

Mountain Exercise 3-14

CPL. CHARLES SANTAMARIA

E Co., 2/4, conducts night movement through MCMWTC training area

Cpl. Charles Santamaria
 Combat Correspondent

As the sun sets on the landing zone, CH-53 Super Stallion helicopters slowly descend to the earth. The moment their wheels touch the ground, Marines insert into the forest, breaking off into formations and providing security for the next Marines to insert. The loud roar of the helicopters rush between the trees as nightfall approaches the company of Marines.

Marines with E Co., 2nd Battalion, 4th Marines, 5th Marine Regiment, supplemented with 35 light-infantry Marines, a Canadian Army Mountain platoon and a United Arab Emirates Military element, embarked on a night movement during Mountain Exercise 3-14 in the Marine Corps Mountain Warfare Training Center's training area, June 17.

The bilateral training allowed Echo Co. MARINES to share tactics and add another

dynamic to the exercise.

"It's an awesome dynamic working with units from different countries," said Capt. Robert A. Porter, company commander, E Co., 2nd Battalion, 4th Marines, 5th Marine Regiment. "There's no big difference from working with any other Marine unit ... You figure out their strength, weaknesses, and what they can do; the biggest point is understanding the best way to communicate with them. We do the same things. We just say it in different ways."

The company and attached elements coordinated together after insertion into the training area and proceeded to seize the objective that was being held by simulated enemy forces. The presence of enemy troops throughout the area added to the scenario by requiring the company to traverse rocky terrain for optimal concealment. International units also see the benefits in training at

See **NIGHT** page A7

2/4 ascends Sardine Rock Face

Cpl. Charles Santamaria
 Combat Correspondent

Marines set up their defensive positions as they prepare to ascend the rock face before them. Fixed rope lanes line the sides with an assault climber watching over the Marines climbing. With their rifle and combat load, each Marine traverses the steep climb, securing themselves to the rope lane. At the elevation of approximately 9,000 feet above sea level, Marines of all climbing skill levels reached the top, ready for the next obstacle of the exercise.

Marines with G Co., 2nd Battalion, 4th Marines, 5th Marine Regiment, participated in a cliff-assault exercise at Sardine Rock Face, Mountain Warfare Training Center, as part of Mountain Exercise 3-14, June 16.

The event challenged the company by putting the Marines out of their comfort zones and having them rely on assault climbers in their unit to organize the best avenues of approach to overcome the climb.



CPL. CHARLES SANTAMARIA

Cpl. Logan Kennedy, assault climber, 2nd Battalion 4th Marines, 5th Marine Regiment, watches over Marines climbing during a cliff assault at Sardine Rock Face, Marine Corps Mountain Warfare Training Center, Bridgeport, Calif., June 16.

"Having assault climbers in the unit allows for more dynamic when approaching an obstacle like this in a combat zone," said Cpl. Logan Kennedy, assault climber, 2/4. "Having the ability to go straight over a cliff face or mountain instead of travel around it, gets the Marines to the objective quicker."

The unit had their qualified assault climbers secure rope lanes for the company to use for the obstacle. The effectiveness of their climbers was also evaluated by mountain warfare instructors to sharpen their skills and add to their strategy and approach. The assault climbers encouraged trust in the equipment to combat fear of heights for the Marines.

"I personally have a fear of heights. I can climb at these altitudes because I know these ropes will keep me safe," Kennedy said. "Looking at another Marine who may have never

See **ROCK** page A7

1st Tanks welcomes new commander

Cpl. Ali Azimi
 Combat Correspondent

After two years as the commanding officer of 1st Tank Battalion, Lt. Col. Greg Poland relinquished command of the battalion during a change of command ceremony at the battalion's tank ramp June 20.

Poland relinquished command of 1st Tanks to Lt. Col. Ralph Rush in front of battalion members and honored guests, including Maj. Gen. Lawrence D. Nicholson, commanding general, 1st Marine Division.

