First Week’s Winners

Here’s how to enter DIXIE Roto Magazine’s 1967 Amateur Snapshot Contest: Write your name and address on each entry. Mail it to Snapshot Contest Editor, DIXIE Roto Magazine, The Times-Picayune, New Orleans, La. 70140. Include a stamped, self-addressed envelope with color slides. No other entries will be returned. Prizes of $5 will be awarded to four black-and-white entries each week, and to four color entries each month. Local grand prizes of $25 will be awarded at the end of the contest, which closes August 13. Send a stamped, self-addressed envelope to the contest editor for a copy of the rules.

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Picayune, Miss.

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Algiers Naval Station:

Past, Present, Future

By Betsy Petersen

"Smoke was actually coming out of the great chimney," reported an astonished Daily Picayune reporter in November, 1913. The Algiers Naval Station was in the midst of one of its periods of inactivity; the show of industry, added the reporter sadly, "was only make-believe, a little performance arranged . . . to show Mr. Roosevelt how well the machinery could work."

Franklin Delano Roosevelt, assistant secretary of the Navy, was evidently impressed by his visit to the station: Through his recommendations, along with those of Secretary Josephus Daniels, the station was reopened in January, 1915.

Reporters often had a hard time keeping up with the fortunes of the station. Activities there have waxed and waned like the inconstant moon, with periodic promises of huge funds fading into thin air, and rumors of imminent disestablishment running rampant.

Announcing a personnel cut in 1956, Congressman F. Edward Hebert said, "Every time there is a policy change or a reduction in force, an unfounded rumor spreads that the Algiers Naval Station will be closed."

The station has in fact been closed 2½ times. The first time was in 1911, an unlucky 13 years after its establishment. The second was in 1933. It had stayed open 18 years that time. "Ten officers and 15 men surrendered," recalls Hebert. "And the weeds grew high."

The station was reduced to caretaker status, and a single civilian, a former Yeomanette (the World War I equivalent of a Wave) named Anna King, acted as station keeper and budget officer. "She was known as 'the admiral,'" recalls an employee. Meanwhile, the National Youth Administration (an agency not unlike the Job Corps of today) used station facilities for a training school.

Reactivated in 1941, the station was open 20 years before the rumors of its closing found basis in fact once again. In March, 1961, Secretary of Defense Robert S. MacNamara declared the station excess to Navy use and ordered it closed.

Mrs. Maude Broad, secretary to Rear Admiral Pierre N. Charbonnet Jr., commandant of the Eighth Naval District,
asked the officer had its headquarters at the station, was SIX came in and had the furniture were received in March station would be disestablished. Orders Eleventh (in San Diego); the Algiers quartered in Charleston) and the political football or not, the station has enjoyed periods of great and important activity—particularly in wartime. During World War I, it was operated as an industrial Navy yard for repair of vessels; it also provided logistic support as a supply depot and a naval hospital; and it was conditioned to receive 700 enlisted men for a fireman’s and machinist’s mate school, and 100 officers. Activities burgeoned again in World War II: Gurney instruction was instituted, and all naval recruits for the Eighth Naval District (which at that time included Louisiana, Arkansas, Oklahoma, Texas, Mississippi, Alabama, Tennessee, and all thirds of members: “We had transferred or were finding other jobs, and most of the barracks have since been de

A lot of ships knocked off in the Gulf by German submarines,” he adds. “Sometimes ships would leave and come right back.”

An enormous reconstruction program was instituted. One employee remembers that “The engineers would develop plans for a building one day, and the next day they’d be putting it up. People were working in the new buildings before they were completed.”

As in World War I, the station functioned as a primary supply center, one of America’s biggest. Nearly 5,000 vessels were supplied and serviced there, and more were outfitted. “We were comparable to Norfolk in size and importance,” recalls an employe. In 1946, the supply depot was decommissioned and the receiving station deactivated; economy measures brought about a decline in personnel. But in 1951, the receiving station was reactivated, and the station began to hum once more.

“A lot of reserves were brought back to the station by the will of the Korean conflict,” says an employe, “and we wrote their orders, outfitted them, and gave them their physicals. We spent long hours at it—we had to work until 9:30 or 10 every night and come in Saturdays and sometimes Sundays.”

Another man recalls, “My wife was pregnant with our third child, and I had to write the orders for her doctor to return to active duty.”

With the end of the Korean conflict, history repeated itself: Officials in Washington again began to think of the station as excess baggage. In 1954, however, the Navy lit a brief candle in the gloom by announcing it would spend a billion dollars over a 20-year period, replacing all temporary structures (which had been built to last five years during World War II) with permanent buildings. “But it was just a story and that was all,” says Hebert sadly. Many of those temporary buildings are still in use today.

The fortunes of the station have been involved through the years with those of the Eighth Naval District. The command headquarters have moved back and forth across the river a number of times; the last move, from the old Federal Building to the station, was completed in 1955. The transfer, said Hebert at the time, had “the announced purpose of stabilizing the Algiers Naval Station as a permanent installation.” In other words, as he put it more recently, “As long as you have bodies in the place, they can’t close the gates.”

One of the most important aspects of COMEIGHT’s program is the organization and administration of Naval Reserve training for all surface reserves—11,000 reservists at 62 training centers in the five states which now comprise the district (Arkansas, Oklahoma, Texas, Louisiana and New Mexico). Among these are the station’s own weekend warriors, who use the U.S.S. Hyman, a destroyer, and the Bathfish, a training submarine, both moored at the Navy’s docks in Algiers.

