Naval Academy's three black beauties stand proudly

Contributing to the smart military precision and natural orderliness at the Naval Academy this year are three beauties.

Not only is it unusual for the male - dominated academy to have three beauties working on its staff as instructor, nurse and minority recruiter, but these three beauties are crisp-talking, smart - looking, intelligent black women.

The AFRO talked with them this week from their desks at the academy in Annapolis.

Twenty - eight year old Lt. Johnna Ritchie hails from San Diego.

Lt. Ritchie is the Assistant to the Adviser for Minority Affairs, having held that position since April of this year.

She says, "There was an opening at the academy in minority recruitment." The alumna of San Diego State University, before coming to the academy, worked as a communications officer, at Dahlgren, Va.

Lt. Ritchie was graduated from Naval Officers' Candidate School in 1974. She was led to joint the Navy, she says, because of the educational opportunities, the opportunity to travel and the chance to meet people.

Her main duties are to recruit minorities, specifically blacks for the academy.

She visits high schools, gives slide presentations on military life at the academy and attends college nights at public schools.

"I am thoroughly enjoying my job because of the diversity of my responsibilities," she says.

The next beauty, Lt Geraldine Whitehead, 27, was born in New Orleans, but was reared in Picayune, Miss., where she attended public schools.

She was graduated from what is now Alcorn State University with a Bachelor of Science degree in Social Science in 1971.

The next year she received the Master of Arts degree in Political Science from the University of Dayton.

She decided to join the Navy, because, in her words, "I had been in an academic environment for a long while."

She entered the Navy in 1973 after finishing Officers' Candidate School in Newport, R.I.

Her first tour of duty was with the Defense Intelligence Agency in Washington. She left the agency and joined the faculty of the academy this year as an instructor in the Political Science department.

Lt. Whitehead teaches three sections in American Government.

On having women come to the academy for the first time this year as duly appointed midshipmen, she said, "I really do think it is a good thing for women to come to the Naval Academy."

And what does the future hold for her? At least two more years will be with the Navy, of that Lt. Whitehead is certain. But, what about beyond that?

At 27, she is experienced in life, has done some traveling; she is in no rush to make definite long-range plans. She has no idea how long her career with the Navy will last.

She lives at the academy. And she enjoys reading books as "The Palace Guard," about the White House by Dan Rather. Additionally, she likes to sew when time permits.

The last of the three beauties is the one holding the highest rank. Lt. Commander Erlene Williams, a career officer, is equivalent to major in the Army.

As a nurse, her tour of duty before coming to Annapolis was at the Naval Base Hospital in Naples, Italy.

She was born in Princeton, Ind. Commander Williams attended and was graduated from Armstrong High School in Washington. From there she decided upon a nursing career. She joined the Navy in 1966.

She joined to have a chance to travel and for the broad range of experiences the navy offers a careerist.

* * *

On having women come to the academy for the first time this year as midshipmen, she said, "I was delighted to see them."

About her job? "I love it. The midshipmen are a pleasure to work with." In her job as a primary care practitioner nurse, she has to attend to all sorts of ailments, the midshipmen may have.

A thorough and dedicated worker, Commander Williams says the midshipmen "accept people. They are real gentlepersons."

Not only is she one of a handful of women working in the huge complex, she is the first female nurse to work in the dispensary.

Male corpsmen had done her job before.

Having the freedom of being unmarried, Commander Williams is thinking of leaving the Navy next year, satisfied she has performed a job done well.

Her parents live in Silver Spring.

Well, there you have it. A mere glimpse of three proud, highly sophisticated young black women who have made it, despite handicaps and race and sex.

And they have enjoyed it all the way, all three agree.

LT. (j.g.) GERALDINE WHITEHEAD

LT. CDR. ERLENE WILLIAMS

LT. (j. g.) JOHNAA RICHEY

Employ handicapped month

President Gerald R. Ford has issued a proclamation declaring Oct. 3-9 "National Employ the Handicapped Week."

Similar proclamations by Maryland Governor Marvin Mandel and Baltimore City Mayor William Donald Schaefer have set the stage for an entire month of activites sponsored by the Governor's Committee to Promote Employment of the Handicapped and designed to educate the public and give recognition to employers and handicapped individuals.

Mayor Schaefer presented his delcaration Wednesday afternoon, Oct. 6, at City Hall. At the same time, Baltimore Goodwill Industries, Inc. honored employers with whom Goodwill clients have been successfully placed.

A comprehensive tour of the Maryland Rehabilitation Center, located at 2301 Argonne Drive, will take place from 1 to 3 p.m. on Oct. 27, under joint sponsorship of the Baltimore City office of the Division of Vocational Rehabilitation and the Personnel Association of Greater Baltimore.

More than 600 employers are expected to take part in their first visit to the training center, which offers evaluation, training and rehabilitation services to the mentally, physically and emotionally handicapped individuals will be more than five acres under roof.

The Kiwanis Club of Baltimore City will host members of the Governor's Committee and professional staff people at its weekly meeting at the Lord Baltimore Hotel, Thursday, Oct. 28. Civil and legal rights of handicapped indyiduals will be the topic of discussion.

LORMAN, Miss. – Community leaders from 15 southwest Mississippi counties recently attended the fourth annual Statewide Community Development and Leadership Conference at Alcorn State University.

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Miss. halts order; NAACP readies appeal

A restraining order issued by a U.S. District Court judge in Mississippi last week allows the National Association for the Advancement of Colored people a "grace period" to end its legal joins and throw-off a $1.6 million judgment.

The judgment which nearly destroyed the 67-year-old organization was handed down Aug. 9 by a Hinds County Chancery Court judge stemming from a case won against the NAACP by 12 hardware merchants.

The NAACP sponsored the boycott and was named as one of the defendants.

* * *

The judgment which forced the association into an "eleventh hour" frantic, national emergency effort to raise the funds from its 1,700 branches and friends of the old activist days of the sixties was overruled, pending an appeal, late last Friday.

Even with the stay of the judgment, through the generosity of the national AFL-CIO and the United Auto Workers, an $800,000 letter of credit was on-hand allowing the association to meet the Aug. 9 ruling and save itself from a real threat of liquidation.

Locally, the Baltimore branch has to date raised more than $130,000 in about four weeks. The city's total represents 17 per cent of funds raised nationally.

"Their effort has been astronomical," Gloucester B. Current, the national NAACP's chief administrative officer, said about the Baltimore chapter's effort.

Mrs. Enolia P. McMillan, Baltimore chapter president, said, "We are pleased, highly pleased, with the response of the local citzenry. But, we have no intention of stopping here."

The Baltimore chapter has set a quota of $200,000. Mrs. McMillan said efforts would continue until the sum has been raised.

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