford it.

The agent suggests Tahiti. Tahiti? On an E-5 salary?

"We may have a great special for Tahiti at the time," says Kathy Kaczmarek, marketing manager for SatoTravel, one of the major travel contractors for the U.S. military.

This is only one way Guard and Reserve members can use the con-



**With winter comes the time to book a ski vacation through an on-base travel office.**

tract travel offices on military installations. Even if you know exactly what you want down to the finest detail, these full-service travel agencies can set it all up. While the Army contracts with companies by region, and Air Force, Navy and Marine Corps installations contract individually, the majority of travel offices are

## ARE YOU ELIGIBLE?

On-base contract travel agencies and trips sponsored by recreational supply offices are MWR Category C programs open to reservists and their families without limitation. ITT/ITR offices are Category B and open to Reserve families at the base commander's discretion on a space-available basis, except during activations when use is unrestricted. For availability of ITT/ITR services and programs, contact the individual installation.

run by SatoTravel or Carlson Wagonlit Travel.

These are commercial operations, but their on-base offices are especially attuned to military customers, including reservists. For example, both SatoTravel and Carlson Wagonlit have obtained special mili-

tary rates of more than 50 percent off the published prices from several cruise lines and, in some packages, a cabin upgrade for free. The agencies have also landed special deals with hotels and resorts.

Guard members and reservists not only can use these discounts, they inspired some of the deals SatoTravel sought. "The cruise discounts were negotiated because that's what the Guard and Reserve told us they needed," Kaczmarek says. "We are big on market research, listening to what our customers want. Then we go out and negotiate a product based on those needs with value added features especially for our customers." Thus, SatoTravel will sometimes offer a unique cruise or tour package for the military.

Carlson Wagonlit's special cruise and vacation packages for federal employees are so exclusive they are available only through offices with federal contracts and require a military ID card for bookings. "Other Carlson offices off base can't get these deals, that's how controlled they are," says Alan Erwin, director of leisure marketing in Carlson Wagonlit's military/government division. "Even I can't take advantage of them."

Carlson Wagonlit has more than 250 offices serving federal employees, so reservists and Guard members who don't live near an active-duty installation can check a nearby federal building for the location of the nearest office that serves DoD. SatoTravel also keeps a database of Guard and Reserve customers who then get literature on special tours, packages and discounts as soon as they become available.

Using a travel agent saves money and time. Having negotiated specials for their clients and knowing what operators and accounts to access, the professional travel agent will usually obtain the best possible price on airline and rail tickets, hotels, cruises, package tours and rental cars, not only in the United States and Canada but around the world. SatoTravel, in fact, offers a guarantee that their agents will find the lowest applicable scheduled air fare at time of ticketing or they will refund double the difference. Their experience helps, too, in finding the right packages and operators to meet the customer's specific needs and desires.

The contract travel office is one of two travel services available to military personnel. Morale Welfare and Recreation and Air Force Services also run their own Information, Tickets and Tours (ITT) or Information, Travel and Registration (ITR) offices, which provide military families discounts on attractions, events

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and special tours.

Rather than competing, the contract travel agencies and ITT/ITR offices usually work together, sometimes in the same room. The Fort Knox Leisure Travel Services combines the ITR office and a Carlson Wagonlit agency in one location, and the Navy is testing a similar combined operation in San Diego. The arrangement gives customers a one-

***A San Francisco treat is only a phone call to your on-base travel office away.***

stop travel service, plus allows a closer relationship between the two operations. ITT/ITR sometimes sets up special trips—from one-day local outings to five-day coach tours—which they book through the base's contract travel office, assuring low



military rates. Meanwhile, something like Carlson Wagonlit's fourth-night free package in Orlando might include air fare and other amenities, but not tickets to local sites because customers get those cheaper through

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## RECREATION TRIPS

Don't suggest that Malmstrom Air Force Base, Montana, is in the middle of nowhere. The base's recreation supply center sponsors around 12 outdoor treks a month, and these usually fill up well in advance. They range from one-day water ski and kayak outings to the six-day Chinese Wall backpack hike in the Bob Marshall Wilderness.

In fact, many MWR and Air Force Services recreation supply centers are a great source for recreation trips. No matter the installation's location, rec supply has a steady menu of scheduled trips, some run-of-the-mill like on-site scuba lessons, others indigenous to the area.

Malmstrom's rec supply, for example, runs hunting trips, including an archery hunt in the Betterroot Mountains; backpacking trips, such as a 25-mile, three-day hike through Glacier National Park; ski trips, both downhill and cross-country; snowmobile trips, with overnight stays in lodges; and fishing trips, such as a four-day fly-fishing trip to the Big Horn River.

These are affordable trips, too. The four-day fly-fishing package in September cost \$125 per person, which includes transportation, tents, meals and rafts. Doing it on your own would cost five times that much. Malmstrom's rec supply also organizes special trips for groups outside the scheduled events.

In supporting of these outings are seminars and classes in various recreation activities. Malmstrom rec supply has conducted fly fishing classes, seminars on cow calls for hunting elk, courses on skinning and cutting game, and kayak lessons, the latter a requirement for customers renting kayaks from the center.

To get out to the great outdoors, get in to your nearest installation's recreation supply, which has all the equipment, expertise and guidance—literally—you need.

ITT/ITR. "We want our military customers to be able to use their other discounts," Erwin says.

ITT/ITR has adult four-day passes to Walt Disney World at an 11 percent savings over the gate price. With what you save on two tickets, you can buy a Sea World ticket, as long as you book through ITT/ITR and get their 19 percent discount. These are only two of many special military discounts ITT/ITR has established with major amusement parks around the country, such as Universal Studios (17 percent off) and Opryland (30 percent).

Additionally, individual offices work special deals with local attractions. The Fort Knox ITR office sells tickets to Kentucky Kingdom Thrill Park in nearby Louisville at 30 percent off the gate price. "That is by far our most popular offer," says the post's ITR Manager Siegi Gibbs. By mid-summer her office had sold 3,000 Kingdom tickets, not including special passes for Military Appreciation

Weekends. These offices sometimes sell tickets to local concerts and shows, too, and a few ticket agencies have opened outlets at ITT offices.

Gibbs' office also takes phone orders for theme park tickets and sends them by Federal Express for an additional \$5, a money and aggravation saving service for distant reservists who order tickets for a group or family. "We get a lot of calls from Texas," Gibbs says.

Because individual ITT/ITR offices have discounts for local attractions and events, traveling Reserve families should call ahead to any military base near their destination or along the way to find out what ITT has to offer. The first letter of both ITT and ITR stands for information, and these offices provide this in abundance for free. They are truly tourist information centers with a



**New York can be anybody's kind of town with the prices an on-base travel office has to offer.**

slant on military interests.

So, next time you long to relax on a beach, take your choice: in week in the South Pacific courtesy of your base contract travel office, or a day at The Beach water park near Cincinnati, Ohio, at a 21 percent discount courtesy of your ITT/ITR office. Either way, you'll get soaked, but your budget won't. ■

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# ★★★ Shelter for the Night ★★★

The ottoman is rich blue, the crystal chandelier hangs from a fresco-styled painted ceiling. This, the hotel lobby, is only a preview. The 141 guest rooms also are luxuriously appointed, each individually stylish, large and comfortable. The library resembles that of an old English mansion, with a temple to books and memorabilia canopied in light blue with gold trim. The burgundy plush Skyroom Restaurant's 12th floor perch offers diners a panoramic view of San Francisco Bay and magnificent skyline.

Not surprisingly, this hotel is downtown. But quite surprisingly, it costs only \$70 a night. It is the Marines' Memorial Club, and reservists and Guard members may stay here if they pay an annual, tax-deductible club due of \$60. Added to the nightly rate that still makes this exclusive hotel an incredible bargain for San Francisco visitors, even compared with the budget motels that dot the city's outskirts.

## ARE YOU ELIGIBLE?

Reservists may only use some on-base temporary lodging facilities on a restricted basis, except those traveling on official PCS or TDY orders. For those quarters that are available, non-activated reservists on leave or vacation are lowest in priority for getting space-available rooms. However, most armed forces recreation centers and resorts are open to reservists without restrictions. Others accept reservations on a priority system whereby certain personnel can book rooms further in advance than others. Navy Lodges use such a system: PCSing personnel with families may make reservations anytime in advance; active duty and reservists on orders may reserve rooms up to 60 days in advance; all others may book up to 30 days in advance. An ID card may be required when booking reservations at any of these facilities.

ing. You may stay at temporary lodging facilities on military installations for as little as \$5 a night. However, these space-available rooms can't be booked ahead of time. A more convenient option is to book commercial hotel and motel rooms at military rates. Ask the chain's central reservations office or hotel clerk when booking if they offer such a rate.

