Friday, October 4, 2002

Volume 2, Issue 17

Published in the interest of personnel assigned to JTF-160 and COMNAV Base Guantanamo Bay, Cuba.

With Army Staff Sgt. Veronica D. Sims

All bark, no bite: GTMO’s sweetest soldier

Compiled by
Spc. Michelle M. Scaspo
The Wire

Q: What do you want people who read this to know about you after reading your 15 minutes of fame?
A: Hmm. Well, I want people to know that even though I have a mean walk, I am a really sweet person with a warm and tender heart.

Q: Okay, so are you ready to reveal the real Staff Sgt. Veronica D. Sims and begin your 15 minutes of fame?
A: I’ve been ready!

Q: Where on this glorious GTMO do you work, and what unit are you from?
A: I am with the 160 MP Battalion out of Tallahassee, Fla., and I work at the Detention Hospital. I basically provide security to the hospital staff and detainees.

Q: And how do you feel about working so closely with the detainees?
A: As a civilian I work in a federal prison so I am used to this kind of work environment.

Q: But, there must be a lot of differences between the two, right?
A: Oh, of course, for starters I work with female inmates back in the civilian world. Also, there are a lot of do’s and don’ts working with the detainees. I have to watch what I say and do more. For example, at my job back in the states if an inmate asks me to get them anything, a water or just anything, I would never do it. It would be looked at as showing favorites. But here things are different.

Q: Enough about work, considering I am sure that is what your bus with the majority of your time here. Tell me, what do you do for fun?
A: I run. After I work a 12-hour shift, you can find me running.

Q: Running for the hall of fame?
A: Just running away a stressful day.

Q: Is there anything else you enjoy doing?
A: Other than working out, I like to go to the movies and just chill out with my roommates.

Q: Ah, housemates! They can be your best friends or your worst enemies. And how about yours?
A: I’ve got a good group. In fact, every Thursday night we cook dinner and thank God for making it through the week. And we drink a lot of apple juice.

Q: Lucky lady, six females in two rooms could mean war. But anyway, what is the weirdest thing you’ve seen since you’ve been here?
A: Banana rats! I do not take them well. And they travel in herds.

Q: We’re definitely outnumbered. Well, other than wiping out the ever-increasing hordes of banana rats roaming the streets, what would you like to change about GTMO?
A: Transportation. Every house or SHAhut should have their own vehicle. No offense to the bus drivers.

Q: Keep it up and you’ll never get a ride. If you could talk to any one about to deploy here, what would you tell him or her?
A: I’d tell them to catch a ride on the GTMO Queen because it don’t GTMO better than that.

Q: What will you remember most about GTMO when you leave?
A: The fun I had with the people who helped me get through the most horrible of days. And, to say I was a part of a good cause, once all the stress and frustration of it is behind me.

Q: And in closing, you’d like to say...?
A: First, I’d like to say keep God first. Love, love, for today because tomorrow is not promised. And, finally, a glass of apple juice a day keeps the bull$%#@ away!

“Catch a ride on the GTMO Queen because it don’t GTMO better than that.”

Next week’s 15 minutes of fame could be you!
Chaplains’ Corner

Follow the Holy Spirit’s Lead

Encountering the Holy Spirit can be thrilling and powerful. But what if such times weren’t reserved just for certain moments in your life? It is possible to experience the Holy Spirit’s presence and revival frequently — if you run after the Holy Spirit to follow where He leads.

Here are some ways you can follow the Holy Spirit’s lead:

1. Decide that you truly want to go where the Spirit leads you. If you’re struggling with fear, remember that God’s love and wisdom will always cause Him to act in your best interests.
2. Think and pray about what is currently hindering your intimacy with God. Ask God to reveal sin that you need to confess, then have confidence about expressing yourself — whether alone or with others with whom you’ve been in any type of conflict.
3. Pursue forgiveness and reconciliation with others.
4. Remember that God’s love and wisdom will always cause Him to act in your best interests. If you’re struggling with fear, follow the Holy Spirit’s lead:
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Proctor Marshal’s Office

Warnings for Swimmers & Snorkelers

Guantanamo Bay waters are subject to strong, varying, tidal and oceanic currents, and dangerous marine life.

