



JUNE
2024

THE ARSENAL

NSWC INDIAN HEAD DIVISION

SPECIAL
GRADUATION
EDITION



NSWC IHD Team Wins
Dr. Delores M. Etter Top
Scientist and Engineer
Award



2024 Graduates!



Legend Shares Stories,
Lessons with EOD
Community



Off the Clock: Shawn
Wilder, Numismatist

Celebrating the People of NSWC IHD

Technician by Day; Search and Rescue Swimmer 24/7

*By Kristen Knott, public affairs
specialist*

If you think you're busy, meet Ulysses Jimenez: full-time waterfront technician for Naval Surface Warfare Center Indian Head Division's (NSWC IHD) Research, Development, Test & Evaluation (R) Department's Chemical, Biological & Radiological (CBR) Defense Division's Fleet Support Branch (R24). He's also a full-time student double-majoring in mechanical engineering and business management at Southwestern Community College in San Diego and a husband and father of three — ages 4, 6 and 9. On top of that, he's a search and rescue (SAR) swimmer with the U.S. Navy Reserve.

Reservists fill vital roles in the fleet and SAR swimmers supplement fleet swimmers, routinely meeting the needs of deployed ships. Reserve SAR swimmers like Jimenez are crucial as there must be at least one qualified SAR swimmer aboard before a ship can get underway. Jimenez is part of a five-person SAR unit based out of San Diego.

"It's a lot to juggle, but I'm more than ready to respond to fulfill the mission," he said.



CBR Technician and SAR Swimmer Ulysses Jimenez
(U.S. Navy photo Released)

Jimenez regularly trains for active-reserve integration in the Pacific Fleet and is always on standby for 5th Fleet in Bahrain, 6th Fleet in Italy and Spain, 7th Fleet in Japan and 3rd Fleet out of San Diego. While he has not served any days underway yet, Jimenez was in a ready standby state in December 2023 to help a destroyer escorting the USS Gerald R. Ford (CVN 78) during Carrier Strike Group 12's multiple deployment extensions in support of 5th and 6th Fleet operations.

While SAR units do not report for a monthly drill, SAR swimmers



SAR swimmer Ulysses Jimenez participates in an exercise with Naval Air crewmen to practice being picked up from the ocean and transported to a ship. Exercises like these are critical to ensure SAR swimmers are ready for deployment at a moment's notice.

(Photo provided by Ulysses Jimenez)

train frequently — often early in the morning before reporting for their day jobs — to maintain qualifications that are reassessed every three months. SAR swimmers must complete a 500-meter swim test in full gear weighing 10-15 lbs., a 400-meter swim test pulling someone — a buddy tow — and at least four pull-ups in full gear. They must also complete a minimum of 10 escape and release drills that simulate the rescue of a panicking survivor in the water and qualify for various scenarios including nighttime recovery missions. In addition, beyond being CPR-certified, Jimenez recently qualified for an advanced CPR certification known as Tactical Combat Casualty Care which will allow him to better render aid when needed.

“Our job matters a lot,” Jimenez said. “I really enjoy what I do. I see a bright future in the Navy Reserve.”

Jimenez spent five years in the Navy as an active-duty Damage Controlman, with four of those years as a SAR swimmer aboard the USS Dewey (DDG 105). He transitioned to the Navy Reserve in February 2023 to spend more time with his family and joined NSWC IHD a few weeks later in his current role.

In less than two years, Jimenez has participated in more than 15 exercises, including one aboard the USS Chosin (CG 65) in March 2024 where each swimmer was lowered into the water off the ship's side while it was moored pier-side at Naval Base San Diego. The exercises ensure SAR swimmers are ready for deployment at a moment's notice.

“Being a SAR gives me a purpose,” Jimenez said. “It gives me a good feeling that I’m still doing something that matters.”

In his day job as a CBR technician, Jimenez inspects onboard CBR equipment and gear of Navy and Coast Guard ships to ensure everything is functional and up-to-date. He also trains the ship's crew and conducts mock drills on what to do in a CBR event.