An even more inviting option is to take advantage of the lodging and resorts around the world run by and/or for military members and other government employees. These run the gamut, from rural cabins to downtown skyscrapers, from oceanside cottages to lakeshore chalets. A sampling:

- Dauphin Island Recreational Complex in Alabama, run by the

Mobile Coast Guard Base, a collection of beach cottages on a Gulf Coast island resort (205-861-7113)

- SunBay Resort at Monterey, a Club Med-type community exclusively for federal employees on Fort Ord by California's beautiful coastline (800-285-3131)

- Shades of Green on Walt Disney World Resort, once the Disney Inn and now leased by the U.S. Army as a recreation center for military families who pay according to rank (407-824-3600)

- Hale Koa Hotel on Waikiki Beach in Honolulu, a newly expanded two-tower hotel with views of the Pacific Ocean (800-367-6027), one of several armed forces recreation centers on the islands

- Solomons Navy Recreation Center in Maryland, several apartments, bungalows and camp sites on a Chesapeake Bay peninsula south of Washington, D.C. (410-326-4216)

- Lake of the Ozarks Recreation Area, a group of new mobile homes and duplexes, plus a campground, in one of mid-America's most popular tourist destinations (314-346-5640)

- Soldiers', Sailors' and Airmen's Club, a not-for-profit hotel founded in 1919 for service members visiting New York City, also offering discount theater tickets (800-678-TGIF)

- Fort Fisher Air Force Recreation Area near Wilmington, North Carolina, a beach resort with a lodge and cottages in proximity to Myrtle Beach's Grand Strand (910-458-6549)

- Pacific Beach Center in Washington, a Navy recreation area with motel, cabins, campground and a full slate of recreational opportunities (800-626-4414)

- U.S. Coast Guard lighthouses at Rawley Point and Sherwood Point on Wisconsin's Lake Michigan coast, now serving as cottages (equipped with a full range of utensils and appliances) sleeping up to eight people (414-747-7185)



**The Hale Koa on Waikiki Beach is a flagship military-only resort.**

Your military affiliation gives you several such opportunities to save money on lodging when travel-



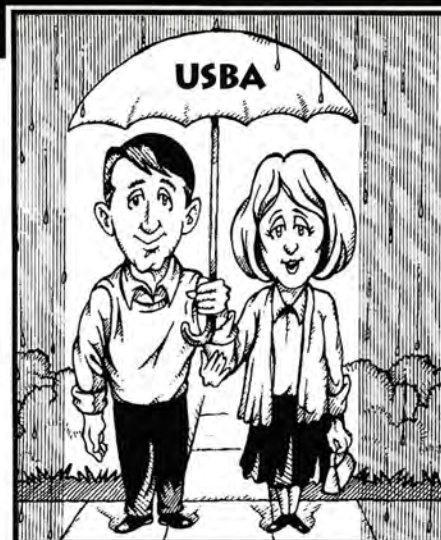
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Accommodations at some of these popular facilities are hard to reserve, like the Coast Guard light-houses in Wisconsin, which are limited in number and for which re-

## NAVY LODGES

The Navy Exchange Command's (NEXCOM) Navy Lodges chain has 41 motor hotels around the world with spacious rooms, kitchens and convenient locations at some of the lowest rates in their surrounding areas. They also have the best security any hotel could offer. Lodges can be found on most naval bases, including some installations which have closed.

Navy Lodges are a true benefit to traveling reservists. In comfort they rival the suites of a motor lodge that are popular among business travelers. Cost-wise, they rival budget motel chains. In location, they match on-base billeting, but are much easier to use. Using a toll-free reservation number (1-800-NAVY-INN), rooms can be booked 30 days in advance.

Even if they match the competition in these aspects, NEXCOM knew its lodges must match up with commercial chains in quality of service to attract customers and continue operations, says Navy Lodge Program Director Bernard Iliff.

"One of the major thrusts of our program today is that we want to deliver to our guests a consistent, quality accommodation staffed by friendly, professional, trained personnel," he says. "We have very high cleanliness and maintenance standards."

But for Iliff, the Navy Lodge's chief attraction is security. A veteran of hotel, resort and country club management, he says the hospitality industry constantly deals with room security to protect against theft and preventing break-ins in the parking lot. "It's a very rare occurrence when we have a problem of that nature at one of our facilities," he says.

NEXCOM began a renovation program four years ago to overhaul every Navy Lodge room in the system once every five years. The first round of renovations have turned standard TLQ rooms into more inviting accommodations. The rooms may lack amenities such as bottles of shampoo and hair caps, but kitchen facilities do have dishes, silverware, pots and pans.

"One of the reasons we deliberately stayed out of that program is because it drives up the price of the room and most of our clientele does not rate those amenities as a high priority when selecting a place to stay," Iliff says.

This all means you have an economical place to stay and eat if you decide to visit Williamsburg, San Diego, Chicago, New Orleans, Seattle, New York City, Washington, D.C., Memphis, Corpus Christi, Key West, or any community near one of 41 Navy installations.

servists are the last eligible to make reservations—up to 15 days in advance compared to 60 and 40 days for other categories. Still, though summer weekends and holidays are bound to be booked, some weekdays and winter weekends may be available. The cottages can be reserved for two to seven nights.

The Marines' Memorial Club in San Francisco, on the other hand, usually has rooms available to book on a first-come, first-serve basis because of its size. The club limits non-military clientele to 25 percent of room sales, leaving the rest for any military ID card holder who wants an upscale hotel at bargain rates in downtown San Francisco.

In addition to pampering its guests, the club has a glorious military history. It originally served as a Navy Waves billet during World War II. The Marines purchased the building in 1946 and designed the club as a living memorial to Marines who served in the Pacific during the war. In the early days it resembled a barracks, but one that stood only two blocks from Union Square, an easy walk from Chinatown, an enjoyable hike to Telegraph Hill, and a quick drive to Fisherman's Wharf, the Presidio and the Golden Gate Bridge. Subsequent renovations have made the club an attraction in its own right. Some guests might choose to ignore the San Francisco sites and instead partake of the club's swimming pool, health club, library, lounge, restaurant and 650-seat theater hosting Broadway shows.

As memorials go, the Marines' Memorial Club is by far the most comfortable. As a hotel, it realizes a writer's classical visions of paradise: gilded in gold, lathered in luxury, with unparalleled service and easy descent to the playground of mortals. Except, in this instance, you



ERIC MINTON



NEXCOM

***The Marines' Memorial Club's lobby (top); Navy Lodge rooms offer simple comfort (above).***

don't have to be a lord to gain entrance—or even a general officer.

A good resource for information about military accommodations, including those described above, is the book *Temporary Military Lodging*. You can purchase this 345-page comprehensive listing through an installation's MWR or Air Force Services office, or order it from the publisher, Military Living Publications, P.O. Box 2347, Falls Church, VA 22042-0347; call (703) 237-0203. ■



# You Are The Best.

You are the Army National Guard. Men and women who believe in their country and themselves. Who willingly shoulder the burden of freedom. The Americans that other Americans depend on in time of crisis. Your dedication and professionalism are a tribute to the Guardmembers who came before you and those who will come after.

The benefits you receive are well deserved.

For many, the Army National Guard opened the door to college with the Montgomery G.I. Bill. Our on-the-job training also develops skills for career advancement. The sense of camaraderie and teamwork are unparalleled.

Your country and community depend on you. And you are there. Truly you are Americans at their best.



## Americans At Their Best.

# ★ ★ ★ Fun & Games ★ ★ ★

**M**orale, welfare and recreation—that about covers it, everything from world-class golf courses to hobby shops where you can indulge your creative urges, even garages where you can repair a car at a fraction of a mechanic's fee. MWR might as well stand for "whatever makes the service member happy," because DoD knows that a happy soldier is a better soldier. That's what MWR facilities are all about, and today more than ever they welcome reservists.

## GOOD SPORTS

Its four holes were cartridge cases, the flags were bamboo fishing poles. It was crude, but at least the Army captain had himself a golf course at Picatinny Arsenal near Dover, New Jersey, in 1921. He recruited another captain as a playing partner, and their enthusiasm quickly spread to other Picatinny officers. In four years the arsenal had a real nine-hole course, expanded to 18 in 1957.

Picatinny Arsenal, an hour west of New York City, now has what some golfers consider one of the best military courses in the nation.

## ARE YOU ELIGIBLE?

MWR (and Air Force Services) facilities fall into three categories according to the amount of appropriated funds involved. Category C, programs sustained primarily by their own revenue, are open to reservists and their families without limitation. These include golf courses, bowling centers with more than 12 lanes, rod & gun clubs, aero clubs, diving clubs, marinas with private berthing, and stables with private stalls. Category B programs are open to Reserve families at each base commander's discretion on a space-available basis, except during activations when use is unrestricted. These include bowling centers with 12 lanes or less, recreational swimming pools, tennis courts, arts and crafts centers, automotive crafts centers, marinas without resale or private boat berthing, and riding stables without private stalls. Category A programs, primarily supported with appropriated funds and generally unavailable to reservists, include physical fitness centers. However, because reservists must meet military fitness requirements, most gyms are open to them on an ongoing basis except during peak periods of use. For availability, contact the installation's MWR or Services office, or the individual facility.

Though lacking funds that private clubs enjoy, the quality of this 6,816-yard, par-72 course was good enough to land the New Jersey State Open qualifying tournament this year. Likewise, Gordon Lakes in Fort Gordon, Georgia, attracts international attention when the Masters is played at nearby Augusta National.

And golf is only one of many sports MWR and Air Force Services provide their military clientele. Almost every installation in the world has a golf course and a bowling center. Many have rod and gun clubs, skeet and trap ranges, archery ranges, swimming pools and tennis courts. Several bases have installed running tracks and PAR courses. Military gyms, once little more than basketball courts and a racquetball court or two, have developed into

top-quality fitness centers, with weight rooms and aerobic studios. Reservists, who must maintain physical fitness for their military duties, have a variety of MWR options and usually can bring their families, too.

MWR doesn't skimp, either. Picatinny golf pro Mike Sparks, a Professional Golfer's Association (PGA) member, says "It's as good as any golf course in the area." And at \$8 to \$16 per round (no mandatory cart fees) it's one of the best deals.