**Commands**

1710.10G states that if you swim or snorkel in open waters, you do so at your own risk. Please exercise extreme caution.

Swimming and snorkeling is authorized within 50 yards of any shoreline, except in industrial areas, marinas, or within the immediate area of the Windward and Lee- ward ferry landings.

Unless swimming or snorkeling within 50 yards from the shoreline of Philips Drive Pier or any public beach, a dive flag buoy shall be employed.

Avoid swimming or snorkeling during inclement weather or hurricane warnings. Swimming is not authorized anywhere near the shoreline of Radio Range.

REMEMBER: Swimming alone is dangerous.


--- Submitted by Navy Lt. Sharon Bush, CHC, USNR

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**Command Sergeant Major**

Follow the Holy Spirit’s Lead

I would like to publicly thank the Windward Loop and East Caravella residents who went out of their way to accommodate the Camp America troops during the last hurricane weather evacuation this past week. The stories continue to pour in about how many of you went out and bought extra food and cleared out living rooms for the troops. Of course we had the stiffs that think they own the housing area and feel entitled to turn their backs on their guests, telling them what they can’t have. But we won’t waste print on them.

Many new friendships have been created because of the positive attitude of taking care of fellow servicemembers. The Camp America residents in many cases reciprocated with their own generosity. This showed the true spirit of the service value. Thank you again for pitching in to take care of our own.


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**The Wire**

**Sports**

**NAVSTA, playing like champions**

Story and photos by Spec. Jose A. Martinez

The Wire

NAVSTA kept rolling in the playoffs by beating the 342nd MP Co. Buckeyes 20-12 Monday at Cooper Field. NAVSTA’s record is still unblemished in the flag football league. This victory puts them one step closer to their fourth championship crown in a row.

The Buckeyes were stunned by NAVSTA into uncharted waters in the first half, able to shut down NAVSTA’s high-powered run offense, which is their bread and butter.

NAVSTA led by only 7-6 by half time.

Spectators were in shock! They were used to seeing NAVSTA bulkhead the competition, but this time it wasn’t happening.

The Buckeyes were an around good football team. They stepped up from playing our game. We were making too many mistakes on the field.”

Said Navy Seaman Antonio Robinson.

They knew the mistakes on the field were keeping the Buckeyes in the game. Not only were they one point behind but also they were building confidence as the game kept going.

At halftime NAVSTA looked staid and concerned on the sidelines as they were discussing how to beat the Buckeyes’ defense.

When the two teams met on the gridiron to start the second half, the crowd knew something had to give. Was it going to be NAVSTA’s perfect season or was it going to be the Buckeyes defense?

NAVSTA had to change their strategy in the second half if they wanted to win. Their usual running offense tactics were shut down.

“We were running the ball over in the first half, but when we figured out the Buckeyes’ defense strategy we started scoring points. We had to continue to open up the field. This made their defense vulnerable,” said Robinson.

NAVSTA forced the Buckeyes to cover them man to man. They began to spread out themselves all over the field. This opened up the field and made more passing possible. So they launched a pass attack.

Many teams have not seen NAVSTA’s passing offense because their running offense is often enough to win.

“We started playing our game in the second half, throwing more instead of just running,” said Robinson.

Robinson and Navy Petty Officer 2nd Class Bill Goodwin. “We want to keep that tradition. We want to keep the championship trophy where it belongs… NAVSTA has won three straight years and have won three straight NCAA titles.

With the losing bracket of the tournament, we are still undefeated in the season. That is what keeps us motivated. The competition is better now because losing a game could end your season,” said Petty Officer 2nd Class Bill Goodwin.

The Buckeyes played hard and valiantly, but NAVSTA was too hot.

“The Buckeyes’ defense was very good. We were tested in that game, but our defense got them on their back,” said Robinson. “The Buckeyes never gave up in the second half of the game.”

“NAVSTA says it is playing for more than a title this year. They are playing for dominance. They want to be the best. We want to keep the championship trophy in the Navy.”

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Let us know what you think!

Optional information: AGE: ______ RANK/GRAD: ______ SERVICE: ______
AFFILIATION: Dependent______ DOD Civ ______ Other ______ Servicemember_____

Answer on a scale of 1 through 5 where it applies.

