

# Public Service: A Way of Life

By Dick Reeves

Tom and Elaine Tempel have never done things by halves, and that trait remains constant now that they are living in retirement in Pine Knoll Shores.

Retirement for many of us is the trading of rigid schedules and heavy responsibilities for a life of ease and the luxury of doing – or not doing – what we want to do when we want to do it. For the Tempels, that couldn't be farther from the truth. Even a cursory look at their volunteer activities reveals the fact that they have traded service to their fellow man on a worldwide basis to the same service on a local level. Trying to recognize all the accomplishments of this dynamic couple leaves a chronicler with the problem of where to start. Perhaps their tendency to pay strict attention to details is as good a place as any.

When then Major General Thomas Robert Tempel began, in the early 90's, to think of retiring as Deputy Surgeon General of the United States Army, he and Elaine began to research places to live. They investigated the east coast because the ocean was a must since they love boats and fishing. They visited and studied towns from Annapolis to Charleston.

Elaine was impressed with Morehead City. As she puts it, "When we came across the causeway, I just knew this was where I wanted to live." They bought a canal front lot on Salter Path Road and began to design their spectacular new home. As career military, it was to be their 23<sup>rd</sup>

and one from which they could launch the activities they love most – time on the water in sea kayaks, a Boston Whaler and an offshore Grady White – especially with grandchildren enjoying the many and varied species of fish (most are caught and released) our area has to offer.

With customary diligence, they developed a book with many individual pockets crammed full of ideas for every room in the house. Next, they sketched it out, hired an architect and lived in a rental house nearby while they eagerly watched every nail, board and window taking shape.

But even before they were fully settled in their new home they were already immersed in volunteer activities that would fill a book, as demonstrated in the accompanying lists of their volunteer pursuits. There are two local initiatives of which they are particularly proud. As a dental

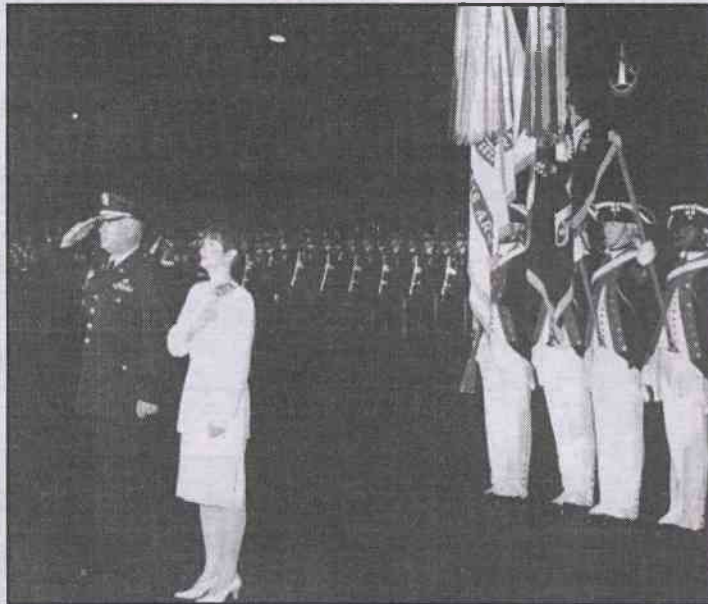
surgeon, one of Tom's favorite charities was free dental care for poor children. In 2002, after many years of planning, organizing, fund raising and a great team effort by Carteret volunteers, "Miles of Smiles" became a reality. A half-million dollar

53-foot-long doublewide mobile trailer became a completely equipped and staffed mobile dental clinic. In August, 2002, it was delivered to the Carteret County Health Department. Funded by the Kate B. Reynolds Charitable Trust and the

and funds requires the kind of organizational skill that is a trademark of Carteret County citizens. The concept was to appoint 12 "Construction Captains" – each with a plan for a day. The logistics and coordination would make a Bill Levitt proud. Tom likes to talk of the individual volunteers. One lady in her 70's insisted that she could only serve in the kitchen. But since they had no kitchen needs, Tom tried to persuade her to use a sander to smooth the boards for a slide. She looked at the sander like a racehorse would look at a buzzing chain saw. "But, by the end of the day," Tom laughs, "we couldn't get the sander away from her." Even a 90-year-old man spent time raking the ground. "But the real satisfaction comes," says Elaine, "when the grandchildren call it Grandpa's playground."

Elaine is also especially proud of her eight years as continuing Chairman of the Carteret County Mayors' Commission for Persons with Disabilities. Recently the commission, with the help of student volunteers, installed special beach access ramps for disabled persons. Before now, you can only imagine the difficulty of transferring from van to wheelchair to beach. But now, with the construction of special ramps, the job is manageable.

Tom's years in the military provided a wealth of experience on which he could draw to carry out the many volunteer activities he and Elaine have become involved in since his retirement in 1996. By the time of his retirement he held the second highest position in the U.S. Army Medical Corps and had become recognized as an



Major General and Mrs Tempel as they are honored for 36 years of service to our Country.

Duke Endowment Fund, the mobile clinic serves eight local schools and treats a thousand children a year at no cost.

The second initiative is the Morehead City Playground, almost miraculously constructed and delivered in a single week – Monday through Saturday in 1997. Pulling off such an astounding feat with volunteers, donated tools, materials

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