The pro shop reflects his pride. Sparks sells brand-name equipment, shoes and clothing from Tommy Armour, Slazenger, Ping and Ashworth. He also has golf bags, balls, head covers, hats, shirts and jackets bearing the Picatinny logo.

Picatinny's course offers a complete challenge, thanks to its design in two different areas. The front nine runs through woods and is surrounded by hilly scenery, while the wind comes into play in the more open back nine. The course has 50 bunkers, and a stream factors into seven holes.

At Fort Gordon, general manager Robert Pettegrew will stack up his 7,077-yard, par-72 Gordon Lakes against any course in the golf-rich area, including Augusta National.

"Augusta National gets less play than we do," he says, referring to the 78,000 rounds of golf per year Gordon Lakes hosts. Weekend tee times are assigned by lottery with priority given to active-duty personnel, though all authorized users can get a tee time on weekdays with 72-hour advance notice.

With fees ranging from \$7 to \$15, Gordon Lakes is much easier to access than the exclusive and private Augusta, but it is no less conditioned or challenging. Using an overseeding program, Gordon Lakes maintains almost ideal surfaces on both the fairways and greens year-round. It is also a difficult course, witnessed



**Reservists can tee off at many gorgeous on-base courses.**



**You can put a new spin on your life at a hobby and craft center.**

by Pettegrew's best score of 78.

Renowned golf course architect Robert Trent Jones designed Gordon Lakes with his son, Rees Jones, whose trademark is island greens. Gordon Lakes' has one of his first, the par-three sixth. So, while the military has had some peculiar courses—the sand course with chicken wire trees and oiled greens in the Saudi desert during the Gulf War, for one—today MWR offers signature courses created by top designers with country-club conditions. And best of all, they're available at public course prices to the most exclusive membership in America, the military family.

### JUST FOR FUN

Tammi Burnette, a reservist with the 5010th U.S. Hospital in Louisville, gave herself a 30th birthday gift: she signed up for a ceramics course at the Fort Knox, Kentucky, Hansen Center For Arts and Crafts. "It was cheap, only \$15, and you get so much!" she says, sweeping her arm over the material and tools she got to make a chess set on her second day.

But it doesn't require a birthday splurge to indulge like this. These facilities are among the activities MWR sponsors to allow military

families to pursue hobbies and learn new skills. Depending on location, military bases might have aero clubs, marinas, diving clubs and stables. And most have craft centers, though they vary in what they offer.

At these centers, staff will either do custom work for patrons or teach customers how to do the work themselves. And with lessons and supplies at low MWR prices, the do-it-yourself aspect is not only fun but also inexpensive.

Fort Knox's Hansen Center, a 32,000-square-foot building opened in 1991, is a prime example. It caters to almost any pastime for the hands and eyes:

- Photography, with a pro photographer on staff
- Framing, to mat and elegantly display your favorite photos
- Weaving, with five looms, and floral design
- Stained glass
- Leather works, complete with a wood stump
- Lapidary, where you can cut and polish your own precious stones, and jewelry
- Ceramics, complete with throwing wheels
- Sewing



**Automotive hobby centers are a goldmine for do-it-yourselfers.**

Two rooms aside from these craft studios really sum up what this place is all about. One is the resale store, offering good prices on the supplies that support every program in the

facility. Around the corner is a gallery of items made at the center, some of them for sale.

A playroom for children allows parents to indulge in their craftsmanship at no additional cost.

The Hansen Center also houses the Wood Crafts Shop, boasting all the space, supplies and equipment of a small furniture factory. Here are planers, table saws, a wall panel saw, drill presses, scroll saws, sanders, miter saws, band saws and more.

The staff will coach customers through a project, but all users must take the safety qualification class first. After that, it's \$1.25 an hour. All income supports the facility.

So, in the end, using a craft center is more than splurging on yourself. It's splurging on your fellow crafts persons, too. ■

## AUTO CRAFTSMEN

Insults flew between the two mechanics. Working on their own cars, the Ford owner ridiculed his counterpart's Chevrolet engine and the Chevy guy dished it out in return. Changing your own oil never got so personal, or so fun. But so it was for the two soldiers using the Automotive Crafts Center at Fort Knox, Kentucky.

But these weren't a couple of wannabe grease monkeys tinkering on their clunkers amid a cluttered old garage. This garage is an image of MWR's new approach to Automotive Crafts Centers.

Fort Knox has an immaculate 42-bay center tooled to the hilt with all the equipment—diagnostic, computer, repair, body work, air conditioner re-charging, and wheel alignment—needed to meet any task on almost any car, van, truck, motorcycle or boat. It has technical manuals on CD-ROM, general maintenance bays, lift bays, body bays and paint booths.

Most important for do-it-yourselfers, it has an expert staff to give professional assistance to anyone, including those who don't even know how to use the dip-stick to check their oil. At Fort Knox bays cost \$1.50 per hour to use, which beats any labor charge at any commercial facility.

Auto Crafts Centers will do repairs as well. They've done such work tacitly for years, but as the exchange systems scale back their own auto service operations, the hobby shops are getting the referral business. Fort Knox even provides wrecker service for \$20 a call and free jump starts on the base.

# ★★★ Bring on the Night ★★★

**Y**ou warp when you walk into the foyer. Constellations of stars adorn the walls along with lamps that look like they came from a yard sale. Overhead lighting filters down from metal buckets painted blue and gold with chandelier prisms on their handles. A bank of nine TV screens flash an array of different shows. Needless to say, it's quite a sight.

Adjust your mind. You have entered Planet Beach, the reincarnated NCO club that opened in April at the Naval Amphibious Base Little Creek in Norfolk, Virginia. Having such a nightspot on a Naval base is no longer farfetched since the Navy's Morale, Welfare and Recreation (MWR) branch began overhauling its club system seven years ago. But Planet Beach pushes the theme-club concept to the outer limits. Where once sailors gathered in drab, nautical decor and unit plaques, they now party in a high-energy, high-tech club of unabashed kitsch.

It's what happens when space camp meets *Beach Blanket Bingo*. "I've never seen anything like this," says club manager Pat Davidson, who's worked in civilian nightclubs. "Everything here is unique." Like the aluminum palm trees with neon tubes, or the 12-foot high rocket containing a smoke machine next to the two-tier dance floor, or the surf boards with rocket engines and flashing lights hanging over the bar. The centerpiece of the \$300,000 video, light and sound system is a huge planet from which a multi-light unit descends to strobe dancers. The walls have pictures of B-movie heroines and aliens, a display case featuring Star Trek props, including Spock's ears, and movie posters such as *Wild On the Beach*, *Barbarella* and *You're In The Navy Now*—a reminder for patrons experiencing an altered state.

MWR contracted a designer to create the formula, then local MWR

## ARE YOU ELIGIBLE?

On-base clubs are MWR Category C operations, available to National Guard members, reservists and their families on an ongoing basis regardless of activation status. The only restrictions are those of rank—only officers may use the officer's club, only chiefs can use the chief's club, etc. These restrictions are waived for special events, whether official or private. Catering services are also Category C, though they can only cater events held on military property.

staff built the stage, disc jockey booth, bar and drink rails. "I wasn't sure the combination would work," Davidson says of the decor. "It wasn't until right before we opened that I saw how it all came together."

Music ranges from funk to oldies, rock to country—whatever the crowd wants at any given time. The club adds pool tables, dart boards and, most popular among the arcade games, a Star Trek pinball machine.

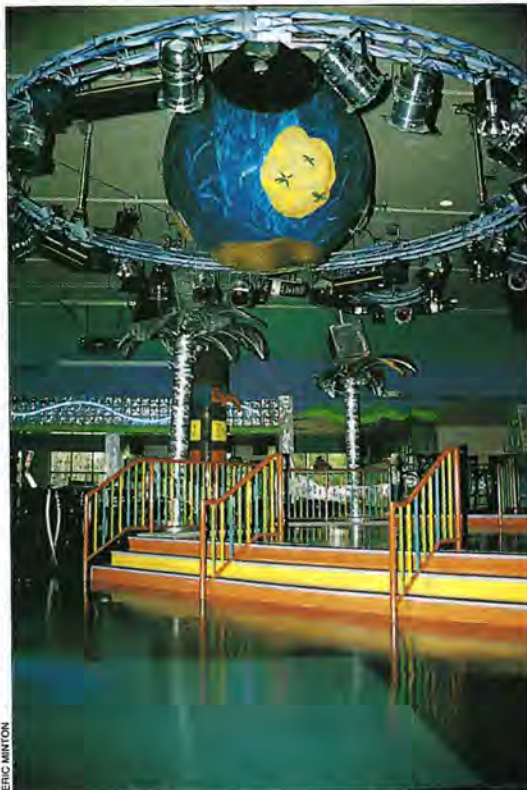
Planet Beach is only the latest offering of a Navy club system that has learned to compete with civilian venues prompted by a 1988 review of its entertainment facilities. "Sailors were going to other places because we weren't providing what they wanted," says Ed McCoy, head of the Navy's Club Branch.

The Navy took two routes: to provide in-house the kind of venues available off base, and to bring in contractors "to do what they do," McCoy says. The first was the Norfolk Original Sports Club, featuring three bars, 12 billiard tables (one L-shaped), eight dart boards, two sand volleyball courts, one key-size basketball court,

a regulation boxing ring, four big screen TVs and 30 monitors broadcasting programs from cable and three satellite dishes. Soon, every large Naval base had a sports club.