1. How would you rate “The Wire” as a whole? 1____ 2____ 3____ 4____ 5____
2. How are we representing the Armed Services? 1____ 2____ 3____ 4____ 5____
3. The NEX
4. The Seaside Galley
5. Windward Loop Housing

NOTE: Please drop your survey off at one of the boxes located in following places by
1. Outstanding 2- Excellent 3- Very Good 4- Needs Improvement 5- No Interest

Give us your thoughts on the following questions:
1. How would you rate “The Wire” as a whole? 1____ 2____ 3____ 4____ 5____
2. How are we representing the Armed Services? 1____ 2____ 3____ 4____ 5____
3. What would you like to see more off of in “The Wire”?
4. What would you like to see more off of in “The Wire”?

Comments:__________________________________________________________________

5. If you could change anything in “The Wire” what would it be and why?
Comments:__________________________________________________________________

6. How do you rate each of the following columns:
Chaplains’ Corner: 1____ 2____ 3____ 4____ 5____
Commander’s Corner: 1____ 2____ 3____ 4____ 5____
Command Sergeant Major’s Corner: 1____ 2____ 3____ 4____ 5____
In Brief: 1____ 2____ 3____ 4____ 5____
Sports: 1____ 2____ 3____ 4____ 5____
15 Minutes of Fame: 1____ 2____ 3____ 4____ 5____
Profession of the Week: 1____ 2____ 3____ 4____ 5____
Crossword Puzzle: 1____ 2____ 3____ 4____ 5____
Movie Schedule: 1____ 2____ 3____ 4____ 5____
Horoscope: 1____ 2____ 3____ 4____ 5____
MWR Watch 1____ 2____ 3____ 4____ 5____

Additional comments and suggestions, including stories you particularly liked or disliked:

______

NOTE: Please drop your survey off at one of the boxes located in following places by October 10, 2002.
1. The NEX
2. The Seaside Galley
3. Windward Loop Housing

Your comments and ideas are important to us!
This week's question: Were you worried about Tropical Storm Lili?

Mar. 21 - Jun. 21

April 20 - May 20

Friday, April 5

Saturday, April 6

Monday, April 8

Tuesday, April 9

Wednesday, April 10

Thursday, April 11

Friday, April 12

Saturday, April 13

Sunday, April 14

Mar. 21 - Jun. 21

July 23 - Aug. 22

Aug. 23 - Sep. 22

Sep. 23 - Oct. 22

Oct. 23 - Nov. 21

Nov. 22 - Dec. 21

Dec. 22 - Jan. 19

Feb. 10 - Mar. 19

"Like my name says, I was going to play it cool. Someone was going to have to be responsible, so I decided up on an essential like water and food.""
The light of the end of the bay

A Cuban-American expatriate returns to the land of his birth, determined to leave his mark on Guantanamo Bay.

Story and photos by Army Sgt. Michael P. Pessoa

The lighthouse

One of the seven wonders of the ancient world was the Light- house of Alexandria, in Pharaoh, Egypt. Its light-guided sailors approaching the bay from 290 B.C. to 1480 A.D.

Point lighthouse at the southeastern end of Guantanamo Bay is a humb- lible structure with a shorter history than the one in ancient Egypt, but the Cuban-American Coast Guard PS3 William “Papi” Farias, this lit- tle lighthouse still qualifies as a point of history. To live in a lighthouse is a dream. A dream I’d like to write down.

Farias has had a long-standing interest in maritime history. He started to become enamored of the lighthouse service when he was a child in Queens, New York. His father was a Coast Guard Quartermaster and had a passion for naval history. Farias, born in Queens, New York, explains Farias. “The family moved back to Cuba when I was only a few weeks old. Then we had to leave again when I was 9 years old.”

In 1959, the Farias family fled Cuba for Miami. Later, they moved to Tampa. Although Farias spent most of his upbringing in early life, Farias never forgot his desire to connect with his fam- ily’s nautical past. He has served in the Navy and the Coast Guard for 24 years and has traveled exten- sively. Literally, now that his tenure with the military is almost up, his travels have brought him back almost to where he began. Because of his interest in history, Farias has returned to his forefathers for the first time in over forty years.

At first, merely of being back on Cuban soil was overwhelming. But eventually Farias and his family started to become enamored of the idea of leaving something of him- self behind when he departs the island. 

