

Prestige's skills helped lead way for female pilots in Navy

By CAROL R. EMMENS
Special to the Star and Wave

CAPE MAY — "I wanted to fly helicopters," said pilot Corry Juedeman Prestige, CDR, USN (retired) who was a Navy pilot. But she didn't. Her "dream sheet," her list of what she wanted to fly and where she wanted to be based, was ignored because the Navy had a new need and she was selected to help fill it.

The Nature Center of Cape May welcomed Prestige, a retired naval aviator with 2,500 total hours and two combat tours over Iraq during the late 1990s, as its featured Harbor-side Chat speaker Oct. 6.

"In the Navy, women served on support ships, but not combat ships such as the aircraft carriers, frigates or destroyers," Prestige said.

Only months before she was

accepted by Naval Aviation, that restriction was lifted. It was a milestone.

What aircraft pilots fly is based, in part, on their grades. Hers were good.

"So I was selected to train for the E-2C Hawkeye," the Navy's all-weather, early warning and control aircraft based on a carrier, Prestige said.

"I wanted no part in landing a fixed-wing airplane on a moving runway at sea," she admitted.

Prestige was trained as a pilot in Pensacola, Fla., and was required to escape four times from a helo dunker, which simulates a crash at sea. The helo dunker is dumped into the water, flipped upside down and the crew has to get



PRESTIGE

out — the last time blindfolded.

"I hated it," Prestige confessed.

It was not her only challenge — more and greater challenges were ahead.

Assigned to learn how to fly on and off a carrier, she admits, "I was terrified. Not only would I be flying a fixed-wing aircraft on to the carrier — if all went well — but I would be flying the largest aircraft (54,000 pounds) with the widest wingspan (81 feet) that can land on the carrier." The carrier's landing strip was 100 feet wide and the plane came in at 120 to 125 knots per hour.

"A study of Vietnam pilots showed their blood pressure was lower over enemy territory than going back to a car-

rier at night," she said.

She called her father, who is a military pilot himself, and he offered her reassurance. Later she found out he hung up the phone and said, "I can't believe she's going to do it." Not only did Prestige do it, but she was "top hook" — the best in her group. Now flying "like a girl," which had been a military insult, was high praise.

"On a carrier, every landing, or 'trap,' is graded and the grades are posted on a display board known as the Greenie board," she said she learned. "The best grade was awarded a green chip; a wave off was a red chip, and no grade — which was worse than a bad grade — was a brown chip (and the source of a lot of humiliating pranks). Prestige never received a brown chip.

In her presentation at the Nature Center, she talked

about her many tours. She had two deployments in the Persian Gulf during Operation Southern Watch; she was one of the pilots who flew missions monitoring the no-fly zone just outside Iraq. Back in the U.S., in cooperation with the Coast Guard, she was assigned a tour to fly out over the water to spot the ships of drug smugglers from Central and South America — the first female pilot so assigned.

Prestige was an instructor, had a tour at the Pentagon and said she was glad to have a chance to "work for a female admiral, Jan Hamby, who was a trailblazer."

After Hurricane Katrina, Prestige flew missions to aid communication and rescue efforts in New Orleans. She had a brother living there and because she saw the urgency of the situation, she says it

was her "most memorable and most fulfilling and busiest mission."

Over the years, Prestige noted, "I've witnessed many changes for opportunities for military women in the span of my career." But the changes sometimes came slowly. She still remembers doing her advanced pilot training on board the USS Kitty Hawk carrier.

"Ironically, women were not yet allowed on board," she remembers, "so even though I flew on and off that ship for three days, I never did set foot outside my aircraft onto the flight deck," not even for a bathroom break.

Like the women who came before her, Prestige has also helped pave the way for the women who are following in her footsteps. And Prestige has lived up to her call sign as well. It was Duchess.

Ban drones

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Last week, U.S. Rep. Frank LoBiondo (R-NJ) issued an opening statement from a hearing on ensuring safety in the era of unmanned aircraft systems. LoBiondo is chairman of a subcommittee on aviation.

"Unmanned aircraft systems, or UAS, represent the latest frontier in aviation technology. While still a new industry, UAS are already contributing to our economy and changing how companies do business. Across the country, we already see UAS used for a myriad of operations, from surveying, photography and safety inspections, to

medical delivery and search and rescue. With each new use, businesses and commercial users can save time, money and even lives.

"But like any other new technology, UAS bring new challenges as well. In the past year, pilots have been reporting sightings of UAS near airports at an accelerating rate. In 2014, the FAA received 238 reports of drone sightings. In 2015, the number has already exceeded 600.

"Safety is paramount in aviation and the increased number of suspected sightings raises serious questions. Some of these reports involved airliners and occurred at low altitudes near the nation's

busiest airports. Other reports involve pilots in general aviation aircraft in less busy airspace. The real possibility of a mid-air collision must be taken seriously in order to prevent tragic consequences.