But in the fast-moving nightlife industry, what's hot today is passé tomorrow. So this summer the Navy's last standing sports bar, the original Original Sports Club, closed.

This isn't inefficiency but forward thinking. Life expectancy in the nightclub industry is about 18 months, three years at most, while the Navy can get by with a three- to five-year life span because that's how often its population rotates. "The



**You won't find a more dazzling nightclub than Planet Beach.**

people who go to nightclubs are very disloyal patrons," McCoy says. "They'll go where the hottest thing

is happening. They can love you to death, but if somebody down the street is doing something different that's more fun, that's where they're going." So, the Navy this year replaced its sports bar in San Diego with The Main Event, a customer-participation club that includes laser tag for up to 40 people.

Norfolk's Original Sports Bar is being folded into Norfolk Live, a 45,000-square-foot multi-purpose entertainment center run by Harborage Ltd. on Naval Station Norfolk. The complex includes Players, a small sports bar renovated in the spring with a new dance floor and an eclectic frontier-themed decor where patrons can keep their own beer mugs on the wall behind the bar. A nightly DJ plays Top 40, while next door in Puzzles each night is devoted to a different form of music: reggae, country, Top 40 and, on Sundays, soul. Puzzles is a classic Vegas-style nightclub, with 450 seats at tables in an amphitheater setting and two bars. Across the foyer is Shooters, a pool hall with six red billiard tables to go with the checkered floor and booths. Norfolk Live also has the High Tide buffet, three banquet rooms and the Chief's Club, a full-service restaurant and bar. All the Original Sports Bar's television capacity is moving to Norfolk Live, with each venue able to host special promotions around sporting events. The club also hosts amateur boxing cards. In all, the complex boasts seven satellite dishes feeding eight big-screen TVs and over 50 other monitors in its six venues.

Across the street from Norfolk Live is another option for Reserve officers, the officer's club. As a full-service food, beverage and entertainment facility, O-clubs in all the branches have suffered lately, thanks to the weakening of on-base Officer's Wives Clubs, off-base competition and a dwindling clientele. Despite these factors, McCoy says, the Navy doesn't plan to change O-clubs under market pressure but let them evolve according to patron needs.

They still make a nice family dining experience, and the Air Force is offering a Mastercard credit card instead of a club card as further incentive.

While it was revamping its club system, the Navy jumped headlong into the catering business, too, hiring a professional caterer to develop a Navy-wide service. Catering operations were consolidated on every base and are run to a set of professional standards, McCoy says. "We see catering as one of the areas where we can shore up our shrinking patron base," he says. Reservists may use catering for any function as long as it is on military property in proximity to the base, such as an armory.

With the Navy's successful revamping of its club system, the other branches have taken notice and are making changes of their own. The Air Force is in the middle of a two-year bottom-up review of its entire



**The entrance to Norfolk Live, the Virginia entertainment complex.**

club, MWR doesn't count on those intangibles alone to entice their patrons. They now use rocket surf boards, aluminum palm trees and Spock ears, too. ■

## SOLDIER SHOWS

Country recording artist Greg Holland toured Army posts this summer as part of the Army Concert series "Dog Days of Summer," a two-day festival at 12 installations that also starred Peabo Bryson, Patty Loveless and Billy Ray Cyrus. Playing for Army bases is old hat for Holland, though: he was a member of the 1989 U.S. Army Soldier Show.

Bases have become venues for top-notch entertainment thanks in part to talent in the military itself. The Army Soldier Show, a theatrical extravaganza utilizing the latest staging techniques, features military members performing pop, rock, gospel and Broadway tunes, magic and comedy. A new cast and crew are selected every year by a board that views tapes and judges live auditions. The Air Force uses local talent shows to select acts for its annual Tops In Blue touring shows.

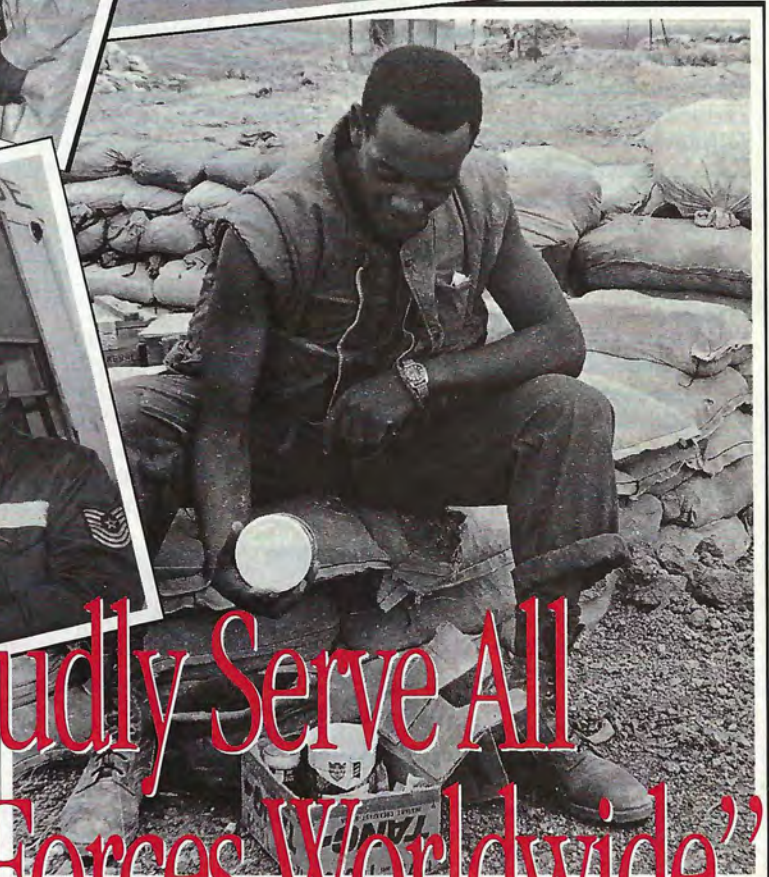
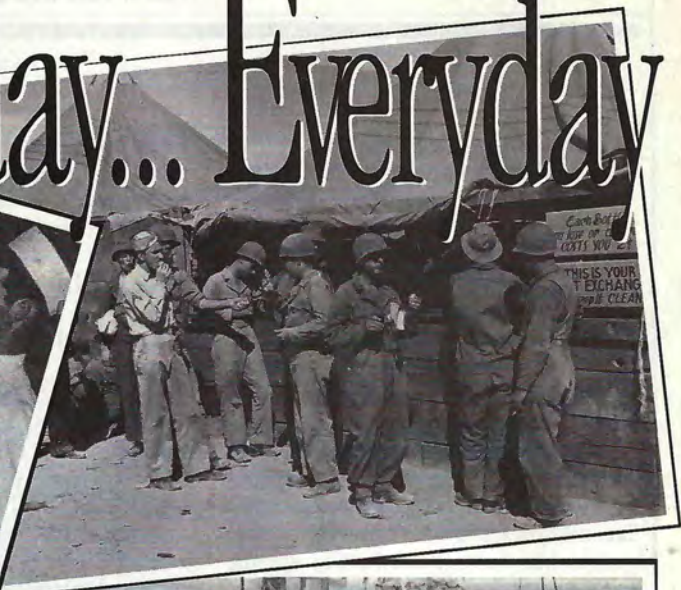
Several bases and their clubs also contract with local and national acts to perform for an installation's population. Meanwhile, the Army Concert series, a service-wide program begun in 1994 for six bases, proved so popular that the Army doubled the tour stops in 1995. Tickets are first made available to military members before being sold to the general public. Check the MWR office at the base nearest you for details on the 1996 shows.



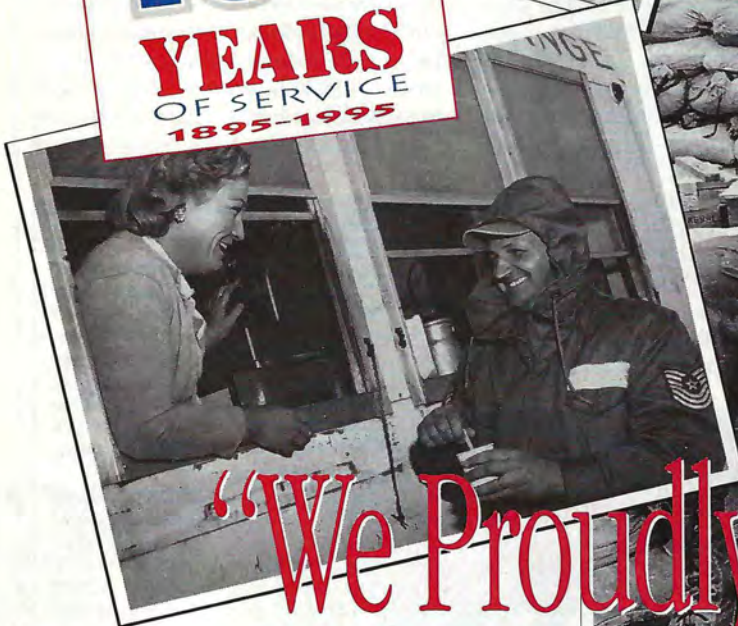
### **Soldier Shows turn talented service members into stars.**

club system. Something that won't likely change are the intangible benefits an on-base club offers over its civilian counterparts: better security, better value, and a crowd of compatriots who don't scoff at a regulation haircut. But in today's Navy

# Yesterday, Today... Everyday



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Purchase any slice of pizza and medium drink, get the second slice for 100 cents.