A storm struck one day in June as Farias and fellow Coast Guard QM3 Melissa Steenman were on a team assessing the safety of the base. Farias watched as a torrential storm with rainfall and gale-force winds hit the island. The storm was moving Northwest at 5 mph, and National Hurricane Center forecasters expected Lili near Cuba’s southern coast by late Saturday or the early hours of Sunday.

Farias and Steen- man went out in the torrential rain to start the long process ofTI, or “scraping out,” the accumulated paint on the lighthouse structure. Once the project was in motion, it was back to normal business as usual, meaning the lighthouse is always on call for an emergency.

Farias had to leave Camp America with all of his own personal belongings.

“Most people living at the Loop were sup- portive of the mission and sympathetic toward us,” said Sgt. M. Hebert of the 239th MP Co. “They knew they were on the front lines of the hurricane.”

Farias and five of his friends from PS3 got out of the Loop right at they. This time, the storm was to hit even harder, and Tropical Storm Condition “Papi” Farias, surveying the bay from the top of the lightship.

The storm.

Farias learned that the light at the end of the bay was located on what is known as “Pigeon Key.” Farias had been there before. He had helped to restore the light, but he knew that it still needed “tweaking.” Farias says, “There’s something romantic about lighthouses.”

The storm.

The storm was moving Northwest at 5 mph, and National Hurricane Center forecasters expected Lili near Cuba’s southern coast by late Saturday or the early hours of Sunday. “It was nice at the Loop, but I’m happy to be back at Camp Amy with all of my own people,” said West.

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Blood may make the green grass grow, as your drill sergeant used to say, but it's fuel, fuel that makes the vehicles go. And while few may give a second thought to the stuff when they fill up their cars, trucks, boats, helicopters and planes here at GTMO, for the hardy and self-sacrificing "fuelies" at the Defense Energy Supply Center here, their job is not about getting noticed.

"It's not a glamorous job," says Dan Anto-

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The 342nd MP Co. EG: Making history during the global war on terrorism

The soldiers of this unit have a motto: “You call, we call.” In addition to guarding the detainees in Camp Delta with vigilant eyes, these soldiers are also in charge of another very important task, a mission so far unique to the Joint Task Force Operation. It is answering the “call” and actually bringing the detainees from where they’re captured to Cuba, and we get to it,” said Staff Sgt. Edward Heckathorn of the 342nd. “We do a lot, and this job can get very draining at times, but physically and mentally. Those flights in the C-130s are pretty long, and then when we return it’s back to the long shifts at the camp.”

Since February, the soldiers of the 342nd have been out on escort missions to distant battlefields. Mobilized out of Fort Dix, N.J., originally only three-quarters of the unit came to GTMO. The rest went out on escort missions based out of Fort Dix. But by May, it was decided that the entire company was needed to assist in the guard duties within Camp Delta, meaning that GTMO would become the unit’s sole base of operations.

Given the unit’s concentration in the escort field, they are in a high priority category for deployments, making them quite valuable.

The 342nd MP Co. EG receives a briefing from JTF-160 Commanding Gen. Rich Baccala during a formation after their shift at Camp Delta is over.

“The intensity of that training involved a lot of close quarter, non-lethal measures to de-escalate any disturbances that can occur,” said Falkowski. “This training was paramount in the preparation of the air mission. Thankfully, the specific instructions we received in regards to de-escalation have never come into play during the actual missions. But it’s definitely better to have it than not to.”

Falkowski said the 342nd has always been prepared for possible enemy attacks, so when we get there, we do what we have to do and get back in the air as soon as we can.

The average soldier in the unit has been on six missions, said Falkowski, and when not on escort missions, the 342nd is on call at all hours. “We’re part of Camp Delta, just like any other unit in this place. Our unit is a rare breed,” said Staff Sgt. Gregory Falkowski, platoon leader with the 342nd.

“Our mission here is to escort the detainees from where they’re captured to Cuba, and we perform guard duty inside of Camp Delta,” said 1st Lt. Gregory Falkowski, platoon leader with the 342nd. “This training was paramount in the preparation of the air mission.”