"This is one of those battalions that never disappoints," Nicholson said. "They are always on their game. Everything we've asked [Poland] to do, he's done in a terrific manner."

The ceremony featured music played by the 1st Marine Division Band and a display of the unit's tactical vehicles and equipment. The band performed for patrons until the beginning of the ceremony. They then marched to the side of the field, followed by four company-sized formations of 1st Tanks' Marines.

The Marines stood in formation, awaiting the appointment of their new commander.

Poland and Rush took their places in view of the audience as the battalion sergeant major walked up to them with the battalion colors in hand. Poland

See **TANKS** page A7



CPL. ALI AZIMI

Lt. Col. Greg Poland (right), former 1st Tank Battalion commanding officer, relinquishes command of 1st Tank Battalion to Lt. Col. Ralph Rush during a change of command ceremony held at the unit's tank ramp June 20.

MCLOG changes hands

Cpl. Lauren A. Kurkimilis
 Combat Correspondent

Col. David J. Eskelund, former Marine Corps Logistics Operations Group commanding officer, relinquished command of the unit to Col. Matthew S. Cook during a change of command ceremony at Dunham Amphitheater, Tuesday.

Eskelund assumed command of MCLOG in June 2012 when the unit was first activated, serving as its first commander.

Cook came to the unit from the Marine Corps Logistics Command in Albany, Ga., where he served as commanding officer and operations officer.

After the invocation, given by Navy Capt. Steven R. Moses, Combat Center Chaplain, the passing of the colors, and playing of the national anthem, Maj. Gen. David H. Berger, Combat Center Commanding General, addressed the audience.

"Every once in a while, the Marine Corps gets the right person with the right background and the right leadership style at exactly the right time," Berger said. "That happened in this case. The Marine Corps needed the first to be in this seat to be the right guy and they really got it right."

Berger thanked the band, family members, friends and service members for their attendance and then

See **MCLOG** page A7

This Week in Combat Center History



Reprinted from the Observation Post
dated
June 24, 1966
Vol. 10, Issue No. 26

Official Ground-Breaking ceremony held for C&E Constr.

Courtesy Story

An official ground-breaking ceremony took place aboard the Combat Center June 23 to mark the beginning of construction for the new communications and electronics school.

Here for the ceremony were: Maj. Gen. B. A. Hochmuth, commanding General, Marine Corps Recruit Depot, San Diego, Calif; Rear Admiral L.C. Cox, Commander, Southwest Division, Naval Facilities Engineering Command; and Col. S.B. Hunt, commanding officer, Communications and Electronics School Battalion, MCRD, San Diego, Calif.

The R.J. Webb Company, Inc. of Riverside, Calif., was awarded the 2.268 million dollar contract for Phase I of construction of the Communications and Electronics School.

Eight new buildings are planned for construction under Phase I of this project. Also included are renovations and additions to the two existing buildings. Construction consists of reinforced concrete, rigid frame and

reinforced concrete roof buildings with concrete block walls. The total area of the new buildings is 58,900 square feet. The new buildings consist primarily of laboratory and classroom space. It is estimated that construction on the new project will start sometime in June and will continue for about 12 months.

Actual construction work at the site of the Communications and Electronics school commenced on May 24. This work has consisted almost entirely of the hauling of fill material, removed from an area above Griffin Road, and the placing and compacting of the material at the sites of the eight new buildings to be erected. Although, as of this date, the contract is less than one percent completed, the contractor using 15 pieces of heavy equipment and an average force of 10 men, has already moved 15,000 cubic yards material, and has used three and one-half million gallons of water for consolidating and compacting of the fill material.

During the next month, hauling and compacting of fill will continue and the installation of the carious utility systems will be started.

The communication and electronics school is now located at the Marine Corps Recruit Depot, San Diego.