"To be clear, it is also my understanding that some of these reported sightings may involve something other than a consumer unwisely operating their new gadget in busy controlled airspace or restricted airspace. In at least some cases, the reported UAS may have been a government-operated aircraft or a lawfully operated UAS or simply a bird in flight.

"To that end, we need to understand what precisely

is going on in our airspace — what's the actual risk and how do we manage and mitigate it? With retailers readying for significant UAS purchases by American consumers this upcoming holiday season, this conversation and subsequent action cannot wait. There are real consequences if we are not cautious enough, though we must not go to the extreme which could unnecessarily restrict the UAS industry's growth and innovation here in the United States because of so-called 'false positives.'

"The key is balance, and I believe that this committee, as well as the FAA and stakeholders, continue to strive for just that. The answers to these

questions will be complex, though I am confident that our

country can and will address them."

Beach slope

Continued from Page A1

hoops." Any work on the beach would require permits from the DEP and the Army Corps, he said. The Army Corps has a process called a Section 408 Review when any of its projects are affected, Thornton said.

Councilman Shaine Meier noted the city's Public Works Department moved sand on the beach prior to the passage of Hurricane Joaquin. Mahaney said the sand was moved under the city's beach maintenance permit with written and verbal approval from the DEP. He said the city's beaches are "engineered beaches," which puts them in a different category than other towns that do not have state or federal replenishment programs.

The city's area of concern regarding the beach slope is the area of the wet sand between the high and low tide lines which is under federal jurisdiction for the most part, said the mayor, adding that the DEP Beach Maintenance Permit would not apply to that area of sand.

"To move forward on this, we're probably going to need a jurisdictional determination and possibly a permit from the Army Corps," Mahaney said.

He said council's overall intent was to take action by next summer to reduce the beach slope following the high tide line to low tide line.

Mahaney said a survey is needed showing current conditions plus past research from Stockton University, Rutgers and Stevens Institute of Technology. He said the Army Corps was concerned with the overall template for Cape May's beaches.

"Their charge under our 50-year agreement is to maintain that template," Mahaney said.

He said Cape May wants to do two future beach replenishment projects from the Coast Guard base to the cove and from the cove to Cape May Point. Mahaney said any activity undertaken cannot reduce the berm by more than a certain amount based on the Army Corps template.

Any plan would require an application to the DEP for a permit and to the Army Corps for jurisdictional determination and possibly a permit, he said.

The Army Corps and DEP have participated in discussions and are willing to help, Mahaney said. He said no other municipalities have undertaken projects to eliminate a beach slope.

The costs of engineering and construction work on the beach would be paid by Cape May, Mahaney said.

"The city has never had liability risk because we never actually participated in the actual construction of beach replenishment projects, we've always just been a funding partner," he said. "But if we move forward with this, I'm not saying we shouldn't, we obviously create some liability because now we are actually doing something either in house or doing something by contract."

Mahaney said the Army Corps and DEP have made it clear removing the beach slope would be a project and the city would not be permit-

ted to regrade the beach on a regular basis, perhaps as little as once per year. He said there is thinking by some engineers that nothing can be done to remedy the beach slope.

City Manager Bruce MacLeod said the U.S. Division of Fish and Wildlife could also be involved in the permitting process.

During public comment,

resident John Van de Vaerst said he personally witnessed a couple of severe accidents at the beach. He asked if a project to remove the beach slope would be a long-term solution or would it help the beach until the next storm event washes away portions of the beach or builds up the sand. Mahaney said the city was seeking a long-term solution.



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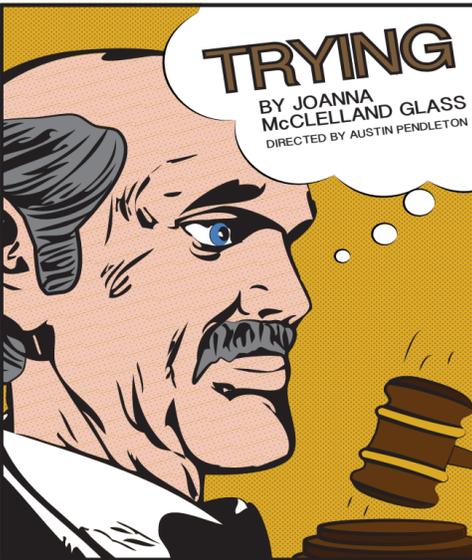
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| 15 | 10:01 | 10:15 | 3:29 | 4:07 |
| 16 | 10:36 | 10:51 | 4:02 | 4:36 |
| 17 | 11:13 | 11:30 | 4:37 | 5:29 |
| 18 | 11:56 | | 5:18 | 6:17 |
| 19 | 12:17 | 12:46 | 6:08 | 7:12 |
| 20 | 1:16 | 1:46 | 7:08 | 8:12 |
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