Haas. “Our unit is a rare breed,” said Staff Sgt. Edward Heckathorn of the 342nd. “We do a lot, and this job can get very draining at times, but physically and mentally. Those flights in the C-130s are pretty long, and then when we return it’s back to the long shifts at the camp.”

“Our unit is a rare breed,” said Staff Sgt. Edward Heckathorn of the 342nd. “We do a lot, and this job can get very draining at times, but physically and mentally. Those flights in the C-130s are pretty long, and then when we return it’s back to the long shifts at the camp.”

“When a mission comes up, we’re pulled off work schedule and we get to it,” said Falkowski. “But we’ll find out with a two or three day notice if we have a mission. The secretory of defense is the final approving authority, and we get them.”

The mission and the number of detainees will dictate how many teams will get called up, said Haas. But when that happens is really anyone’s guess. “My job is bright and intelligent, and he’s going to ask questions and want answers,” he said.

But you can’t always give them the best answer. But the success has been an outstanding job with the mission that they’re tasked with.”

Their training is what helps them get the job done. During their stay at Fort Dix, the unit underwent special Air Force Raven training, which is an intensive two-week course.

“The kids that are going to be here are not bad,” said Spc. Brian Payne of the 342nd. “We trained on out flight lines and had guys all shackled up, acting as detainees. The entire thing was very hands-on.”

The intensity of that training involved a lot of close quarter, non-lethal measures to de-escalate any disturbances that can occur,” said Falkowski. “This training was paramount in the preparation of the air mission. Thankfully, the specific instructions we received in regards to de-escalation have never come into play during the actual missions. But it’s definitely better to have it than not to.”

“Heckathorn said, ‘It was also a big thing to work with the Air Force,’ said Falkowski. “We even have couple guys go through the entire Raven school and become certified. There are only around 250 certified Ravens in the Air Force, and we had Army in there making history.”

The soldiers of the 342nd are also appreciative of the historical significance of their mission and their role in the war on terrorism.

“Just thinking that we’re the ones doing it, we’re responsible for bringing the detainees here, makes you feel important,” said Sgt. Michael M. Con of the 342nd.

“This is a different kind of war, and we are making history,” said Payne. “But you can’t help but feel good about it. We take great pride in what we do.”

Every mission done is done with 100 percent effort, “is how much it costs,” said Trotter, who handles the operation’s preventive maintenance, “is how much it costs.” Which reminds him — prices, set annually by the U.S. comptroller, are down this year. Diesel is $0.91, a gallon, down from $1.22; gasoline is $0.85, down from $1.22; and JP5 is $0.96, down from $1.22 in FY 02. Maybe this year, GTMO’s ‘fuels’ will get a little glamor after all.

From what I’ve heard from pilots and crews, they do an outstanding job,” said Mike Samsal, Leeward’s Air Traffic Control coordinator and the man whose call makes Hepburn jump. “Very professional, very safety conscious. I don’t think anybody still gets that hometown welcome when they get here.”

“Spend a day or two around the camp, and you realize where that attitude comes from. Fuel is the blood of the military; these guys’ mission is to make sure the military’s heart keeps beating. And somewhere along the way, it gets into their blood too, and becomes a way of life.”

“I’ve been in fuel since 1967,” said Antonis. “I started out with the Air Force in Vietnam, then Thailand, and when I got out and became a contractor I went right back to Thailand, doing the same job at three times the money. From there it was Panama as a mechanic, then I came back to the U.S. for college; then back to Panama as the fuels manager from 1993 until I retired in 1997. And in 1999 I came out of retirement to take the job with Kvaerner-Willbros here.”

“I love everything I know to the Air Force, fuel-wise,” he said. “But I’ve been working in gas stations since I was 14. I was a mechanic at Charlie Collins Chevy in Bayonne, N.J. I guess you could say I was born to do this — it sure seems that way.”

“Today’s soldier is very hands-on. There’s no way you can help but feel good about it,” said Payne. “We trained out flight lines and had guys all shackled up, acting as detainees. The entire thing was very hands-on.”

But Hepburn wouldn’t have traded it for anything. “I love it,” he said. “It’s the most important job on the base. Because these planes are pretty much the only means of getting in or out. And if the aircraft don’t have fuel, you don’t go nowhere.”