Swimming has always been a part of Jimenez's life. He began at the age of 6, swimming competitively for club teams from 10- to 16-years-old, breaking records and even taking first place at the Junior Olympics in San Francisco as a 10-year-old.

Reflecting on his career, Jimenez highlighted a mission in 2020, where he and his team located a single torpedo-sized ocean glider in the Pacific Ocean. Jimenez said locating the glider was a “needle-in-a-haystack” type of challenge, but the team located it after a couple of days. Jimenez helped operate the rigid hole inflatable boat to hoist the glider onto the ship.

“I’m still on the waterfront helping ships and that’s what I love,” said Jimenez.

NSWC IHD Team Wins Dr. Delores M. Etter Top Scientist and Engineer Award

By Lillian Reese, public affairs specialist

NSWC IHD scientists Dr. Demitrios Stamatis and Emma Skekel were honored at the 2024 Dr. Delores M. Etter Top Scientist and Engineer Awards ceremony at the Pentagon in Arlington, Virginia, June 12.

“Their contributions exemplify the innovation and expertise coming from Indian Head Division, which is now being recognized by some of the top decision makers in the Department of Defense,” NSWC IHD Technical Director Ashley Johnson said.

Stamatis and Skekel’s Novel Metal Fuel Synthesis and Combustion Team designed and built a constant volume combustion (CVC) vessel that allows critical performance metric measurements of metal fuel and streamlines the fuel development process. The team exploited unique material effects and phenomena by coupling their backgrounds in experimental design and material development.

“Since only gram amounts of material are needed by the CVC, this allows for cheaper and faster development, saving the U.S. Navy significant time and money,” the group’s nomination form stated. “The CVC will rapidly advance the emerging propulsion needs of our warfighters.”

The Novel Metal Fuel and Synthesis Combustion Team was one of five Naval Sea Systems Command groups chosen to receive a Dr. Delores M. Etter team award. The awards were established in 2006 to recognize significant contributions in science and engineering by Navy and Marine Corps civilian and military personnel for superior achievements, and to promote continued excellence in both fields. Etter, a former Assistant Secretary of the Navy for Research, Development and Acquisition, delivered a pre-recorded address and called the recipients “unsung heroes of national security.”

Nearly 35,000 Navy scientists and engineers are eligible each year to receive the award. Selected honorees demonstrated exceptional scientific and engineering achievement in their field during the preceding calendar year.



NSWC IHD’s Novel Metal Fuel and Synthesis Combustion Team of Emma Skekel (left) and Dr. Demitrios Stamatis (right) are the recipients of a 2024 Dr. Delores M. Etter Top Scientist and Engineering team award.

(U.S. Navy photo released)

“The selectees in this competitive and prestigious award program demonstrate the outstanding talent, professionalism, and scientific and engineering achievements across the Warfare Centers in support of the Navy and the nation,” NSWC and Naval Undersea Warfare Centers Executive Director Dr. Marty Irvine wrote in an email announcing the winners.

Both Stamatis and Skekel are scientists with NSWC IHD’s R Department. Stamatis is a recognized expert in preparation, processing and combustion of metal fuels and is the command’s designated materials effects scientist. Skekel is a junior research scientist who joined NSWC IHD in 2018 and has made significant contributions to combustion science. As a team, the two collaborate to clarify the physics and chemistry controlling energy release.

“Breakthroughs in research and engineering often come from taking paths that seem too hard or that lead to dead ends,” said Etter. “Innovation and creativity are often built from ideas that came from previous failures. Because of your persistence and hard work, our warfighters have a technical edge in their battles.”

The award comes in the midst of modernization efforts at the Navy’s only arsenal to keep up with global wartime requirements. Stamatis and Skekel [join other NSWC IHD command personnel honored both internally and externally for their contributions in supporting the warfighter.](#)



2024

Congratulations to all the members of our command family who are celebrating a graduation. There are few things in this world more important than education, so wear your achievements proudly. Please join us as we recognize and honor their successes!