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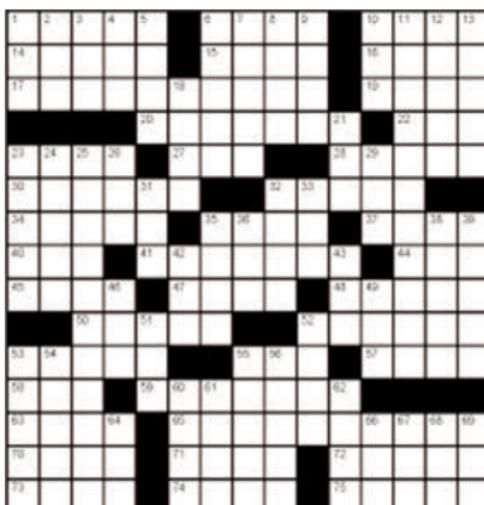
July 8 - July 28

Students who complete the course will be a minimum of a green belt instructor. Students must be a corporal or above with a grey belt.

Location: Martial Arts Facility, Building 1652
For more information, call Staff Sgt. Fulgencio at 830-0290

“HAVE PHUN”

- Across**
- 1 Woman's name that rhymes with "table"
 - 6 "The Crimson Tide" of college football
 - 10 Unwanted e-mails
 - 14 Scarlett ____ ("Gone with the Wind" heroine)
 - 15 Unsigned, as a poem: abbr.
 - 16 Cincinnati's state
 - 17 Drugstore employee
 - 19 Celebrity's car, for short
 - 20 Police ____ (list of cases)
 - 22 "____ Miserables"
 - 23 Money for waiters
 - 27 ____ whim (without thinking ahead)
 - 28 Eat away
 - 30 Ready to breed, like a cat
 - 32 Hands over
 - 34 Does magazine work
 - 35 Face to the left or right
 - 37 Dell or Hewlett-Packard product, briefly
 - 40 Word after sesame or vegetable
 - 41 Albert Einstein's field
 - 44 "____ favor" ("Please," in Spanish)
 - 45 Hammer's target
 - 47 Ready for customers
 - 48 Resort lake that's also a Chevy SUV
 - 50 Elton John's instrument
 - 52 Los Angeles NBA team
 - 53 Place for a corsage
 - 55 Not he
 - 57 Greek god of war
 - 58 Boxing great Muhammad ____
 - 59 Final item
 - 63 "What's Love Got to Do With It" singer Turner
 - 65 One of Thomas Edison's inventions
 - 70 Not odd
 - 71 Cut
 - 72 Florida Everglades creature, for short
 - 73 Take it easy
 - 74 Not we
 - 75 Hearty soups
- Down**
- 1 Janitor's tool
 - 2 "This is relaxing!"
 - 3 Sheep's sound
 - 4 Make a mistake
 - 5 Mary had a little one
 - 6 Breakfast strips
 - 7 Singer Baker
 - 8 Not all, but more than half
 - 9 Money before a poker hand
 - 10 Mexican beer brand
 - 11 Deep thinker



- 12 Prepared to fire
- 13 Bullwinkle is one
- 18 Many
- 21 Fire up your motorcycle's engine
- 23 Attach
- 24 Mahatma Gandhi's country
- 25 Asian island nation whose capital is Manila
- 26 Prepared
- 29 ____ center
- 31 Scary snake
- 32 Smile
- 33 Abbr. in many company names
- 35 Writing mistake
- 36 Find a job for
- 38 Actor Dudley or singer Mandy
- 39 Push down on
- 42 Darlin'
- 43 Train stop: abbr.
- 46 Made-up story
- 49 Letters in a croo's name
- 51 Every bit
- 52 Joking Jay
- 53 Not now
- 54 "Stayin' ____"
- 55 One of many in a shopping mall
- 56 Bees make it
- 60 Datebook abbr.
- 61 ____ of Iran (former leader)
- 62 "Green ____ and Ham"
- 64 Tiny crawler
- 66 Sneaky person
- 67 Devoured
- 68 Punching sound
- 69 There are 24 in a day: abbr.