Offer good at these AAFES restaurants offering pizza by the slice



Present coupon at time of ordering.  
Not valid with any other coupon or offer.

Offer Expires 30 Nov 1995 Extended to January 31, 1996

100 cents off the purchase of a Chicken Broiler Sandwich, large fries & large drink.

Offer good at this AAFES restaurant



Present coupon at time of ordering.  
Not valid with any other coupon or offer.

Offer Expires 30 Nov 1995 Extended to January 31, 1996

100 cents for a fish sandwich, with purchase of large fries & large drink.

Offer good at these AAFES restaurants offering fish sandwiches



Present coupon at time of ordering.  
Not valid with any other coupon or offer.

Offer Expires 30 Nov 1995 Extended to January 31, 1996

100 cents for any breakfast sandwich, with purchase of orange juice.

Offer good at these AAFES restaurants offering fish sandwiches



Present coupon at time of ordering.  
Not valid with any other coupon or offer.

Offer Expires 30 Nov 1995 Extended to January 31, 1996

Save 100 cents off the purchase of any sandwich, side order, & large drink.

Offer good at these AAFES restaurants



Present coupon at time of ordering.  
Not valid with any other coupon or offer.

Offer Expires 30 Nov 1995 Extended to January 31, 1996

Purchase any large frank, chips & medium drink, get the second frank for 100 cents.

Offer good at these AAFES restaurants offering hot dogs



Present coupon at time of ordering.  
Not valid with any other coupon or offer.

Offer Expires 30 Nov 1995 Extended to January 31, 1996

Save 100 cents off the purchase of any breakfast omelette, & orange juice.

Offer good at these AAFES restaurants offering breakfast



Present coupon at time of ordering.  
Not valid with any other coupon or offer.

Offer Expires 30 Nov 1995 Extended to January 31, 1996

100 cents for a kid's meal, with purchase of adult combo meal.

Offer good at these AAFES restaurants offering kid meals



Present coupon at time of ordering.  
Not valid with any other coupon or offer.

Offer Expires 30 Nov 1995 Extended to January 31, 1996

Purchase two 16" cheese pizzas for \$10

Offer good at these AAFES restaurants offering pizza



Present coupon at time of ordering.  
Not valid with any other coupon or offer.

Offer Expires 30 Nov 1995 Extended to January 31, 1996

100 cents for a large bowl of soup, with sandwich purchase.

Offer good at these AAFES restaurants offering soup



Present coupon at time of ordering.  
Not valid with any other coupon or offer.

Offer Expires 30 Nov 1995 Extended to January 31, 1996

# ★★★ Beautiful Bargains ★★★

**A**ir Force Reserve Staff Sgt. Margaret Willey of the 446th Airlift Wing lives in the Tacoma, Washington suburb of Puyallup, near McChord Air Force Base. A single parent raising three children, she uses up her allotment of 12 annual commissary visits sometimes as early in the year as June.

"It's easier on the pocket book," she says, noting that her big commissary purchases are diapers, baby food, milk products and produce. Her 446th colleagues, many from near Puget Sound, who use one of the six Navy, Army and Air Force commissaries in the area, cite savings as their primary reasons for buying on base, too. Their shopping habits differ, though.

Tech. Sgt. Kari Schmidt and her husband, who also is in the Reserve, use the commissary exclusively about every two weeks, spending some \$200 per visit. They like the savings on cleaning products and canned goods in particular. "You can get meat on sale at other stores, but we

## ARE YOU ELIGIBLE?

Commissary privileges for National Guard and Reserve members and their families are tied to duty status. During activations of more than 30 days, unlimited shopping comes with the green ID card. During annual training or special schools, reservists can use their orders to gain entry to the commissary. Corresponding with monthly drills, Guard and Reserve units provide their personnel a U.S. Armed Forces Commissary Card (DD Card 2529) allowing up to 12 visits a year. Issued in November or December for the coming year, Reserve families can use their allotment of visits as often and as quickly as they like, but they cannot get additional visits without activation, and they cannot carry over unused visits to the next year. Proposed legislation that could give reservists unlimited access has been advanced in Congress, so possible changes in eligibility in the coming months could take place.

on baby products and cereal. "I'd probably go bankrupt if I had to buy elsewhere," she says.

Tech. Sgt. Todd Marshall and his family of two kids (with one on the way) schedule their commissary outings once a month, saving the most in meats, he says. "I like the convenience of not having to shop sales and coupons," Marshall says. Upon hearing that, McChord Commissary Officer Lucas Markos quickly pointed out that commissaries accept many coupons (including special ones for military members) and also run occasional sales.

Staff Sgt. Michael Hurt, meanwhile, didn't like shopping at the commissary nearest his Everett home, the Navy's Sand Point store, which closed in May. The ambience—or lack thereof—turned him off, and the only time he shopped the commissary was to stock up on

holiday foods: Christmas, Thanksgiving, summer cookouts, etc. Three days after the Sand Point closing, the Defense Commissary Agency (DeCA) opened a new commissary at Naval Station Everett, and the metamorphosis was like a butterfly emerging from a caterpillar, prompting Hurt to reassess his shopping options.

His bias is understandable. "Commissary privileges" is an oft-trumpeted benefit of serving in the armed forces. Because it was considered a privilege—and you don't look a gift horse in the mouth—military authorities used to count on access and savings alone to attract shoppers. Thus, commissaries had a reputation for drab, cramped conditions and often under-stocked shelves. Befitting a program that grew out of the essential military mission of feeding its troops, some commissaries were even located in unused post warehouses: you retrieved your shopping cart by the railroad tracks.

Since DeCA's formation in 1991 and subsequent consolidation of military commissaries, these on-base facilities are changing the way they look and operate. No longer is a stock-up trip to the commissary merely a money-saving task to endure as more and more commissaries make it a pleasurable and rewarding experience.

McChord AFB's store, renovated in September 1993 and the second largest commissary in sales in the entire DeCA system (trailing Ft. Belvoir), exemplifies the new-style commissary. It compares in appearance with a Kroger, a Harris-Teeter or an Albertson's: well-lit, colorfully decorated, appetizingly arranged. Most notable are the alcoves for produce, dairy, meats, and health and beauty items. The dairy section has a counter of gourmet cheeses and condiments, the produce section has displays of fruit and vegetable specials,



**TSgt Kari Schmidt shops for produce at McChord AFB.**

don't have time for that," she says. "We like one-stop shopping."

Tech. Sgt. Cathi Gouveia has five children and spends more than \$300 on her monthly visits, stocking up



like baskets of "Zealicious" New Zealand apples.

Additionally, McChord's commissary has four special markets. The Fish Market is operated under contract by Johnny's Seafood Co., a Tacoma seafood store providing fresh fish and shellfish daily. The deli and the bakery are contracted by Eurpac, a Virginia Beach, Virginia, company. The deli sells some 350 items, including dozens of salamis, hams, cheeses and salads. The bakery ships in prepared dough and frozen breads of various types that are baked on the premises. The bakery also sells cook-

beef a day. The commissary's average monthly gross take is \$5.7 million, he says, and his biggest day ever was \$432,000, which came on a pay day during a truckload sale. He averages more than 3,000 customers a day, of whom 61 percent are retirees. The last may be the most significant of his statistics, for those particular consumers could choose more conveniently located supermarkets over the on-base store.

The McChord commissary took the room to expand from its own warehouse, and what's happening here is happening at DeCA facilities

sary cuts down on the amount of storage space it needs, which in turn allows more room for sales space.

The consumer gets a significant benefit, too. Now that CONUS commissary officers don't have to order merchandise by projecting a week or more ahead of time, the shelves stay relatively well-stocked. Markos says McChord typically has in-stock rates of 98 percent.

The system also allows regional variances. In addition to the national brand buyers at DeCA headquarters in Fort Lee, Virginia, each of the seven regions has three buyers who

concentrate on non-national brands. Cagle says the stock list for his Northwest/Pacific Region includes about 16,000 items which commissary officers can order, depending largely on customer demand.

Meanwhile,

FDS doesn't cost

the commissary more than buying in bulk. "What DeCA can do in this buying program is go to the vendor and say, 'Look, across the board we are buying X amount of products,'" says Cagle. "We don't have to have them in the warehouse to show you the volume we're dealing with."

DeCA is now upgrading to an electronic ordering system so that commissary officers can cut down on paperwork and make deliveries even more efficient, Cagle says. It's all part of the modernization of a military benefit that can still save patrons more than 20 percent on their overall food budget, even with the five percent surcharge applied at the cash register, a fee which helps pay for construction projects like the one that turned McChord into an upscale supermarket.

The price has always been right. Now the lights are brighter, the aisles are wider, the views are nicer, and the merchandise will likely be there, from baby products to bananas: 9,000 of 'em brand new every day. ■



**Today's new commissaries often offer a bulk goods section (left) and a full-service bakery (right).**



ies and cakes, decorated to order. While these specialty stands are common in commissaries throughout DeCA, McChord's also has the Value Mart, with items sold by the case or large quantities, and Bulk Foods, where dried products are available by the scoop, both providing further savings for shoppers.

