

J S C * s S H I N I N G S T A R**Duncan lives the dream as part of JSC's Aircraft Operations team**

Years ago, visions of war-torn aircraft thundering through smoke filled skies in the World War II flick Tora! Tora! Tora! inspired Nickie Duncan to pursue her own aviation dreams.

A quality assurance specialist at JSC's Aircraft Operations Directorate at Ellington Field since 1989 and a recent Embry-Riddle Professional Aeronautics graduate, Duncan is living her dream — working and flying among aviation's elite.

"This is the only place I ever really wanted to work," said Duncan. "I just like being around airplanes. There's nothing like it!"

Shortly after graduating from Magnolia High School, Duncan joined the U.S. Air Force and served as an aircraft mechanic on C-141As. She left in 1979 to join Northrop Worldwide Aircraft Services, Inc., but returned to the Air Force Reserves in 1985 as a flight engineer on C-5A/B aircraft.

"I really liked the traveling," Duncan said of her days in the armed service. "I went around the world a few dozen times and visited many countries. Too many to count."

After Desert Storm, Duncan left the military and returned to NASA's aviation team at Ellington Field where she puts her skills from the Air Force to work for the country's astronaut corps.

"I have approximately 3,800 total hours of flight time," explained Duncan. "I was C-5A/B flight engineer and instructor, flight simulation engineer (FSE) on the Shuttle Training Aircraft, back-seat flyer on the T-38, and as a private pilot, I fly Cessna 172s."

Her on the ground responsibilities at Ellington include reviewing contract policies and the airworthiness of as many as five NASA aircraft.

"The flying is my favorite part," said Duncan. "As an FSE on the STA, I really



NASA JSC Photo S99-11686 by Robert Markowitz
Nickie Duncan

enjoyed watching new astronaut pilots finally make it to the left seat. We train them on the STA from when they start at NASA as an ASCAN to when they finally make commander of the shuttle. As a QA specialist, I don't always like being the aviation police but you have to look at it in a simple way — we're helping keep the aircraft safe and, with our experience and background, we also help keep the bosses out of trouble."

Duncan plans to continue her education through Embry-Riddle's graduate program and pursue a Masters in Aircraft Operations and Aviation Safety.

"Ms. Duncan is a dedicated and hard working team member of the Aircraft Operations Division Team," said Harry Drott, aircraft systems quality assurance branch chief. "She is an asset to NASA, Aircraft Operations and the Quality Assurance Branch." ■

More than a fun run: *JSC employees train for upcoming marathons*

By Nicole Cloutier

Some JSC employees are running around like crazy to get ready for exotic trips to Honolulu and Cozumel.

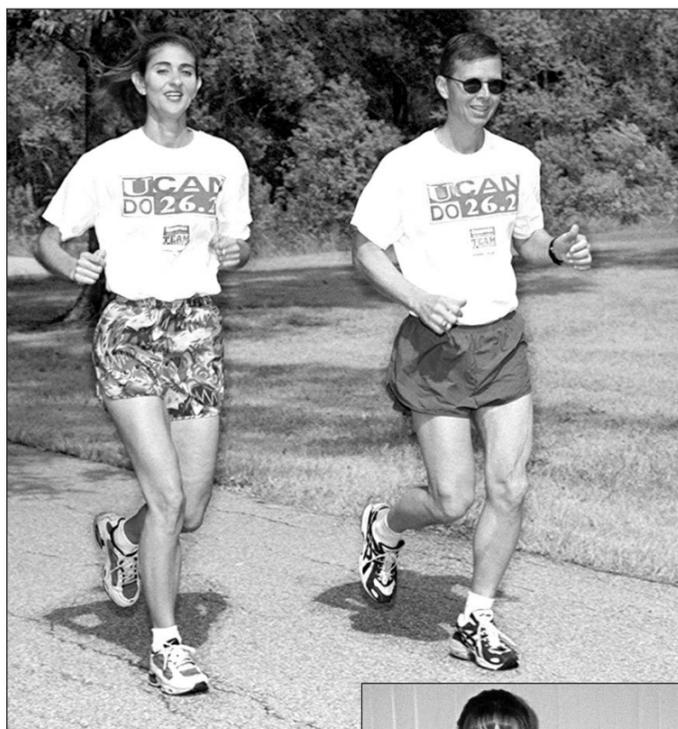
Bobby Kann, GB Tech, Margie (Frances) Schafman, Boeing, and Victoria Valadez, Enterprise Advisory Services, are just a few local runners participating in a program that not only raises funds for leukemia research and patient assistance, but also prepares the runners to finish a marathon or bicycling century throughout the U.S., Canada and Mexico.