See answers on page B2

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7				1		
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WHAT I'VE LEARNED

Christian

Destrehan, La., squad leader, HQ Company, 7th Marine Regiment, 23

MARTINEZ

MARTINEZ IS A RIFLEMAN WITH 7TH MARINE REGIMENT. HIS FORMER BATTALION WAS THE NOW DEACTIVATED, 3RD BATTALION, 4TH MARINES, 7TH MARINE REGIMENT, WHERE HE DEPLOYED TWICE WITH THE UNIT'S SNIPER PLATOON.

>**I joined because I was in school** and not sure what to do. My uncle and my brother had served and it did a lot for them.

>**Some things were rough during childhood**, but things smoothed out. I grew up kind of poor, but when I moved in with my grandparents, they had money. I learned both the value of a dollar and what it could buy.

>**During that time**, I also played sports. I enjoyed the camaraderie, being able to rely on other people and see them on a regular basis.

>**I was looking forward to** learning how to do things step-by-step. I had all the tools, I just didn't know how to use them.

>**My time has been spent mostly with a sniper platoon.** The last four years doing so have built me a reputation of reliability, and so when 3/4 returned from this last deployment, my first sergeant was looking for someone to replace the current Chaplain's assistant. It was more of an appointment rather than a volunteer opportunity, but I don't regret it.

>**I learned a lot from the experience**, even if it was more of an office job. It's good to change gears from time to time.

>**Working with the chaplain** opened my eyes on a few things and taught me to be more accepting of certain people, learning to listen before you speak and realize that some people don't want to speak but just listen.

>**I don't like to do much;** I usually lay low to save money. I like to work out. I've been doing extensive weightlifting and more recently, picked up CrossFit. A friend of mine is showing me the ways.

>**I own a 2008 Subaru WRX STI.** By reputation it's a rally car, but mine has not been very modified. Once I get out and get a job that pays better, I would like to transform it into a rally car and take it out on the weekends.

>**I'll be getting out of the Marine Corps** in November of this year. These five years have gone by pretty quick.

>**I would like to go to school**, but I've come to the realization that I need to save more money. I will be working in an oil field-related job for a little while. It'll be good pay and hard hours.

>**It'll help me save up the money** I need to get back to studying engineering, which was what I briefly did before joining the Marine Corps.

>**I think I would like to stay in Texas** once I get there. I can become a resident and try to go to school in that area. If not, I'll go back to Louisiana. I'm not too picky as long as I know I'll get a good education.

>**I have deployed twice** with the sniper platoon. The first time, I was a team radio operator and primary shooter. I maintained communications and if we made contact, which we did a few times, I would use the long rifle or start spotting.

>**The second deployment** was more toned back. We'd go in, occupy and then transfer forces.

>**Being with that platoon really taught me** "big boy rules." It's an environment where the guys are professionals and everyone has to try out to even be there. The bond is definitely a little tighter.

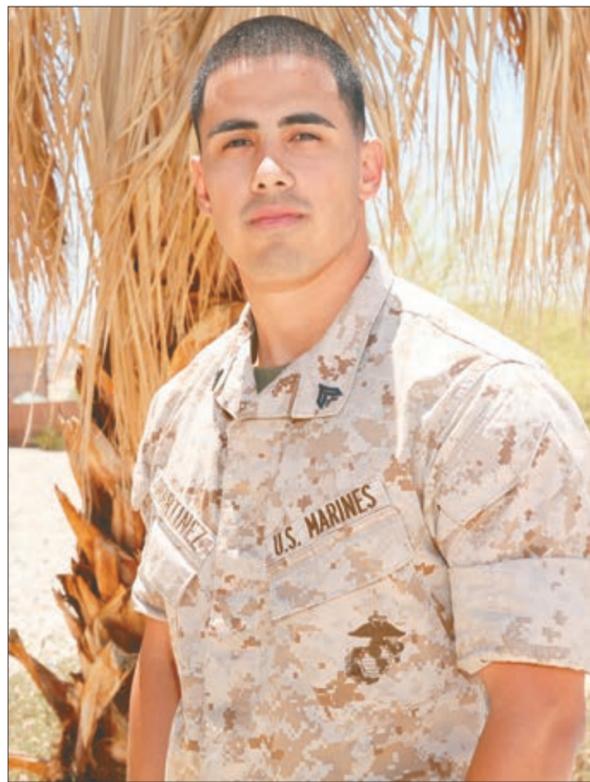
>**I haven't been the most important** player in the platoon, but we all do our part, and I enjoy doing that.

