

COAST GUARD CONNECTION

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KRISTI LANGENBACHER

Missing Man Ceremony

Upon entering the dining area, the table at the front is unmistakable. It is set for one, with a stark white table cloth. In its simplicity, it offers a feeling of honor, dedication and loss.

The table is part of a ceremony, often called the Missing Man Ceremony or Honor Ceremony. It is designed as a dignified and solemn moment in many formal dinners.

My husband and I have seen it many times at various Coast Guard events, and it always brings tears to my eyes.

We attended a Chief's Call to Initiation ceremony last week, and the Honor Ceremony portion of the event reminded everyone there about the men and women who have been lost, or have died in service to our country.

The moderator asked attendees to stand and take note of the table at the front, reserved in honor of our missing loved ones.

Though they cannot attend, the place has been set for them, and they are being honored by those who can.

The ceremony has been a part of military balls, formal dinners, and numerous other traditional ceremonies.

We have heard different variations of the narrative written for the ceremony, but the symbolism is constant.

After calling attention to the special table, the moderator then goes on to explain the meaning of the items on the special table, with one single word between each sentence. "Remember."

The table is round, to show the everlasting concern for those who cannot be here.

"Remember." The tablecloth is white, symbolizing the purity of their intent when answering the call to duty.

"Remember." A single red rose reminds us of their life, and those of the loved ones they left behind.

"Remember." A slice of lemon on the bread plate reminds us of the bitter fate of those killed or missing in service of their country.

"Remember." A dash of salt symbolizes the tears endured by the families who are left behind.

"Remember." The Bible represents the strength gained through faith.

"Remember." The glass is inverted to symbolize their inability to share in the toasts of the event.



STAFF PHOTO BY THOMAS J. TURNER

Commanding Officer for Aviation Logistics Center, Ed Gibbons, (left) talks to college and university students Monday. The students will be attending a pilot apprenticeship program at the Coast Guard base this summer.

College students apprentice at Coast Guard's Aviation Logistic Center

By WILLIAM F. WEST
Staff Writer

Davina Preston said when she received word she would be one of a first-ever group of college and university interns in a new program at the Coast Guard facility, she dropped to her knees in joy.

"Words couldn't describe how I felt," said Preston, of Richmond, Va., and a recent graduate of North Carolina A&T University in industrial engineering.

Preston, along with eight fellow graduates and students, began apprenticeships Monday morning at the Aviation Logistics Center.

The program is a collaborative effort between the senior leadership at the Coast Guard headquarters and the senior leadership of the Aviation Logistics Center. The center is tasked with material and technical support for Coast Guard air stations and aircraft.

The center's commander, Capt. Edward Gibbons, told the interns that, "ALC is

"Words couldn't describe how I felt."

Recent North Carolina A&T University graduate about being accepted into the ALC apprenticeship program

Davina Preston

not a place. It's a group of people."

"We need to kind of build a pool of folks who might be interested in living in Elizabeth City and working for us and applying for some of these jobs as they come open," he said.

And one of the center's longtime civilian employees, Danny Hale, made clear to the interns that the center is looking for fresh ideas.

"We've got a lot of unsolved problems here. You will have an immediate impact on what we do, guaranteed," Hale said, noting the center will probably implement the interns' answers.

Hale is the center's deputy of the business operations division. He emphasized the center's work ethic, with

the vehicle parking lots usually full by 6:15 a.m. and staff on the job by 6:45.

"We get off at 4:15," Hale said, though he noted workers are still on the job as late as 7:30 p.m.

"That's the dedication that the captain doesn't even have to ask for from us," he said.

And Hale emphasized the bond between the center and those in the field.

"When an aircraft goes down, every one of us cries," he said. "I mean that hurts. Why? Because we know these people."

And he noted the Coast Guard has lost three aircraft the past several months: A helicopter in Michigan; an airplane out of Sacramento, Calif.; and a helicopter in Hawaii.

Hale went on to say that, at the center, the interns

would find hard-working, but good-natured people.

"Yes, you're in Elizabeth City," he said. "You're in a small town, but we act like a big town. We act like we're world class. We believe we're world class."

"I had no idea all this was here, really," one of the interns, Rebecca Farmer, said of the Coast Guard facility. "I just didn't know it was as big as it was."

"I don't usually come this far out," said Farmer, of South Mills. She is a recent graduate of Elizabeth City State University, with a degree in engineering technology.

James A. Generette, of Johnsonville, S.C., and a senior at N.C. A&T, sees the internship as a good opportunity. He is studying mechanical engineering.

Generette said he wants to one day get a pilot's license because he enjoys air travel and seeing the beauty of the skyline.

When asked what kind of aircraft he would prefer to fly, he said, "Anything." The program will conclude May 30.

WHAT'S UP ON BASE

Admiral Papp relieves Admiral Allen as Coast Guard commandant

Adm. Robert J. Papp, Jr., assumed command as the 24th commandant of the Coast Guard on May 25, relieving

Chief Warrant Officer on May 13, and will be officially promoted on June 1.

Dirksen is stationed at the Aviation Technical Training Center in Elizabeth City.

VBS scheduled at base chapel

The Wings of Faith Aviation Memorial Chapel on the Coast Guard base will host

ing family members.