And though he likes to deliver his service with a smile, joking with pilots and crew members while the JP5 flows, Hepburn takes his responsibility seriously. “I personally try to set some standards while I’m here,” he said.

“When you get the call from the tower, you go out and do the job, and do it well. That’s it.”

Spend a day or two around the camp, and you realize where that attitude comes from. Fuel is the blood of the military; these guys’ mission is to make sure the military’s heart keeps beating. And somewhere along the way, it gets into their blood too, and becomes a way of life.

“I’ve been in fuel since 1967,” said Antonis. “Just thinking that we’re the ones doing it, we’re responsible for bringing the detainees here, makes you feel important,” said Sgt.

The United States Coast Guard cutter Confidence pulls up to Pier Charlie for refueling.

Kvaerner-Willbros employee Sunday Canoy closes the gate behind an entering vessel at the operation’s headquarters facility on Potter Ave.

One of those people, Joe Hepburn, remembers the January readiness well. As the operations chief for the Leeward Air Termi- nal’s refueling needs, Hepburn handles every- thing from inventory to data entry to fueling aircraft and teaching other workers to do it safely and quickly. With planes coming and going 24 hours a day, the fueling operation is on call at all hours too — and Hepburn calls the detention operation’s early days the busiest of his life.

“The place was crazy,” he said. “In Janu- ary, February and into March, planes were coming and going all the time, needing to be refueled and sent on so that more planes could land. It was the most amazing thing, the biggest challenge I’ve seen.”

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Sometimes, there are a lot of planes and it will start of Fiscal Year 2003 on Oct. 1, and a procedural change that will now allow the JFFs to bill their fuel directly to DESC in Virginia instead of through GTMO’s Navy leadership — had JTF drivers bringing in Camp Delta’s spotlit nights, planes will still land, refuel and take off again. The countless engines of the detention operation will roar on, moving the mission and its people wherever they need to go.

The only thing people want to know about fuel, says Trotter, who handles the operation’s preventive maintenance, “is how much it costs.” Which reminds him — prices, set annually by the U.S. comptroller, are down this year. Diesel is $0.91, a gallon, down from $1.22; gasoline is $0.85, down from $1.22; and JP5 is $0.96, down from $1.22 in FY 02. Maybe this year, GTMO’s ‘fuels’ will get a little glamor after all.

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Troops stationed at Guantanamo Bay have little fear of injury from enemy fire, it’s the smaller things that can put a soldier out of commission and impede mission capabilities here.

Set up as a triage to treat sick patients but capable of saving lives is your neighborhood Aid Station. However, most patients who walk past the little red cross and enter the Aid Station are simply in need of fast, efficient medical assistance to get their bodies back to full mission capability.

The Joint Aid Station located at Windward Loop is responsible for treating all sick call patients from Windward Loop, East Caravella, and Villamar housing areas. Their hours of operation are Monday through Friday 7 a.m.-4:30 p.m. Patients having any emergencies after those hours must call 911 and will be taken to the hospital.

The Camp America Aid Station is primarily responsible for treating Camp America residents. Their hours for sick call are Monday through Sunday 7 a.m.-10 a.m. and 1 p.m.-3 p.m. However, there’s someone available in the Aid Station 24 hours a day, seven days a week.

In comparison to the hospital, the Aid Station is much smaller in size and manpower. However, their efficient work and skill enable them to treat an average of 15-20 patients daily without much delay.

So, if you need aid, don’t be afraid, and visit your local Aid Station. They’ll take care of you.

Story and photos by
Spc. Michelle M. Scsepko
The Wire

Ouch! Navy HM3 David Roberts, MIUW 204, prepares a patient’s shot.

Army Ssg. Robin Bigalke, 43rd MP Brigade, rests her heavy head in the upstairs waiting area of the Joint Aid Station while she waits to be seen by a member of the staff.

Navy HM2 Scott Rogoff, MIUW 204, examines fellow MIUW 204 Seaman Mike Brake’s pained feet.

Navy HM2 Scott Rogoff, MIUW 204, and Navy HM3 David Roberts, MIUW 204, consult with one another’s expertise about a patient’s urine-dip test results.

Navy Seaman Mike Brake, MIUW 204, signs in and awaits treatment.

Spc. Diana Klinker, 418th Transportation Co., has her temperature taken before being seen.