>**You've got to learn how to** really talk with people and find what they find important. Learning the mentality of all of the different military occupational specialties is valuable.

>**This one time at Marine Corps** Mountain Warfare Training Center Bridgeport Calif., I found myself attached to Marines and having to teach them how to quietly maneuver and how to accurately work on mortar systems.

>**By doing that, I was able to expand** their knowledge of the battlefield. Everything from snipers to mortarmen play into winning a battle.

>**Victory favors the prepared.** When you're about to go conduct training in the morning, be sure to pack your bag the night before. Preparation and repetition are the keys to success.



Interviewed and photographed by Lance Cpl. Paul S. Martinez, June 23, 2014



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Lessons Learned

TECH SGT. MICHAEL R. HOLZWORTH

What I learned working with wounded warriors

(Story by **Cmdr. Laura Bender**)

For the last three years, I have served as the chaplain to the Wounded Warrior Regiment providing pastoral care to wounded, ill and injured Marines, their family members, and the military and civilian staff who advocate and care for them. It has been a sacred privilege to have served in this capacity.

As I prepare to move on to my next assignment, here are some of the "lessons learned" that will go with me:

I've learned that injury and illness may place restrictions on a person's activities, but do not define them. When Marines arrive at the hospital, they initially see themselves as patients. At the point they remember they are Marines who earned that title, healing increases its pace. The first time I met a quadruple amputee negotiating his way with prosthetics, he held the door open for me. An Improvised Explosive Device may have removed his limbs, but had no effect on his desire to be a gentleman.

I've learned that one of the best ways to decrease difficulties in whatever forms they pres-

ent themselves is to increase joy. One way to do that is through athletic activities. The thrill of competition, of pushing oneself beyond perceived limits, of cheering for your team is quite healing. At regimental events, we know we have succeeded when a Marine refers to him/herself as a swimmer or a basketball player and not in relation to his/her injuries. A key component to increasing joy is the maintenance of a healthy sense of humor. Case in point, one of the favorite T-shirts for combat-injured Marines at Walter Reed states: "Wounded Warrior, some assembly required," and on the back it says: "I had a blast in Afghanistan."

I've learned that healthy connections are essential. Those who fare the best, whether wounded, ill and injured Marines, family or staff members, are those who make the best connections. By this I do not mean the ones with the most friends. I mean those who feel connected to what matters most: the values that define them, the people who love them, the hope for the future that awaits them and the vision of their best selves. As a person of faith, I would also add those who feel connected to the God who never lets them go.

I've learned that the call of God upon a person's life is not voided by illness or injury. It may be redefined and redirected, but it still remains. When our wounded, ill and injured Marines are able to discern and answer that call, becoming agents of care for others rather than just recipients, everyone benefits, especially them.

These lessons, about self-definition, joy, connection and calling, are among many that I will carry with me not only to my next duty station, but for the rest of my life.

As we prepare to go our separate ways, I pray God's blessing will be upon all with whom I have served and from whom I have learned so much.



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CG's Honorary Breakfast



CPL. REBECCA FLOTO

Maj. Gen. David H. Berger, Combat Center Command General, stands with his guests during his monthly Civilian Honorary Breakfast, June 13. This month's breakfast honored Laurinda Stewart, Exercise Support Division, Wendy O'Brien, Marine Corps Community Services, James Berg, Communications and Information Systems, Donald Praska, ESD, and Donny Nelson, Center Logistics Division.

