

# NAVAL AVIATION NEWS

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## Photographer's Mate

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In the air or underwater, PHs are on the scene wherever the Navy does its job.

exciting and rewarding field in the Navy.

"Well, not quite at first," PH1 Inez F. Libert said. Libert is the leading petty officer for Still Media Services at the Naval Imaging Command in Washington, D.C. "Many of our younger sailors spend their time shooting 'grip and grins' [award ceremonies] and printing black and white photographs. We start them in black and white because it forms the basis of all photographic work," she explained.

"It gets a little boring just shooting ceremonies all the time," PH3 Cynthia J. McGuirk said. "I like taking photos but I have more fun shooting something interesting or exciting."

Interesting? Exciting? Fortunately, the Navy offers photographers one of the most visually exciting arenas to practice their craft. But paying dues remains the Navy way and this maxim holds true for PHs. After "A" school, grip and grins, as well as portrait photography, will remain mainstays of the PH rating for a long time to come.

"We put our students through a 10-week course of instruction," PH1 Dennis D. Taylor, an instructor at the Navy's photo school in Pensacola, Fla., said. "We take people, who in some cases have never even held a camera, and teach them the fundamentals of composition, exposure, shooting, processing and printing. Then we touch on color photography, large format cameras and quality control."

The A school is 10 weeks long but plans are being made to increase it to 14 weeks. According to Taylor, an additional two weeks of electronic imaging, the photo technology of the future, is scheduled to be incorporated into the schedule in 1994. Also, there is a possibility the school will move to Fort Meade, Md., as a part of a combined Defense Photo School.

A PH's training doesn't end in A school, though. The job involves much more than taking the pretty pictures we see. Its specialties require advanced training, and advanced training means NECs (Navy Enlisted

**H**ow would you like to wear a suit and tie at your next duty station? If you're a Photographer's Mate (PH), this is a good possibility, provided you get the right duty.

You've probably seen these enlisted folks at a retirement ceremony, a reenlistment or a cake-cutting ceremony, waiting for just the right moment to snap their shutters. Or you

might have seen them in Somalia, or Kuwait, documenting events for military analysts or for posterity. But, definitely, you have seen their work. It's published in magazines and newspapers around the world and seen on television sets throughout the fleet, as well as commercial and public broadcast stations. And they will proudly declare that the PH rating is the most

PH1(AW/DV) Tilton

Classification) codes.

Maintaining cameras and accessories in proper condition requires a five-week school in equipment maintenance for which the 8191 NEC is earned. Repairing equipment is taught at a three-month school culminating with the 8192 NEC.

But what if you want to be in pictures? Motion pictures, that is. The Photographer's Mates can put you there. A motion picture "C" school is taught at Pensacola. Placing emphasis on establishing a full-length production, students learn the intricacies of shooting video. A more advanced school, located at Syracuse University in New York, trains PHs in video editing.

CWO3 Rhonda L. Bailey is the division officer for Motion Media at the Imaging Command. Her job casts her in the role of a television producer. "We do naval productions for education and training," Bailey said. "Depending on our client, we develop the script, contract the actors or voice talent, arrange production times and shoot and edit."

Want high visibility? How about the nine PHs responsible for videotaping virtually every step the President of the United States makes? PHC E. G. Noccillo of White House Television said, "We document, on video, the President of the U.S. These tapes are sent to the National Archives and eventually to the presidential library. We tape all open and most closed events at the White House. We also go where the president goes. If the president jogs, we jog."

On call 24 hours a day, these PHs wear suits and ties to work. "For me, it's the most rewarding duty I've had," said Noccillo. "I'm in daily contact with the decision makers of the world. It is really exciting to be there when history is made, such as the recent signing of the Middle East Peace Accord."

Don't get the impression that a PH's life is all fun and glory. Their main mission is fleet support and a perfect example of this is TARPS (Tactical Air Reconnaissance Pod System). "TARPS provides air reconnaissance and bomb assessment damage. The pod weighs 2,000 pounds and hangs under an F-14," PHCS(AW) Harry J. Blacker said. "PHs assigned to an F-14 squadron maintain the pod and load and unload the film."

PH2 James E. Finnigan served on *Midway* (CV 41) during Desert Storm. "Our mission onboard a carrier is to support operations and intelligence. During Desert Storm, we processed the TARPS film and provided maps for planning purposes."

Finnigan also tells a tale of a more grisly aspect of the PH rating. After a fire onboard *Midway* in 1990, PHs were called in to take photos of the physical damage to the ship. They also photographed the autopsies of the dead crewmen. "By photographing the bodies and the compartment where the fire occurred, investigators gathered important information about how and where the fire started and how the crewmen died. This information can be used to find better methods of shipboard firefighting," Finnigan added.

Fascinating stuff, right? Well, if you're thinking about converting to the PH rating, the opportunities are there. According to PHCM(AW) Ted L. Salmons, there are more than 1,200 PHs in the Navy with a manning level currently at 88 percent. "So much for the myth of our rating being overpopulated," Salmons, the PH detailer, said. "We are crowded at the senior levels, but advancement to second and first class remain good with hard work and lots of studying. And we take conversions from other ratings quite regularly."

The new sea/shore rotation recently revised the PH's sea time, reducing it

in most cases. However, third class petty officers can now plan to spend an additional 15 months at sea for a total of 60 months sea time and 36 months ashore. Second class PHs will spend 45 months at sea and 36 months on shore. First class petty officers and above will split their time between sea and shore, 36 months each.

"For the career sailor, the opportunity for advancement is there. We are the only rating where our officer community comes exclusively from the enlisted ranks, earning their commissions through the Limited Duty Officer or Warrant Officer programs," Salmons continued. "The reason for this is that we remain a very technical rating and we need that technical expertise at the officer level."

"There are people in our community who do their time and get out after their first tour, and that's fine. But to advance in our rating, you really have to love what you do. Lots of sea time helps, also."

"We fly, we sail and we go underwater," Salmons concluded. "Wherever Navy men and women are working, PHs will be there to document their story."

"The only way to excel in photography is practice," Libert said. "Photography for me is my hobby as well as my job. I can't imagine going anywhere without 20 pounds of gear hanging from my shoulder." ■

PHAN Todd Lackovitch



Two PHs remove an infrared sensor from a Tactical Air Reconnaissance Pod System (TARPS) pod on a VF-84 F-14A aboard Theodore Roosevelt (CVN 71) during Operation Deny Flight.