Nathan Anderson

La Plata High School
Diploma
(Pam Anderson, D Dept.)
Coastal Carolina University
business/marketing



Miranda Blanford

Bellarmine University
Bachelor of Science
nursing
(James Blanford, G Dept.)
Robley Rex VA Medical
Center for RN Residency



Parker Beebe

La Plata High School
Diploma
(Courtne Beebe, R Dept.)
College of Southern
Maryland



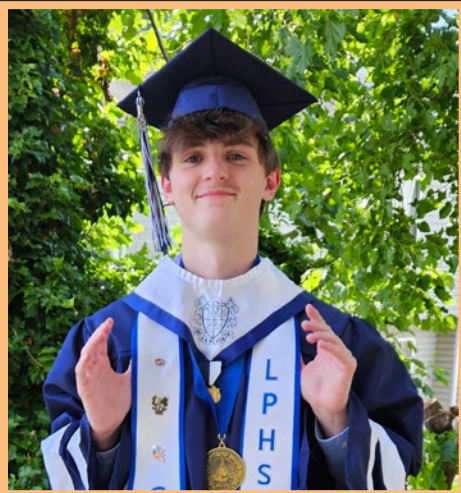
Owen Butler

University of Indianapolis
Bachelor of Science
kinesiology/minor in
psychology
(Kristen Butler, R Dept.)
graduate school



Grayson Carswell

Calvert High School
Diploma
(John Carswell, D Dept.)
Lebanon Valley College
exercise science and
physical therapy



Cole Clevenstine

La Plata High School
Diploma
(Jennifer Clevenstine,
D Dept.)
Frostburg State University
aerospace engineering



Matthew Cosgrove

St. Mary's Ryken High School
Diploma
(Audrey Cosgrove,
Contracts)
Auburn University
(Navy ROTC scholarship)
mechanical engineering/
naval commission



Erin Culfogienis

Elizabeth Seaton High
School
Diploma
(Steve Culfogienis, E Dept.)
University of Vermont
history



Dylan Feigenbaum

Lake Braddock High School
Diploma
(Eric Feigenbaum, M Dept.)
Virginia Commonwealth
University



Clara Grady

Mississippi State University
Bachelor of Science and
Bachelor of Arts
marketing/international
business concentration
Asian studies/Japanese
concentration
(Julie Grady, D Dept.)



Damar Green

Mid-America Christian
University
Bachelor of Science
Management and Ethics
(M Department)



Lilliana Goldsmith

Westlake High School
Diploma
(Rachel Jones, R Dept.)
College of Southern
Maryland
psychology



Zachariah Kershner

Henry E. Lackey High School
Diploma (with honors)
(Tammy Kershner,
Contracts)
San Diego State University
economics/accounting



Ashland Kjelland

Chopticon High School
Diploma
(Jimmy Kjelland, Code 10)
College of Southern
Maryland
graphic design



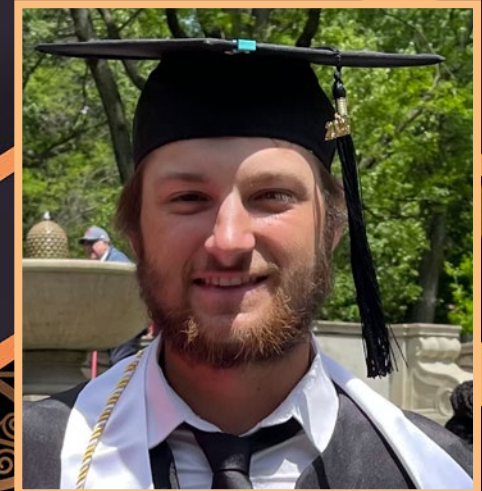
Penelope Kriebel

Henry E. Lackey High School
Diploma
(Heather Kriebel, Code 10)
Vassar Powerhouse Acting
Program (summer)
Manhattanville University
musical theater