Putting in the alcoves did more than give the McChord commissary a look more akin to modern civilian-sector supermarkets. It also provides more sales and cart-manuevering room. The frozen foods section, for example, grew 175 feet thanks to the renovation, and the produce section doubled. All told, Markos says his store now stocks about 13,000 grocery items, 950 meats and 300 produce items. This man, who obviously likes numbers, will proudly tell you his commissary sells 9,000 bananas, approximately 5,000 gallons of milk, and about 4,500 pounds of ground

throughout CONUS. In its reorganization of the commissary system, DeCA instituted a new inventory system, going from the old regional distribution centers and stocking up warehouses at local stores to a frequent delivery system (FDS) and direct store deliveries (daily restocking of such items as bread and drinks). With FDS, distributors or manufacturers send trucks to the store five to seven times a week and deliver whatever of its merchandise the commissary needs. "Which means you've got trucks coming in from a variety of sources every day," says Sam Cagle, public affairs officer for DeCA Northwest/Pacific Region. Or, to use a typical Markos measuring stick, the warehouse receives about 7,000 cases every night. The next day, most of these items are on the shelves in the store.

In a business sense, FDS means the commissary isn't tying up capital in inventory, Cagle says. Plus, by cutting down on the pallets it has to put in its warehouse, the commis-

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# ★★★ Comrades In Arms ★★★

**W**omen in the Reserve and National Guard have a champion going by the rather unflattering name of DACOWITS. This acronym stands for Defense Advisory Committee on Women in the Services, which serves the Secretary of Defense as both a watchdog and advisor on policy affecting women in the military.

It is one of several organizations and associations catering to the unique needs and interests of servicemen and women, including reservists. Many of these groups serve as a voice in Congress, some provide aid and services to military members and families, and others offer seminars and other educational opportunities. Dues are required to join some, but usually the dues include subscriptions to publications and access to group insurance plans.

DACOWITS is not an organization that service members can join, but it is a powerful force for women's rights in the military that reservists should get to know. Established in 1951 by then Secretary of Defense George C. Marshall, the committee comprises 30 to 40 civilians selected by the Department of Defense. These volunteers receive staff support from assigned military representatives. Three subcommittees illustrate DACOWITS' primary areas of concentration: Quality of Life, Forces Development and Utilization, and Equality Management.

In addition to serving as a clearinghouse for information on issues concerning women in the military, DACOWITS sponsors on-site visits at military installations and organizations. These keep DACOWITS members informed of current military activities and policies, and allows them to meet with women and



men in the fleet and field. Such visits are sometimes scheduled for Reserve and Guard units.

For more information on DACOWITS, call its office at (703) 697-2122, or write 4000 Defense Pentagon, Room 3D769, Washington, DC 20301-4000.

Another important advocacy group working for the Guard and Reserve as a watchdog on family issues with both Congress and the DoD is the **National Military Family Association**, 6000 Stevenson Ave., Suite 304, Alexandria, VA 22304-3526; (703) 823-6632.

The following is a list of other groups geared specifically to reservists. Contact their national headquarters for detailed information on how to join or to get in touch with local

National Guard's enlisted members. Open to all E-1 through E-9 members of the Army and Air National Guard. Formed in 1970; membership 75,000. Annual dues are \$4 plus state association fee. Offers insurance plans, VISA card, travel discounts, legal services, and the *New Patriot* magazine.

**Fleet Reserve Association:** 125 North West St., Alexandria, VA 22314-2754; (703) 683-1400. Protects personnel interests of sea service members, including pay, benefits and entitlement issues in Congress. It also helps individuals with career problems by representing them in matters involving government agencies. Open to enlisted personnel, active, retired and Reserve, in the Navy, Marine Corps and Coast Guard. Formed in 1924; membership 160,000. Annual dues are \$20. Offers legislative seminars on ships and at bases, and an insurance plan.

**Marine Corps Reserve Officers Association:** 110 N. Royal St., Suite 406, Alexandria, VA 22314; (703) 548-7607. Supports and strengthens the Marine Corps, its Reserve and Reserve officers in legislative affairs. Open to all Marine officers and officers of other U.S. services who served

with the Marine Corps. Formed in 1926; membership 5,500. Annual dues are \$20 for warrant officers and lieutenants, \$25 for captains, \$35 for majors, \$40 for lieutenant colonels, \$50 for colonels, \$100 for generals. Publishes *The Word*.

**National Guard Association of the United States:** 1 Massachusetts Ave. NW, Washington, DC 20001; (202) 789-0031. Promotes National Guard issues in Congress, with the National Governors Association, and with the Department of Defense and branches of the regular armed forces. Open to all officers and warrant of-

**A variety of organizations exist to serve the Guard & Reserve members' interests.**

chapters. This list ends with associations that cater to the military in general, including reservists.

**Enlisted Association of the National Guard of the United States:** 1219 Prince St., Alexandria, VA 22314; 1-800-234-3264. Promotes national security issues and the status, welfare and professionalism of the

# TALK-BACK RADIO



Speaking of innovations, an innovation that speaks! Here are the first car stereos that feature JVC's new **Voice Support System (VSS)**. Press a function and one of the nation's legends of rock'n roll responds, vocally confirming a function you've chosen. It's a true safety breakthrough, because JVC's VSS enables you to change functions on your stereo without ever taking your eyes off the road.

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**OFF DUTY ★ MILITARY ORGANIZATIONS**

Officers serving (or who have served) in a federally recognized status with either the Army or Air National Guard. Formed in 1878; membership 58,000. Annual dues are \$68 for generals, \$45 for colonels and lieutenant colonels, \$33 for majors, \$25 for CW4s, \$20 for captains and CW3s, and \$14 for lieutenants, warrant officers and CW2s. Offers an insurance plan, speaker's bureau, awards program, legislative seminars, library and the *National Guard* magazine.

**Naval Enlisted Reserve Association:** 6703 Farragut Ave., Falls Church, VA 22042-2189; (703) 534-1329. Promotes national security issues and career service in the Naval, Marine Corps and Coast Guard Reserve. Open to E-1 through E-9 members of the Naval, Marine Corps and Coast Guard Reserve. Formed in 1957; membership 15,000. Annual dues are \$20. Offers the Microfiche Record Review Service, an insurance plan, and the *Mariner* magazine.

**Naval Reserve Association:** 1619 King Street, Alexandria, VA 22314-2793; (703) 548-5800. Promotes the U.S. Navy's interests in Congress and Reserve officers' interests with the Navy. It also provides educational services to Naval Reserve officers. Open to Naval Reserve officers. Formed in 1954; membership 24,000. Annual dues are \$35. Offers insurance plans, the *NRA News* publication, periodical educational papers, and a records check service for selection for promotion.

**Reserve Officers Association:** One Constitution Ave. NE, Washington, DC 20002; (202) 479-2200. Promotes national security issues with

Congress, state legislatures and local governments. It's open to all commissioned and warrant officers of the active forces, Reserve and National Guard, including retirees and members honorably discharged. Formed in 1922; membership 102,000. Annual dues \$40. Offers insurance plans, travel discounts, *The Officer* magazine, and a monthly national security report.

Other military organizations:

**Air Force Association:** 1501 Lee Highway, Arlington, VA 22209; (703) 247-5800.

**Air Force Sergeants Association:** 5211 Auth Road, Suitland, MD 20746; (301) 899-3500.

**Association of the U.S. Army:** 2425 Wilson Blvd., Arlington, VA 22201; (703) 841-4300.

**Chief Warrant Officers Association:** 200 V St. SW, Washington, DC 20024; (202) 554-7753.

**Coast Guard Chief Petty Officers Association and Coast Guard Enlisted Association:** 5520 G Hempstead Way, Springfield, VA 22151; (703) 941-0395. Insurance plan.

**Marine Corps Association:** P.O. Box 1775, MCCDC, Quantico, VA 22134; (703) 640-6161.

**National Association for Uniformed Services:** 5535 Hempstead Way, Springfield, VA 22151; (703) 750-1342.

**Non-Commissioned Officers Association of USA:** P.O. Box 33610, San Antonio, TX 78265; (210) 653-6161.

**Society of American Military Engineers:** 607 Prince St., Alexandria, VA 22314; (703) 549-3800 or 1-800-336-3097. ■

**How Much Shopping Do You Do On Base?**

Ever since exchanges and commissaries opened wide for members of the Guard and Reserve a few years ago, the U.S. Congress, the DoD and the military resale industry have wondered to what extent these "new customers" actually exercise their shopping privilege.

Several thousand readers responded to a mini-survey on this subject in the first issue of our Guard & Reserve edition in 1992. Of them, 52 percent said they lived more than 30 miles from the nearest PX or commissary. Still, 71 percent of this group shopped at a military installation several times a year. About 25 percent reported living within ten miles of an on-base shopping facility. Predictably, those living in close proximity to a base shopped with greater frequency, while those living further away spent more per visit.

Since our 1992 mini-survey, the military resale industry has stepped up its promotion to members of the Guard and Reserve in order to heighten awareness of their on-base shopping privileges. With this month's mini-survey we hope to measure the change, if any, in the shopping habits of our National Guard and Reserve readers.

You can participate by completing the Reader Information Service card found bound into this issue on this page, and mailing it in. We'll report the results in a future issue.



# ★★★ Kids in the Field ★★★

**W**hen mom or dad go to annual training, they drill in their military duties, of course. But they also hone their mental and physical skills, improve their self-esteem, indulge in camaraderie, and maybe even have fun. Thus, naturally, some parents foresee similar benefits for children who engage in a similar experience.

Out of this notion grew the National Guard youth camp programs in several states, such as the one in Minnesota. Its annual Youth Camp hosts about 260 kids for the two one-week camps held in August at Camp Ripley, 10 miles north of Little Falls.

"They march and sing their own cadence, so it's perfect for 10- to 12-year-olds," says Capt. Eric Ahlness, Minnesota National Guard family program coordinator.

