

Mobile Press register:

Sailor from Alabama reported missing Family frantic a week after Seaman Ronald Duck disappears

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Seaman Ronald Duck Jr., 21, of Tallassee, Ala., has been missing since early Valentine's Day when he mysteriously disappeared while returning to his ship at the Navy Homeport in Pascagoula, Miss., and his family is searching desperately for him.

Duck, who lived with his wife in an apartment off Airport Boulevard in Mobile for several months last fall, was last seen less than 75 yards from his ship, the USS Stephen Groves, at about 3:30 a.m. Feb. 14, according to a shipmate.

In a statement given to Duck's family, the shipmate said the two sailors were returning from playing pool. When they reached the guard shack leading to the vessel, the shipmate stopped to talk to the guard and Duck kept walking. The shipmate said that was the last time he saw Duck.

Pascagoula Police and the Navy are investigating the disappearance.

When Duck failed to show up for work the next day, the Navy initially treated the case as a seaman going absent without leave. But on Friday, after family members arrived in Pascagoula, the Navy put divers in the water and dragged around the ship on the possibility he might have fallen in, said Buford Strength, Duck's father-in-law.

Family members said they could not believe Duck, who had been in the Navy 3½ years, would go AWOL. His wife, Suzette, is expecting a child next month and all his belongings, including a pickup truck, were left behind.

"I don't believe Ronnie has gone AWOL," said his mother, Beverly Duck. "He is not that type of person. There was the possibility he would be getting out next month for medical reasons."

Mrs. Duck said she had concerns about possible foul play. The weekend before the disappearance, she said, her son told his wife that his life had been threatened. She declined to comment further on the threat because she did not know for certain that it was related to her son's disappearance.

Nevertheless, the family is continuing its search from a headquarters they have established at the King's Inn in Pascagoula. With the aid of Riverside Baptist Church, they have produced flyers and are distributing them around the area.

"We're not leaving Pascagoula until we find him," Mrs. Duck said.

Strength said that anytime they get a call in response to the flyer, they go out and talk to the callers.

“We're just chasing everything we can get hold of now,” he said. “We just miss him, and love him, and want him back.”

Duck is 5 feet, 11 inches tall and weighs 170 pounds. He has brown hair and eyes, a scar from open-heart surgery when he was 3 years old that runs down his chest, and a scar on his right shin. He has a tattoo of a dark-winged duck on the left side of his chest and a dragon on his left thigh.