Meredith Ann Labanowski

Flagler College
Bachelor of Science
mathematics
(Magna Cum Laude/
Distinguished Major Award
Recipient)
(Marlene Ridgell, Contracts)
data statistical analyst
St. Augustine, Florida



Austin Luther V

Wittenberg University
Bachelor of Arts
business management
(Rachel Luther, Contracts)



William McConnell

Henry E Lackey High School
Diploma
(Bill McConnell, M Dept.)
Project Lead the Way,
Pre-Engineering
Penn State University
mechanical engineering



Yonatan Mikre

John Hopkins University
Master's degree
systems engineering
(E Department)



Addison Pfleegor

La Plata High School
Diploma
(Clyde Pfleegor, Code 10)
University of North Carolina/
Wilmington



Isabel Raleigh

Henry E. Lackey High School
Diploma
(Tom Raleigh, Comptroller)
University of Miami
marketing and graphic
design



Hannah Lancaster - Rodriguez and Mateo Rodriguez

Texas A&M
Bachelor of Science
mathematics (Hannah)
electrical engineering (Mateo)
2nd Lt. commission
(Carlos Rodriguez, E Dept.)
U.S. Space Force
Peterson Space Force Base



Rachel Sorensen

Iowa State University
Doctorate
toxicology
(Daniel Sorensen, R Dept.)
DoD Public Health
contractor



Natalie Yeager

University of Maryland
Bachelor of Science
neuroscience
(Cindy Yeager, 00Q)
Medical school

**NSWC IHD
congratulates the
Class of 2024! We
wish you the best
of luck in all of your
future endeavors!**



2024
Shine Bright!

Damar Green's Promise Fulfilled: Team Effort Propels McAlester Employee to Success



Recent graduate Damar Green (left center) chose to have a graduation photo submitted with his entire section of M Department's Navy Weapons Division, McAlester Detachment Weapons Maintenance Branch (M53) as he felt this accomplishment was one he shared with the whole team.

(Photo provided by Damar Green)

By Barbara Wagner, public affairs specialist

McAlester Detachment employee Damar Green made a promise 20 years ago to complete his education, and 2024 was his year to see that promise fulfilled. Prior to his grandmother's passing, Green promised her he would return to school after leaving college to join the Marine Corps. It was important to him not only to see that promise through, but to set the example for the next generation in his family to follow.

"I am the first in my family not only to go to college but the first in five generations to graduate," Green explained. "To me it is just a piece of paper, however it is proof to my kids to make good on a promise even though those whom you promised may be gone."

To have his children, nieces and nephews at his graduation meant more than words can say to Green.

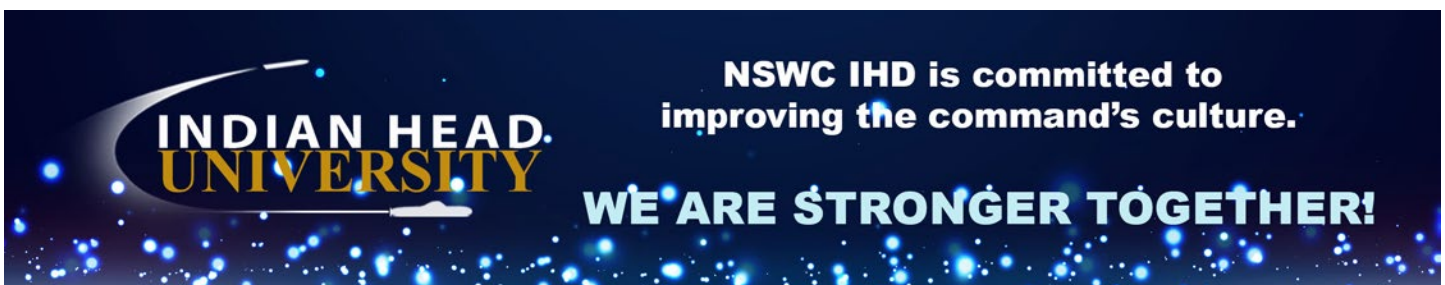
"I told them that even though I may be the first in our family, my prayer is that I will not be the last and many more will come after me," he said.