Relief of Sgt. Maj.



LANCE CPL. PAUL S. MARTINEZ

Marines, sailors, distinguished guests and families of 3rd Battalion, 7th Marine Regiment gathered at Lance Cpl. Torrey L. Gray Field to wish Sgt. Maj. Rafael Rodriguez, former sergeant major, 3/7, fair winds and following seas, Thursday.

Rodriguez assumed his post in July 2011, and deployed twice with the battalion to Afghanistan in support of Operation Enduring Freedom.

"I could not have asked for a better senior enlisted advisor," said Lt. Col. Daniel Wittnam, commanding officer, 3/7.

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[TIP] of the SPEAR

Photos by Cpl. Joseph Scanlan



[Above] Marines with Bravo Company, 1st Battalion, 7th Marine Regiment, load onto a CH-53E Super Stallion with Marine Heavy Helicopter Squadron 466 prior to a mission in Helmand province, Afghanistan, June 5. The company conducted disruption operations in a known Taliban bed-down location for two days. During the previous mission May 29, the company discovered a drug production lab and removed more than one metric ton of narcotics from the battlefield.

[Left] Marines with Co. B, 1st Battalion, 7th Marine Regiment, conduct a security patrol during the mission.

[Bottom, left] Sgt. Michael Nibler, squad leader, Co. B, 1st Battalion, 7th Marine Regiment, documents coordinates during the mission.

[Bottom, right] Marines with Co. B, 1st Battalion, 7th Marine Regiment, maneuver into a village as the sun rises over Helmand province.



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MCLOG, from A1

passed the microphone to Eskelund, who conveyed his appreciation to his family, friends, and adjacent commanders from the Combat Center and from Marine Corps Base Camp Pendleton, Calif., for all of their hard work to contribute to the development of MCLOG.

"When we started out, it was so small and it was every commander's dream," Eskelund said. "I knew every Marine in the command, we had no parking issues, and we had plenty of supplies for the three or four individuals who were standing (the unit) up. Those problems came later on but we were ready for them when they did come."

Eskelund, whose personal awards include a Bronze Star, Defense Meritorious Service Medal with bronze oak leaf, Meritorious Service Medal with three gold stars, a Navy Commendation Medal with gold star, a combat action ribbon, and Military Outstanding Volunteer Service Medal, also described the collective attitude of MCLOG, which he believes aided in its success and productivity.

"In my never-ending search for simplicity, I wanted to come up with one word for MCLOG and I've got it down to two," Eskelund said. "When I think about this organization and how it operates, I think, 'We do,' because it is a collective effort and this is a good demonstration that the power and momentum of a group moves much more rapidly, effectively and efficiently than



PFC. MALIEK M FOWLER

Col. Matthew S. Cook, incoming commanding officer, Marine Corps Logistics Operations Group, addresses the audience at the MCLOG change of command ceremony held at Dunham Amphitheater, Tuesday.

a bunch of individuals trying to run in the same direction."

When Cook, whose personal decorations include a Bronze Star with gold star in lieu of second award, Joint Meritorious Service Medal, Meritorious Service Medal with gold star, Navy and Marine Corps Commendation Medal and Navy and Marine Corps Achievement Medal with gold star, spoke, he thanked his family and fellow Marines and expressed his excitement over joining MCLOG.

"I am very excited to be here. As

they have alluded to, this is a very special command for the logistics community," Cook said. "We're entering new and interesting times and we've learned a lot of lessons over the last 10 years in war. This command will make sure that we hold on to those lessons learned that were hard fought as we enter a time of fiscal and personnel constraint."

"The Marines' Hymn" played, bringing the ceremony to an end. This marked the closing of a chapter for Eskelund and the opening of a new one for Cook.

NIGHT, from A1

MCMWTC with Marines.

