



MILITARY KNIGHT INSTRUMENTAL IN SOMALI PIRATE RESCUE



AP PHOTO/US NAVY

Cmdr. Frank X. Castellano III (left), commanding officer of the USS *Bainbridge* and a member of Patchogue (N.Y.) Council 725, shakes hands with Capt. Richard Phillips of the *Maersk-Alabama*, who was rescued from Somali pirates on Easter Sunday, April 12. As commander of the *Bainbridge*, Castellano was on the front line of the rescue operation that freed Phillips from the pirates who had boarded the *Maersk-Alabama* four days earlier and had taken Phillips hostage. Castellano's father is also a retired general agent for Knights of Columbus Insurance. To read an exclusive interview with Castellano, visit the Order's fatherhood Web site, www.fathersforgood.org

Medal Recipient

Paul Moxley, 87, of Msgr. James M. Downey Council 3660 in Indianapolis received the French Legion of Honor along with six other recipients from the area. Moxley enlisted in the U.S. Army in 1942 and was part of the Normandy Invasion in June 1944.

Base Donation

St. Paul the Apostle Council 9352 in Alliston, Ont., donated \$1,740 to Canadian Forces Base Borden. The funds were directed to the base's "comfort fund," which provides aid to soldiers wounded in combat and their families.

Regular Volunteers

St. Louis (Mo.) Assembly and its ladies' auxiliary regularly volunteer at St. Louis-area VA hospitals as part of the Order's Serving Those Who Served program. The ladies' auxiliary also sews flannel bedrolls for homeless veterans in the community.

From America...With Love

The Baghdad International Zone (IZ) Round Table in Iraq provided a truckload of donations to needy residents of the city at a load-out March 27. The goods — which included toys, clothing, school supplies and over-the-counter medicine — were distributed at a local orphanage, school and maternity hospital. The round table is sponsored by St. Mary of the Grove Council 11138 in Tampa, Fla.

Supporting Military Vocations

Fort Belvoir (Va.) Council 11170 organized a parish dinner in honor of all clergy and religious who support the military and the Fort Belvoir Catholic community. Special guests included Bishop Joseph W. Estabrook, auxiliary bishop of the Archdiocese for the Military Services, USA, and State Deputy Kelly J. Mortensen. At the event, Mortensen presented Bishop Estabrook with a check for \$10,000 in support of vocations for the archdiocese.



Master Sgt. Curtis Patten (second from left) of the Balad (Iraq) Air Base Round Table greets Archbishop Timothy P. Broglio of the Archdiocese for the Military Services, USA, when the archbishop arrived to celebrate Mass at the base on Good Friday, April 9. Also pictured are (from left): Maj. Roger Giraud, Sgt. 1st Class David Wenner and Lt. Col. Mike Hoepfner. The round table is sponsored by St. John Bosco Council 11762 in Lakewood, Wa. Archbishop Broglio also visited with members of the St. Thomas the Apostle Round Table at Camp Victory during Holy Week.



Members of Patapsco Council 1960 in Catonsville, Md., stand with a welcome home banner at an area airport. Knights, in conjunction with the USO and "Operation Welcome Home," greeted U.S. troops who were returning from active duty overseas.

Wheelchairs for Vets

The Georgia State Council purchased and presented 20 wheelchairs to the VA Medical Center in Augusta through the Order's partnership with the Wheelchair Foundation. Funds for the donation were raised by councils throughout the state, and State Deputy Daniel J. Baker assisted with the presentation.

Sailors of the Year

Father Dade Assembly in Tulare, Calif., hosted a dinner to honor the "Sailor of the Year" recipients from Naval Air Station Lemoore.

Combat Rosaries

St. Alban Roe Council 12022 in Wildwood, Mo., purchased 100 combat rosary kits for the religious education students at St. Alban Roe School. Students assembled the rosaries — which are constructed of black beads and parachute cord — for shipment to soldiers serving overseas.

Beagle, Owner Try to Lift Spirits at York VA

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Buster is at least one man's best friend. "He goes with me wherever I go," said owner Vic Finch, who is a member of St. Luke Council 9168 in Smyrna, Tenn.

by Mealand Ragland-Hudgins, *Daily News Journal*

The three-year-old beagle is now making other friends at the Alvin C. York VA Medical Center in Murfreesboro.

Finch and his wife, Jean, have had Buster about two years. For a little more than a year, Vic and Buster have been making rounds at York VA to lift the spirits of patients there.

"They may not remember my name, but every time they see me, they say 'Where's Buster?'" said Finch.

Buster and Vic Finch go to the hospital each Wednesday for about five hours. They visit the hospice and mental wards, where Finch said some patients don't get visits from family members often, and sometimes never at all.

"Some are up and about and some aren't. Buster climbs in bed with some of them on command or he lays on their laps. Their faces light up when they see him," Finch said. "I've even seen some of them bury their face in his coat and cry and call him by their old dog's name. Buster doesn't care; he just likes people."

Mary Ann Aquadro oversees recreational therapy for the VA's Tennessee Valley Health Care System and said about 10 pets and owners visit the facility on a regular basis. Having animals around is good because it reminds patients of home.

"A lot of the patients come in here and leave pets at home. It's so much like home for them to see a pet or have one come jump in their lap," she said. "This is their home now."

Visits from animals also change a patient's demeanor quickly, Aquadro added.

"Some patients, you don't think they're very alert because they don't respond to a lot of things, but the pets seem to break through that," she said.

'IT FILLS A HOLE...'

Finch spent 10 years in the Navy as a submariner and was discharged with the rank of electronics technician 1st class. He said he stumbled into pet therapy several years ago when he owned an akita named Sam.



[Clockwise from top] Vic Finch walks his beagle, Buster, through the corridors of the Alvin C. York VA Hospital; Buster gets a hand from one of his admirers; Glendon Parrott feeds Buster during their visit together.

Finch began participating in the "Adopt-A-Vet" program, collecting toiletries and other items for veterans. One day, he called administrators at Smyrna's Peachtree Rehabilitation Center to see if Sam could come visit with residents.

"They told me he needed to be caught up on all his shots and he was, so we just went over," Finch said.

The visits continued for about two years, when Sam's health failed and he eventually died. Akitas are a large breed, and the Finches wanted to go a different route with their next pet.

"Vic's always been a dog lover, but when Sam got sick, we said the next dog we got needed to be smaller," Jean Finch said. "We checked all the shelters and when you do that, you want to take all of them home with you. Our son told us to check PAWS in Murfreesboro, and that's where we found Buster."

She said Buster was about a year old when they adopted him and he'd already been cage and house trained. The Finches took him to obedience school and worked to teach him other commands.

Aquadro said that getting pets certified to come visit the VA hospital is a fairly

simple process. The veterinarian has to give the animal a clean bill of health, and additional forms are required for the owner to fill out. Pets have an interview process of their own to make sure they have a good temperament and like being around people.

From there, Aquadro lets therapists in each care area know the days and times pets are available to visit. Therapists that are able to accommodate the animal are given the owner's contact information to set up visits.

Vic Finch said the hardest part of seeing patients on a regular basis is going back the following week and learning that someone has died. He continues the visits because he knows it's something patients look forward to.

"It fills a hole in their life. I wish more people would do it," he said. ■

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