The support Green received from his department — NSWC IHD's Energetics Manufacturing (M) Department's Navy Weapons Division, McAlester Detachment Weapons Maintenance Branch (M53) — was instrumental in his success and Green is grateful to his supervisor and director along with the rest of his department and detachment. Through encouragement, meals and even being available for questions Green had with his case studies and assignments, his team cheered him on to earn his degree in management and ethics. Often, Green drove two hours each way to attend class, returning home after midnight.

"Thanks to the entire team of people here at McAlester," Green said. "I appreciate them checking on me to make sure assignments were done and grades were high."

Green is excited for the future but doesn't have immediate plans aside from growing his career and future at the command.

"I am just in complete shock still that I have accomplished something I promised, and it finally happened," Green said. "I really thought I would not live long enough to see this day."



Miranda Blanford: Triumphant Over Adversity to Care for Others

By Lillian Reese, public affairs specialist

Miranda Blanford is no stranger to adversity and turning challenges into triumphs.

“During my senior year of high school, my mother was diagnosed with breast cancer,” Blanford said. “I saw the amazing work the nurses were doing, and I wanted to make an impact on others’ lives like they did.”

Supporting her mom through each chemotherapy treatment and surgery inspired Blanford and helped her realize her passion for caring for others. She knew what she wanted to be before even stepping foot on Bellarmine University in Louisville, Kentucky.

The recent graduate is the daughter of Systems Integration (G) Department Engineer Jamie Blanford. She earned her degree in nursing and chose her alma mater for the small class sizes and its nursing program. Despite planning and preparing, Blanford experienced a common plight among students — failing a course.



“Not passing that class pushed me a year behind to graduate,” Blanford explained. “But during that time, I was able to work in the hospital and met some of my best friends.”

Blanford gained hands-on, clinical experience in both a hospital and a student nurse apprenticeship with Kentucky-based Norton Healthcare, all while maintaining a positive outlook on the obstacles she had to overcome

on the road to success. She said those experiences led to developing critical thinking skills that only come with experience.

Her hard work, perseverance and resilience earned Blanford a full-time position in the Post-Baccalaureate Registered Nurse Residency program at the Robley Rex Veterans Affairs Medical Center in Louisville.

Blanford will begin the one-year program in September. “I am looking forward to serving our veterans and their families,” she said.

Yonatan Mikre's Pursuit of Excellence

By Lillian Reese, public affairs specialist

Balancing his role as a systems engineer and project manager at NSWC IHD's Systems Engineering (E) Department with his graduate studies at Johns Hopkins University wasn't always easy for Yonatan Mikre. However, Mikre firmly believes that the challenge was worth it.

“I graduated with honors, earning straight As in all my courses,” said Mikre, who recently completed his master's in systems engineering with a focus on model-based systems engineering (MBSE). “This accomplishment reflects my dedication and hard work throughout my educational journey.”



He found that applying theoretical knowledge to real-world scenarios with professionals in the field was invaluable.

Mikre attributes his success to excellent time management skills, which he relied on to juggle his full-time job and rigorous academic schedule.

“Johns Hopkins offers the top hybrid systems engineering program in the D.C./ Maryland/ Virginia area, and is one of the best hybrid programs in the nation, making it an ideal choice for me,” he said. “I am grateful that the [command's] Academic Tuition Assistance Program gave me the opportunity to attend.”

Looking ahead, Mikre plans to leverage his graduate education in his work at the command.

“My next steps involve supporting the command with MBSE and digital engineering initiatives, integrating MBSE into more projects, and continuing to run my current projects,” he explained. “I am excited to apply systems engineering rigor to concept and engineering development projects, including requirements analysis, functional architecture, physical synthesis and validation, verification, and accreditation, all

through the use of MBSE. I’m also looking forward to mentoring and advising others across the command as they learn MBSE.”