Leukemia is the number one disease-killer of children under 15 and also is the leading killer of young men and women under 35. With that in mind, more than 23,000 bicyclists, runners or walkers participate in this program nationwide to raise millions of dollars to fight it and other related illnesses.

Although all the participants are introduced to the program in different ways, it's the singular goal of helping to conquer leukemia that prompts them to enlist in the cause. For Schafman, it was a very personal mission.

"My son Conrad, now 9, was diagnosed with leukemia in 1994," explained Schafman, who plans to participate in the Cozumel Marathon in Mexico this month. Her son underwent two years of chemo-therapy treatment, and later had to have a cancerous tumor removed.

"He's been off the chemo treatment now for seven months," said Schafman. "Training for a run like this gives you a sense of purpose — something to work towards and strive for." It's a similar feeling for the other runners.



NASA JSC S99-11868 Photo by Benny Benavides



Margie and Conrad Schafman

"Before I committed to joining the program, I attended a group outing of runners for Michael, an 11-year-old boy in remission from leukemia and that was it. I was hooked," said Valadez, a regular runner at Gilruth. "Just seeing Michael in person, and meeting someone who is going to benefit from your efforts, is really inspiring."

Each runner is designated an Honor Patient Hero of someone challenged with leukemia, lymphoma, multiple myeloma or Hodgkins's disease, who puts a face to the cause. The Honor Patients add inspiration and motivation as the runners prepare for the race's financial and physical demands.

Valadez now meets with Mark Anderson, NASA, who leads the training and provides coaching tips, and a group of about 15 other Clear Lake participants every Saturday morning to train for the upcoming marathons.

"Getting up that early in the morning is tough," said Kann of the 6:30 a.m. training sessions. "Sometimes I don't get out there till 7:30 and I have to catch up!"

"But you know if you don't make it out, everyone else is going to talk about you," teases Anderson. This is Anderson's first coaching role, but he says it's a unique way to contribute to the cause. "This has been a lot of fun, working with people who are new to marathoning and even to fitness. It's fun to pass on my experience and to see them get excited."

"The best motivation, in addition to finding a cure, is knowing that it's helping young children," added Kann, who will be running in Honolulu for his aunt who died of cancer, as well as Charlie, a six-year-old leukemia patient in Pearland. "Knowing that children are going through all the testing and chemotherapy keeps me motivated to pursue my fundraising goals and never give up during the long strenuous runs." ■

Runners Victoria Valadez and Mark Anderson train for Leukemia Society marathons.

Local airshow highlights thrills of aviation

Celebrating its 15th year, the Wings Over Houston Airshow Festival delivered another action packed and fun-filled weekend for hordes of people out at Ellington Field. Despite a threat of inclement weather, the skies held throughout the weekend for the more than 95,000 spectators who came to see one of the world's largest airshows.

The airshow served as one of the first sites for JSC's new *Benefits of Space On-Tour* mobile theater. Organizers estimate that nearly 2,000

airshow enthusiasts visited the trailer during the weekend.

The flight festival regularly exhibits one of the largest collections of vintage and modern aircraft in its on-the-ground display. Airshow visitors were able to get up-close to the planes that shaped our country's history as well as the planes used to protect its future, such as an F-117A Stealth. NASA aircraft, including several T-38s, the KC-135, a Shuttle Training Aircraft, the WB-57 high altitude aircraft and the Super Guppy Transport plane were

also among those exhibited.

In addition to many of the perennial air-act favorites, including the legendary Tora! Tora! Tora! Pearl Harbor bombing re-enactment, the 1999 airshow featured flight demos from our nation's elite military aircraft. Streaking overhead were an F-15 Eagle, F-16 Falcon, AH-64 Apache Helicopter and a Stealth fighter. The skies also provided the backdrop for aerobatic performances from national favorites such as Sean Tucker and Kent Gordon. ■