The training aids distribution unit, also located at Algiers, keeps thousands of training movies, mock-ups, charts and recordings for use in all the regular and reserve shore and fleet units in the district. (The movies—covering everything from digital computers to first aid—are available also to schools and other nonprofit institutions in the five-state area.)

After Hurricane Betsy, in September, 1965, the station took a hand in civilian affairs—10,000 refugees were housed in Navy barracks at Algiers. (Most of these barracks have since been demolished.)

In July, 1966, the station was renamed the Naval Support Activity (West), and the old port of embarkation on the East Bank was taken over from the Army and designated the Naval Support Activity (East). The two activities, which officially comprise Naval Support Activity New Orleans, provide facilities (dormitory, hospital, and such) for military personnel and their dependants from all services in the New Orleans area.

"The support activity is a small, dried-

Recalls a feeling of “total shock” on hearing the news.

“I was the one who took the message over the phone,” she remembers. “I couldn’t believe what I was writing. I asked the officer in Washington to please let me read it back to him—it just didn’t seem possible.”

The Eighth Naval District, which had its headquarters at the station, was to be split between the Sixth (headquartered in Charleston) and the Eleventh (in San Diego); the Algiers station would be disestablished. Orders were received in March to complete the operation by July first.

One civilian employe recalls: “COMEIGHT came in and had the furniture tagged. You’d be sitting at your desk and someone would come along and say, ‘I want that chair.’ I couldn’t believe it was really happening—I think they would’ve had to roll my chair out with me on it.”

But they didn’t. Another employe remembers: “We had transferred or released to inactive duty almost two-thirds of our complement. Key civilians were finding other jobs, and most of the records had been transferred. Then, all of a sudden, the order came halting disestablishment.”

The station, and COMEIGHT, were saved. Since personnel were, to a man, antidisestablishmentarian, there was joy in Algiers. “We all felt, ‘Long live Mr. Hebert!’” says one employe. “We all know that if it weren’t for him, we’d be out of a job.”

Hebert himself admits, “The station has had its ups and downs from the very beginning. It’s always been a headache—it was a political sop to begin with, and it’s been a political football ever since.”

His own association with the station dates back long before his 1946 election to Congress and his induction into a minstrel troop that entertained there during World War I. Since those days, his problem has become a bit more knotty. “My responsibility is to keep it open as long as I can,” he says.

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Fran And Joey--

Talkative
And
Talented

By Ida D. Jeffries

College girls lavishing their attentions on Joey are, from left, Linda Ogletre of McComb; Fran Sullivan, Joey's owner; Libby Falcon of Amite; and Brenda Ogletre of McComb. Fran and Joey are home in Vicksburg for the summer, but Joey misses life at USM. He'd like to be back with the girls!
Graduates

Delaney was lone male in most of his elementary education classes. He'll receive Bachelor of Science degree.

But Delaney's love of music is a permanent fixture. He had cultivated his interest in playing since his grammar school days when a nun taught him the trumpet.

"Pete, George Girard and I played together in grammar school," he recalled. "I was a terrible trumpet player. Girard was great. When he showed up, I fooled around with a trombone."

Delaney said he had to play the trumpet when Girard couldn't come. "Pete just stopped up his ears."

Switching permanently to the trombone, Delaney played throughout high school—even for his own senior prom. Explaining that he wanted to graduate as soon as possible, he had

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To feel really fresh and clean you really have to be fresh and clean.

Naval Station:  Continued From Page 9

up version of the naval station," says Adm. Charbonnet. "Our potential for mobilization is outweighed by the need for economies which has forced us to consolidate—but, by consolidating, we can make valuable, nicely located land available to the city."

Last year, government officials took a giant step toward utilizing the station’s land for health and education. Seventy-five acres declared surplus to Navy use will be used for schools and hospitals to make up one of the nation’s largest health-education complexes. Facilities will include two high schools—one constructed by the Orleans Parish School Board, one by the Archdiocese of New Orleans, a vocational training center for Delgado College; a mental health treatment center operated by LSU School of Medicine; and a 150-bed satellite hospital of Touro Infirmary.

An additional 32 acres are being made available for industrial purposes. Only 132 acres remain of the station’s original land, and it may be, the Admiral feels, that even these will one day be declared surplus. Many support functions are being removed from Algiers to the East Bank facilities: "Most of the district headquarters will probably move into East Bank facilities," says Adm. Charbonnet. "The Navy will retain a portion of the docks in Algiers, and access to them; other than that, nothing of an operating nature will remain on the West Bank—although we'll probably retain quarters for military personnel." He adds, however, that the Navy is not eliminating responsibilities or functions. Most of the 400 civilian employees and 210 Navy men (including six Waves) will move to the East Bank facilities as Department of Defense services are consolidated into one compound.

Among those civilian employees are quite a few who have seen the station through its many ups and downs. "I wouldn't trade these years for anything," says one. "Working for the Navy gets into your blood—you become a part of it. It's been a wonderful experience."

The 1961 photo shows gate before station was named a support activity.

Station housed 10,000 Betsy refugees. Chief Yeoman Frank J. Strong and Chief Machinist’s Mate Robert Johnson set up evacuation center.

Adm. Charbonnet, commandant, 8th Naval District, steps from car as Marine orderly, Cpl. Henry Eckert, stands by.

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