Reflecting on his journey, Mikre is inspired by a quote from the Greek historian and philosopher Herodotus: “Excellence is never an accident. It is always the result of high intention, sincere effort and intelligent execution; it represents the wise choice of many alternatives — choice, not chance, determines your destiny.”

Next Generation Engineer Billy McConnell Heading to Penn State’s Happy Valley

By Lillian Reese, public affairs specialist

Billy McConnell may be leaving Southern Maryland and the farm he grew up on to attend Penn State University (PSU) in the fall, but his roots are deep and he hasn’t forgotten where he comes from.

“I’m thankful to my parents, teachers, coaches and others who have influenced and shaped the person I’ve become,” McConnell — the son of M Department’s explosive manufacturing subject matter expert Bill McConnell — said. “Without them, I wouldn’t have achieved all that I have.”

The 2024 Henry E. Lackey High School graduate finished 10th in his class and during his four years was a tri-sport athlete earning all-conference honors in football and a Project Lead the Way pre-engineering student. He even represented Maryland at the 4-H Shooting Sports National Championship where the team placed 14th in the country.

“I want to be a mechanical engineer,” McConnell said. “I love working with my hands and the capture or conversion of energy has always intrigued me.”



McConnell’s success on the field, track, pool, shooting range and in the classroom led to his acceptance at Virginia Tech University, the University of Maryland and PSU, all of which are among the top 30 engineering programs in the country offered by public universities, according to the 2023-2024 U.S. News and World Report ranking. But the success of the program alone was not enough to be the deciding factor.

“I wanted a rural college with energy and a big sports fanbase,” he explained. “I have family and friends of my parents in Pennsylvania, which makes me feel closer to home. Penn State is far enough away where I can’t come home every weekend, yet close enough to my family, extended family and friends.”

Despite the looming change, McConnell is excited to expand his horizons. The sky is the limit, but he is staying grounded.

“If offered the opportunity after graduating from college, I would like to work for one of the local bases or work with heavy machinery in some capacity,” he said. “I would like to have a career where I can be an engineer and be hands on.”

CULTURAL
AWARENESS



OBSERVANCE

National Independence Day



Juneteenth, officially known as Juneteenth National Independence Day, holds significant importance in the United States. Juneteenth celebrates the end of slavery and freedom for African Americans.

The holiday's name is derived from the combination of "June" and "nineteenth," signifying the date when Major General Gordon Granger issued the final enforcement of the Emancipation Proclamation in Texas after the conclusion of the American Civil War.

President Abraham Lincoln issued the Emancipation Proclamation on January 1, 1863, as the Nation entered the Civil War's 3rd year. The proclamation declared that the 3 million slaves living in the Confederate States were free.

For those who were largely isolated from Union armies, life continued as if the Emancipation Proclamation did not exist. This was the case in Texas, where thousands of slaves were unaware of their declared freedom.

On June 19, 1865—over 2 years after President Lincoln declared enslaved persons free—Major General Gordon Granger and Union Army troops marched into Galveston, Texas, to enforce the Emancipation Proclamation. They freed over 250,000 Black Americans, the last enslaved people in Texas.

Opal Lee is an American retired teacher, counselor, and activist in the movement to make Juneteenth a federally recognized holiday.

On June 19, 1939, at the age of 12, Lee and her family were displaced after her home was burned and destroyed by 500 White rioters in Marshall, Texas. She went on to dedicate her life to becoming a teacher and an activist.

She campaigned for decades to make Juneteenth a holiday. She promoted the idea by leading 2.5-mile walks each year, representing the 2.5 years it took for the Emancipation Proclamation to reach Texas, bringing an end to slavery.

At the age of 89, she conducted a symbolic walk from Fort Worth, from which she departed in September 2016, to Washington, DC, where she arrived in January 2017.