## *A National Guard summer camp gives kids a sense of what mom & dad do when drilling.*

Marching is just one aspect of guard drills that the kids emulate. They ride Bradley armored vehicles, handle firearms at the range, watch F-16s and helicopters perform, endure reveille and attend retreat.

"We didn't want to militarize it too much, but they wanted to see what their parents were doing," Ahlness says. The kids also swim, hike, boat and play team sports. The latter can be self-defeating for a camp emphasizing self-esteem, so teams



***Kids run the obstacle course, and other drills, at youth camps.***

are chosen by such fate-ordained means as birthdays (odd days here, even days there) and Oreo cookie habits (those who eat the middle first here, those who eat the whole cookie there). "There are a hundred different ways of choosing teams," Ahlness says.

For one program—which is accredited by the American Camping Association for its adherence to no less than 200 different standards—participants pay a \$50 fee, which covers all the week's activities and amenities. It is open only to children of Guard members.

"We're hard pressed to let all the kids even from our own population attend," Ahlness says.

The West Virginia National Guard runs a Youth Leadership Camp open to all teens in the state. Nominated by high school counselors and organizations, about 120 15- and 16-year-olds spend a week in June at Camp Dawson near Kingwood. They get a basic orientation of the Army and Air National Guard units, engage in leadership role-building activities and team-building skills, and take on various military-related feats such as rappelling, rubber boat training and shooting. Sports and physical fit-

ness events are also on the itinerary.

While the West Virginia Guard has been running the Youth Leadership Camp for 26 years, five years ago the state launched a similar program—minus the leadership skills aspects—for Guard kids nine to 13 years old. This camp usually attracts about 150 participants.

In addition to these programs run by individual states, nationwide the National Guard offers the Challenge Program, a boot camp for at-risk teens, and the Starbase program, a camp combining science and computer skills with military activities and athletics. Both are open to the general public.

If your unit doesn't have any information about summer youth camps in your state, contact the adjutant general's office. ■

## SPOUSE CAMP

The Wyoming National Guard introduced a new element into annual training at Camp Guernsey this year: Spouse Camp.

While the field artillery battalions were doing exercises, 43 spouses and two girlfriends arrived at the camp for a weekend of orientation, including a visit to the field for lessons in Howitzer operations, fire direction, meteorology, radar, and compass training. Another class—shared with the Guard members—focused on Army family team building. Unfortunately, rain canceled the field visit and forced them to do other presentations.

But they did get out to an observation point for a night field artillery fire display, during which one Guard member proposed marriage to his girlfriend.

"Even with everything we had to change because of the weather, it went excellent," says Karrie Fischer, state volunteer coordinator for the Wyoming National Guard Family Program.

Comments on evaluation forms reflected the enthusiasm: "Now I realize what fascinates my husband, and I know I need to be more positive about it;" and "They really do have jobs, it's not just a fun trip away from home." Ninety-five percent said they are more positive about the Guard, which convinced Fischer and company to make Spouse Camp an annual event.

# ★ ★ ★ Dollars & Sense ★ ★ ★

**W**hen Ohio National Guard members and reservists were activated for the Gulf War, the Wright-Patt Credit Union mobilized, too. Headquartered near Wright-Patterson AFB in Dayton, the credit union sent an employee to the Veterans Affairs center for a weekend to help reservists shipping out to Saudi Arabia open accounts, set up payroll deposits and write powers of attorney.

Soldiers were putting on their boots as they were working with the representative, said Judy Lovejoy, the credit union's division manager. "When their lives were being uprooted and they suddenly had to leave their homes, we were helping them do last-minute work on their accounts," she said. Meanwhile, all credit union staff were being familiarized with the Soldiers' & Sailors' Civil Relief Act, to make sure they were doing the right thing and giving customers accurate information.

This illustrates why financial institutions serving military installations should be an attractive option for reservists. On-base banks and credit unions understand military lifestyles and obligations and are sometimes required to give personnel special breaks. As part of its contract with the base, Bank One, which has three branches on Wright-Patterson, must cash checks accompanied by military ID regardless of the originating bank. Bank One goes a step further by letting military ID bearers cash checks at branches surrounding the base, too, says Charles Held, Bank One-Dayton president.

Military-associated institutions even give reservists an edge for credit. "Over the years we've prob-

## ARE YOU ELIGIBLE?

As long as they meet the terms of the loan and account agreements, reservists and Guard members can use any on-base commercial banks. Credit unions, on the other hand, have specific membership requirements. Wright-Patt, for example, is open to DoD employees at Wright-Patterson AFB and military personnel in the credit union's service area who don't have access to another credit union. Pentagon Federal Credit Union is open to all Army and Air Force Reserve and Guard officers except those eligible for membership in other DoD credit unions, all enlisted Air Guard and Reserve members not eligible for other credit unions, and all Sixth Army personnel. Call 1-800-247-5626 for inquiries. The Navy Federal Credit Union (1-800-656-7676) and Coast Guard Federal Credit Union (1-800-554-4590) have similar requirements.

ably been more lenient with lower grade members," says Bill Phelps, Wright-Patt Credit Union business development manager. "An E-3 or E-4 doesn't have a credit history, but we know he or she will be in (the service) for three or four years."

Bank customers want good deals and convenience. Good interest rates, home and car loan availability, money market certificate and savings club options, plus accessible ATM banking and free checking, not to mention credit cards, are all important issues for customers.

On-base institutions not only provide services that are competitive with their civilian counterparts, but they are also available on drilling weekends and during training. For instance, the Wright-Patt Credit Union, with 15 branches in Ohio's 14 southwestern counties, has three offices on base, one open Saturdays.

Bank One, which has offices nationwide, opens its Wright-Patterson BX office on Saturdays and a branch in nearby Fairborn on Sundays.

Reservists also have access to many national credit unions and military-specific financial services. The Pentagon Federal Credit Union, for example, has a full menu of banking products for its members and provides the Affinity VISA card through the Reserve Officers Association and the National Guard Association of the United States. The Coast Guard Federal Credit Union has a 24-hour bank-by-phone service that offers a toll-free number.

The big difference between credit unions and banks is that the former are owned by its members, the customers. All profits go back to the membership rather than to a group of stockowners. Thus, credit union rates tend to be a little better. Because all members have a vote, they can gear operations to meet the membership's needs. The advantage of a bank—especially large ones like Bank One—is a national presence and accessibility to customers.

The bottom line for reservists is customer service, especially in the event of activation. Make sure the institution you choose is well versed in the Soldiers' and Sailors' Civil Relief Act, which protects against mortgage foreclosure and sets a six percent maximum rate of interest on loans during activations. Also, ensure you can get such things as Sure Pay and automatic drafts. Convenience is nice when you need cash for the weekend, but it is essential when your family needs sustenance during a war.

As in so many instances, the military lifestyle, whether full-time active duty or in the Reserve, requires special planning and considerations. For many, when it comes to money, an on-base financial institution has just what they need. ■



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OFD

# ★★★ Your Bigger & Better BX ★★★

**L**ike a proud papa, Robert Ellis, general manager of the Travis AFB Exchange in California, was showing off construction on his new store to visiting brass from the Army & Air Force Exchange Service (AAFES) headquarters. One feature he pointed out was the wider aisles, something BX shoppers everywhere have longed for.

Sorry, said HQ: not wide enough. AAFES had just passed new standards. "We had to take out 1,100 linear feet of fixtures to widen the aisles to the new standard," Ellis said. But now he brags of the six-foot wide aisles and four-foot wide spaces between clothing racks.

When Travis' new BX opened in April, it provided a glimpse into AAFES' future. America's armed forces retailer—which can operate out of tents on the front lines just as

## ARE YOU ELIGIBLE?

All AAFES and NEXCOM facilities are available full time to National Guard and Reserve members and their families holding a military ID card, regardless of activation status.

well—has created the prototype '90s department store. Actually, the base exchange anchors a modern AAFES mall containing a one-hour photo store, Box Office Video sales and rental, a frame shop, beauty salon, barber shop, T-shirt shop, optical shop, florist, Cherish Collection jewelry store, and a food court. Independent vendors use stands to sell anything from costume jewelry to encyclopedias. The niftiest thing in this mall, however, is a map of the main store. Travis' customers can now see how to go directly from department to department.

It is the first of many customer-service features in this new exchange. Others include:

- 18 checkout lanes
- 25 customer-service call buttons around the store—if you need help, push the button to automatically page the sales staff
- Six price-check stations, where you scan bar codes to check a price
- A video display catalog in the shoe department allowing you to or-

## SIGHT & SOUND DEALS

Base exchanges are perhaps best known for offering military shoppers great deals on top-line stereo equipment, televisions and VCRs. However, ironically, customers usually shop off-base for the sights and sounds they play on the equipment purchased at a PX because the selection of CDs and tapes has been notoriously poor at base exchanges.

That's changing. The Navy Exchange opened a new music and video superstore last December at the Great Lakes Naval Training Center's Fleet Store in Illinois, a renovation that expanded the CD and tape sales area from 800 to 1,700 square feet and more than doubled inventory to 30,000 CDs, cassettes and videos. Sales have more than doubled since the store opened, surprising even General Manager Tom Kolstad. "Any time you allocate more space to merchandise, you'll increase sales," he says. "But you don't double sales like we've done."

