

Supersonic Stealth Aircraft in Our Skies

By Phyllis Makuck

Everyone living or visiting Pine Knoll Shores has been aware of military aircraft overhead. Two jets we see and hear most frequently are the unmistakable AV-8B Harrier and the EA-6B Prowler. The Marine Corps will be replacing these aircraft and its F/A 18 A/C/D Hornet with a new Joint Strike Fighter—the F-35B Lightning II. Made by Lockheed Martin, the F-35B is a single-engine, supersonic, stealth fighter with short take-off and vertical-landing capabilities.

The Marine Aviation Corps has begun planning for the F-35B's arrival on our coast. Two air stations affected will be Cherry Point, North Carolina and Beaufort, South Carolina.

At one or both of these locations, the Corps proposes to replace existing squadrons with up to 10 Active-Duty F-35B squadrons. It also will establish one F-35B Reserve squadron and a new Pilot Training Center, consisting of two training squadrons. Five alternative configurations for Cherry Point and for Beaufort are under study.

In either location, new aircraft would use existing airfields, current air-to-ground munitions' training ranges, and offshore warning areas now available for air-to-air training. No changes at the Naval Aviation Depot maintenance

facility at Cherry Point are part of the current proposal.

From January 15 through February 16, the Marine Corps hosted open houses to inform the public and gather information. The next step is to finalize the scope of an environmental impact statement that will take a year to draft. Next year, January through March, the draft will be available for additional public comment. The Secretary of the Navy is expected to sign off on the final decision in December 2010. It will take another three years to prepare sites and do the necessary renovation and new construction for flight operations, training, maintenance, support, and personnel. F-35B's will begin arriving on the East Coast in 2014. Full implementation is not expected until 2023.

A comprehensive environmental study will assess the North Carolina and South Carolina sites and determine how proposed changes will affect surrounding communities. It will include consideration of socioeconomic, land use, air and water quality, noise levels, wildlife and natural resources. Throughout the process, the Marine Corps will keep affected communities informed and involved.

Purim Gives Children A Chance to Participate

By Cierra Tomaso

Not only are Saint Patrick's Day and Easter coming up, but there is also the Jewish holiday, Purim. Purim is unique because, in the ceremony at synagogue, children are allowed to dress up and interact in the service.

The story: King Ahasuerus is intoxicated at a feast, and has an argument with his wife, who he then orders to be dethroned. Ahasuerus quickly begins to look for a queen to replace her, and finds one by the name of Esther. Shortly after this, he appoints Haman his prime minister. Everything is going well until a man named Mordechai refuses to bow down in Haman's presence, and thus angers the king and Haman.

Having been informed Mordechai was Jewish, the king decided to slaughter every Jew in his kingdom. Although he is

not aware of this, Queen Esther is secretly Jewish as well. She confronts him, and he agrees to repeal the act he decreed.

The holiday is a celebration of Queen Esther's bravery. The four mitzvot (commandments) of the day are: listening to a public reading of the Book of Esther, sending food gifts to friends, giving charity to the poor and eating a festive meal. Many children dress up as Mordechai and Esther and go to the service dressed as them. The children boo and shake noisemakers whenever Haman's name is said, and cheer when Esther's is mentioned.

It's still an extremely important holiday even today, although it took place during the Persian Empire. The holiday is also a fun and enjoyable way to spend a day.

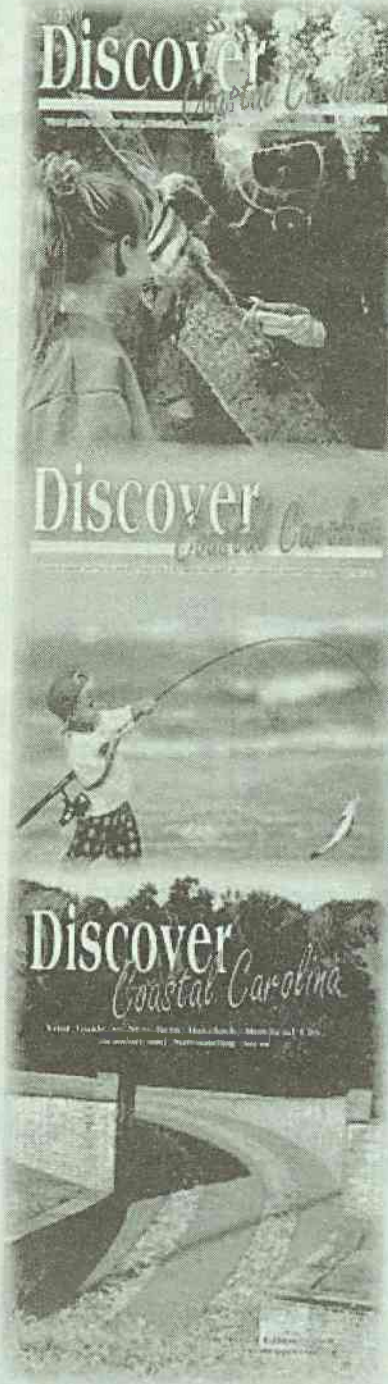
Editors Note: Cierra is our youngest contributor. She has not sent in an item in awhile, and we welcome her back.

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