In June 2021, at the age of 94, Lee's efforts succeeded when a bill to make Juneteenth a Federal holiday was passed by Congress and signed into law by President Joe Biden. She was an honored guest at the bill signing ceremony.

In May 2024, Opal Lee was awarded the Presidential Medal of Freedom, the Nation's highest civilian honor.

On Juneteenth, we renew our commitment to promoting fairness, equal opportunity, and just treatment for all.

Legend Shares Stories, Lessons with EOD Community

By Kristen Knott, public affairs specialist

By April 1969, the United States had been at war with Vietnam for four years and the number of American troops peaked with more than 543,000 men and women embedded in the Southeast Asian country. On April 27, a grass fire ignited a U.S. military ammunition supply point (ASP) at Danang Air Base, causing explosions and an inferno that burned for more than 12 hours.

Retired U.S. Army Lt. Col. Robert E. Leiendecker, then commander of the 336th explosive ordnance disposal (EOD) section stationed at Danang Air Base, was part of the cleanup crew for what was one of the biggest explosions during the Vietnam War. The U.S. lost more than 20,000 tons of ammunition that day, and according to Leiendecker, it took about seven months to get the ASP up and running again.

“There was no document at the time on how to store the ammo,” said Leiendecker.

To Leiendecker, it was just another day at work. It was one of many stories that he shared at the EOD Legends event hosted by NSWC IHD EOD Department Head Jason Perry at the Stump Neck Annex in Indian Head, Maryland, May 8. The 82-year-old Leiendecker proudly dedicated his storied career to “Keep Them Off the Wall.”

Leiendecker grew up in post-World War II Ohio. His interest in EOD began when he received a chemistry set from his parents at 16. He set up a chemistry lab in their basement and started to experiment.

“If I did today what I did then, I’d be on the no-fly list or in jail,” said Leiendecker regarding supplies he used with his chemistry set that he got at the local hardware store.

He joined the Army in 1964 after he graduated from Bowling Green State University in Bowling Green, Ohio. By the time Leiendecker served three years from

his Reserve Officers’ Training Corps obligation, he didn’t want to leave. He completed the Basic Officer course and a tour of Japan before attending EOD School at Fort McClellan, Alabama. He was stationed at Indian Head, Maryland, and at the Letterkenny Army Depot in Chambersburg, Pennsylvania, before serving two tours in Vietnam, commanding the 85th Ordnance Detachment at Pleiku for his second tour.

He supported operations in Washington D.C. and Alabama upon returning to the U.S. but went overseas again to serve in the Korean War at Camp Caset. His military career culminated in a return to Indian Head at the Navy EOD Technology Center. He was awarded with an EOD Master Badge in 1974 and retired from the U.S. Army in 1984.

Retirement, however, could not keep Leiendecker from the work he dedicated his life to mastering. He spent the next 22 years at the National Ground Intelligence Center in Charlottesville, Virginia, as an analyst. Leiendecker became a recognized subject matter expert and advisor in military ordnance and explosive devices before retiring a second time — for good — in 2009. He was inducted into the U.S. Army Ordnance Corps Hall of Fame in 2017, which Leiendecker considers a highlight of his expansive career.

“I wouldn’t change a thing,” said Leiendecker on looking back at his career. “I had that sense of helping people doing the mission. I’m just an EOD tech with a lot of years of experience. I don’t consider myself an expert — most of the people who are experts are missing a finger.”

Today, Leiendecker serves as the historian for the National EOD Association and has also amassed a personal collection of EOD materials in his home.

“Everyone who wears the EOD badge is not normal in one way or another, but it’s mostly in the good way,” Leiendecker said.



only instrumental in progressing the EOD community, but his technical and tactical acumen was imprinted on every service member that he mentored along the way. After transitioning from the military [and] even today, Bob continues to support the EOD community. While Bob is exceptionally humble, he truly is an EOD Legend deserving the utmost respect within the EOD community.”