NEXCOM chose the Training Center's Fleet Store as the test site because of its customers' demographics: mostly male 18- to 23-year-old students living on campus. Nevertheless, the store's success goes

beyond this particular consumer group. Commanding officers say they like the new store, too, because now they can find more classical titles. "We expanded selection to include all types of music, adding show tunes and opera to the R&B, rap and country, and to provide a much greater breadth and depth within each category," Kolstad says. Prices are better, too, with bins of budget CDs starting at \$6.99 and cassettes going for \$3.99.

Great Lakes is also expanding its CD and video department at the main store, and NEXCOM is moving forward with plans to open a dozen more of these stores around the world.

AAFES is making similar changes. Appended to the new Travis Air Force Base Main Exchange is a PowerZone store, and in addition to expanding and reorganizing the music and video selections, this megastore boasts higher-tech presentations of its high-tech merchandise. Brands include Advent, Carver, Cerwin-Vega, DCM, Infinity, Jensen, JVC, Kenwood, Pioneer, Sony, Sansui, Technics and even RCA's new direct satellite television system. Now, rather than a set-



**The Great Lakes music superstore carries over 30,000 titles.**

ting more akin to a warehouse liquidation sale, the Travis' PowerZone sells this equipment as an audiophile store would.

A side room allows customers to hear any CD player, tape player or amplifier through any speaker in the store. Another setup matches any VCR with any TV. A console with headphones gives listeners a three-song sampler of every Top 100 album. Additionally, the PowerZone has a computer inventory that includes 19 different models (Compaq, Packard Bell, AST) and about 500 software titles in floppy and CD-ROM formats. So, at BX prices you can buy your computer and all the software you need, to boot.



**Shoppers will find a variety of name brands, as well as the exchange systems' own labels, at today's new PX.**

der hard-to-fit shoes and have them delivered to your home

The shoe store itself has 3,200 square feet of selling space and a 3,000-square-foot stockroom, rivaling in size many commercial shoe specialty stores and having all the trappings of an upscale retail shoe department. Aside from the typical BX wares and wears, Travis' exchange has under one roof a Toyland, a furniture and appliance store, and a garden center. At 202,000 total square feet, half of that sales space, the complex is four times the size of the original exchange, which had everything the new store has except furniture. The parking lot grew from 280 spaces to 1,444.

The new exchange doesn't merely boast a bigger size, but a better look, too. More space allows better display of books, for example. Though the number of titles remains the same, book sales doubled. "It's not so much that we are offering more, it's that it's all so much better organized," Ellis says. "You've got to be able to shop, and now it's opened up so you can see that the books are there."

What is so striking about this

**A merry-go-round and talking tree are part of Travis AFB's children's clothing department.**

BX's environment is how upscale it seems. Lingerie is invitingly displayed in soft wood cases. Purses sit on shelves instead of hanging from bars. The men's department has an attractive wall of stacked cubicles containing shirts. A merry-go-round and talking tree are part of the children's clothing department. A

real Volkswagen Bug is part of a display in casuals. Television monitors throughout the store broadcast infomercials and promotions.

Plus, six merchandisers have "concept areas": Nike, Levi's, Polo, Alexander Suits, Rubbermaid (which required 145 linear feet of shelving), and Shoebox greeting cards, the first exchange to land that concept. The Travis BX also is test marketing a Big and Tall Store.

In other words, this base exchange could be mistaken for any suburban mall, though its economic range is more like a Wal-Mart or Target. However, says Ellis, "We can't call ourselves upscale discounters because Prestige and Clinique don't like to be in discount stores." Which says something for the range

of merchandise AAFES and Navy (NEXCOM) exchanges offer, from bargain-basement wares to high-end items. Additionally, both AAFES and NEXCOM sell more than 900 store-brand items, ranging from cleaning supplies and beauty aids to clothes and toys, offering even better deals on top-quality products.

What's more, in addition to its looks good, this BX has several other customer service programs not readily evident to customers:

- Sales-based replenishment of merchandise—when an item is scanned at the register, it is automatically reordered (and deliveries arrive daily)

- A color sensor theft detection system, which has drastically reduced shoplifting

- A training center containing cash registers and sophisticated audio-visual equipment geared toward meeting AAFES' initiative to improve training for all its employees

All this comes on top of AAFES' and NEXCOM's traditional dedication to the specific needs of their military customers: check-cashing facilities, lay-away programs and acceptance of credit cards, supplemented in the Navy with NEXCOM's own NEXCARD credit card. NEXCOM also has a Convenience Care warranty program providing extended coverage—guaranteed anywhere the sailor may go—for appliances, computers, audio/video equipment and other products.

AAFES is expanding its new retailing image with construction and renovations of base exchanges throughout the United States, as well as changing its automotive service stations to rival civilian competitors. So, while AAFES and NEXCOM continue to provide military families with bargains in their main stores and satellite operations—military clothing stores, Class VI stores, portrait studios, tax services, book stores, theaters, sports stores, dental clinics and eateries—they will strive to do so with a certain amount of panache, not to mention much wider aisles. ■



# Bulletin Board

## RECEIVE AAFES SALES FLYERS

For those of you who have been out of the loop when it comes to on-base sales events and promotions (and missing out on great deals), the Army and Air Force Exchange Service (AAFES) has some news that could change all that.

AAFES will mail free sales flyers announcing major exchange sales events to National Guard and Reserve members, and military retirees living in the U.S., at their request. National Guard and Reserve customers who would like to receive this information may call Ms. Rhonda Osborne at (214) 312-2960; DSN 967-2960; or fax their request to (214) 312-3016. Or, write to AAFES, attn.: SD-P (Rhonda Osborne), P.O. Box 660202, Dallas, TX 75266-0202.

## AND THE WINNER IS...

OFF DUTY is pleased to announce that Maj. Caryn A. Long, a Reserve member with the 403rd Wing at Keesler Air Force Base in Mississippi—but who resides in Lake Helen, Florida and makes the day-long trek every month to her post three states away—is the winner of complimentary admission tickets to Universal Studios in Orlando, Florida. Long entered one of OFF DUTY's mini-surveys, and her name was drawn from thousands of entries. Long says that she and her family plan to visit Universal Studios in the near future. Congratulations Maj. Long!

## YOU, TOO, COULD WIN

If a \$100 shopping spree at your nearest commissary sounds appealing, take note: Welch's, the maker of fine grape juices for over a century, is offering members of the National Guard and Reserve an opportunity to win one of seven gift certificates as thanks for their patriotic service. To enter, simply complete the mini-survey on the postcard bound into this issue and mail it in.

The drawing will be held on April 1, 1996; entries must be post-marked by February 28, 1996. The winner must be a military ID holder. Employees of Welch's, DeCA and OFF DUTY are not eligible to win.

## HOT OFF THE PRESS

If you've dreamed of the perfect state-of-the-art home entertainment center and are ready to take the plunge, you could not have chosen a better time. OFF DUTY's *Home Entertainment '96*, a comprehensive guide to electronic equipment of every type sold in exchanges from home theater items to stereo components, is now available by mail. To receive your copy, send a check or money order for \$2.50 to OFF DUTY, Dept. H., 3303 Harbor Blvd., Suite C-2, Costa Mesa, CA 92626.

## WELCOME TO THE POWERZONE

If savings on home entertainment equipment are what you're looking for, you'll want to check out an AAFES PowerZone. PowerZone is the name of the newly designed electronics and music/video departments within selected main stores

and at a limited number of PowerZone stores. Recent trends in the home entertainment industry show a move toward interactive sampling of video games and video monitor displays, and PowerZone stores offer that and more high-tech ambiance than ever. So power up to great savings at the PowerZone near you.

## GET 'EM WHILE YOU CAN

If you'd like to receive more copies of this issue for family or friends, some may still be available at your military unit. However, if it's out of copies, you can order more for the cost of postage and handling by using the postcard bound

into this magazine. Each copy costs \$2.50 (bank draft, money order or check). Just fill out the card, enclose payment and mail it to: OFF DUTY/NGR, 3303 Harbor Blvd., Suite C-2, Costa Mesa, CA 92626.

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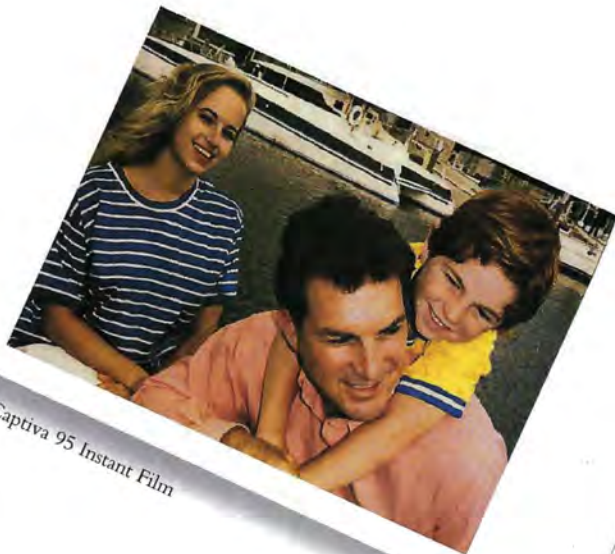
A year ago Congress passed the Uniformed Services Rights Act of 1994 (USERRA). A victory for reservists who feared military obligations could jeopardize their civilian jobs, it stipulates that reservists be able to return to work with the same pay and

benefits they received before military duty, among other things.

For details and to learn more about USERRA, contact your Job Service Office or call 1-800-2VET. Or call The National Committee for Employer Support of the Guard and Reserve at 1-800-336-1400 for more information. ■



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