“With 60-plus years of contributions to the EOD community, Bob epitomizes those core values of selfless service, loyalty and personal courage,” said NSWC IHD EOD Department Head Jason Perry. “In uniform as an EOD officer, Bob was not

*Here, Perry (left) interviews retired U.S. Army Lt. Col. Robert E. Leiendecker (right) as part of the EOD Legends event at the Stump Neck Annex in Indian Head, Md., May 8.
(U.S. Navy photo Released)*

Off the Clock: Shawn Wilder, Numismatist

By Lillian Reese, public affairs specialist

Coins are just pocket change to some. But to others, like Shawn Wilder, each coin is a unique piece of history with a story to tell.

“I collect errors,” said Wilder, an engineering technician with NSWC IHD’s R Department. “I’m in a niche area of numismatics. I study the dies that actually make the coins and collect die varieties. If the die is wrong when they put it in the press, they mint however many coins with the incorrect die until someone notices something is wrong with the die. But by that time, they’re already in bags and heading out.”

Wilder is a self-taught numismatist and coin collector. Numismatics is the study and collection of coins,

tokens and other coin-like objects used as currencies throughout history.

“I’ve been in and out of collecting since I was a kid,” he said. “In 1996, I started metal detecting. Then in 1998 I was on Special Forces teams, and we went everywhere. That’s when I was bringing home silver from other countries ... I kind of put [the hobby] away but I really picked it up again when I started working here around 2012. I look at coins every day now.”

Wilder said there is a community of coin collectors at NSWC IHD, and he is adamant about using his knowledge for good and to be helpful.

“Coin collecting is a big hobby and a lot of people here do it,” he said. “But a lot of people get burnt.

There's a lot of fake stuff out there. People go to eBay and think they're buying gold and when they get it, it's not. There's a lot of people who get ripped off when they sell their collection because they don't know the value of it. If people would either ask or do a little research into understanding what they have, they'd be better off. You have to do your homework because there are a lot of sharks in the sea. If anybody on Indian Head has questions about their collection or want to know more about what they have, I can help them for free or give them research material."

Whether hunting online, in rolls from the bank, or outdoors, Wilder understands the excitement of the hunt — and the allure of finding a small treasure. He recalled a time in 2016 when he and his son were using submersible metal detectors in a Fairfax, Virginia, creek and his son found an 1811 half cent.

"It had been in the water for over 160 years," said Wilder. "There are only a few examples known and we found this one! We found it next to a bunch of Civil War cannon balls. We were in the creek until about 2 a.m. with headlamps on."

Wilder said years of outdoor metal detecting and coin hunting has given him perspective of how much



R Department engineering technician Shawn Wilder poses with a portion of his coin collection onboard Naval Support Facility Indian Head, Indian Head, Md., May 23.

(U.S. Navy photo Released)

history is buried just beneath the surface. While metal detecting on military bases is illegal and Wilder has not unearthed coins from NSWC IHD's past, his collection includes coins minted and circulated from different points in history to help visualize the pay NSWC IHD personnel received throughout the years. "We can see and understand the wages of the people who first worked at Indian Head," Wilder said. Wilder may not have discovered all the answers yet, but searching for them is a big part of the fun.

OFF THE CLOCK

What do **YOU** do off the clock? Share your hobby with the command! Email the **Arsenal Editors**.

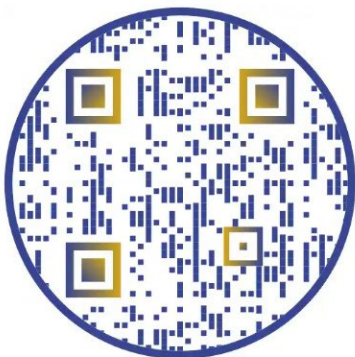


PARTING SHOT



NSWC IHD recognized individuals and teams who made significant contributions to the command's mission at the annual Honorary Awards ceremony hosted at College of Southern Maryland's Velocity Center in Indian Head, Md., May 14.

(U.S. Navy photo Released)



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FLYFARTHER.HITHARDER.SAVELIVES.