"It's a great opportunity to train with the United States Marines and develop the skills they have through learning from them," said 1st Lt. Ahmed Alremaithy, United Arab Emirates Military. "We do have mountains where we train but not as high as these. The area has provided a challenging environment by [determining] how well we can handle weather and terrain like this."

Helio-insertion helped the company conserve energy by giving a shorter distance to their objective but also afforded the gamble of potentially revealing their position. This series of risks, advantages and disadvantages is one of the dynamics that was present in the movement.

"We save our energy by the insertion with the CH-53s and shorten the movement by up to a whole day," Porter said. "With that advantage, we also gain some disadvantages, such as our position surrounded by mountains. With each new challenge, our goal is to mitigate our disadvantages while in this terrain."

The Marine Corps and international units learn the challenges of training in cold, mountainous environments. This challenge is the reason units from many countries travel to learn the skillsets that can be obtained at MCMWTC.

"When you train outside of your country, you have to be as professional as possible because you represent your country," Alremaithy said. "Learning to deal with different units helped me learn patience and problem solving. I've trained in different terrains and countries all over the world and it really is different here for everyone ... The field and the mountains can break a man, but it's challenges provided a great learning experience for me as a leader."

TANKS, from A1

took hold of the colors and passed it off to Rush, representing the official passing of authority.

"I've had the dream job here the past few years," Poland said. "It's been a great team up here."

The ceremony ended with the pass and review, at which point the four platoons of Marines marched passed Poland and Rush to bid farewell to their old commander and welcome the new.

"I'm back in the blue diamond," Rush said. "I am humbled; very, very humbled."

ROCK, from A1

climbed before and telling them a rope will save them from falling off a cliff is not easy, so having climbers reassuring their safety helps some Marines overcome that fear."

The assault climbers are trained by mountain warfare instructors and evaluated when training at MCMWTC. The climbers are trained within individual units as force multipliers to train Marines within their battalions.

"Every assault climber or mountain leader that comes for training learns every knot," said Staff Sgt. Jeff Austin, mountain leader. "The course goes into detail of repelling, rope bridges and other tactical methods for traveling through mountainous terrain. Throughout their respective courses, Marines will practice knots and tactics for hours, creating a muscle memory for situations where they may have to

set up these rope lanes or knots in complete darkness."

The rope lane, which is used by Marines as a safety line when climbing, was clipped to several loops on the rock face and held at the top by an anchor. The anchor is a knot which clips to three loops securing the rope lane. The rope is also laid out in a Zig-Zag route, ensuring Marines slowly go up in elevation as opposed to abrupt increases, according to Kennedy.

Co. G conquered Sardine Rock Face and moved into the assault phase of their movement. Units that train aboard MCMWTC leave better equipped to handle mountainous terrain and carry the skills to better equip Marines in their units.

"As assault climbers, we teach the Marines the basics of these techniques," Kennedy said. "The best thing we can teach to Marines is to have trust in the gear they are using. Once they have confidence in what they're using, overcoming a mountain face will be easier."

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TOUGH MINDED OPTIMISM
by Lou Gerhardt

Fritz Drumm of Flamingo Heights telephoned the other morning and requested that I rerun a column that was much appreciated by many in various parts of the country. Here it is Fritz! Enjoy.

One of my boyhood heroes was the late Joe Gordon who was the second baseman for the New York Yankees and the Cleveland Indians. He was inducted into major league baseball's Hall of Fame, at Cooperstown, New York in 2009. It was a recognition of a great baseball player, a fine gentleman, and a tough minded optimist.

In 1942 Joe Gordon made more errors than any player in the American League. He struck out more times than any player in the league. He hit into more double plays than any player in the league. What a seemingly dismal record it was. And yet, unbelievable as it may seem, he was voted the most valuable player in the entire league!

Why?

Joe Gordon never stopped believing in himself and in his ability to improve. Joe Gordon never stopped believing in the possibilities of his teammates and personally encouraged them over and over again in every game. Joe Gordon never stopped believing in the possibilities of his team winning the pennant. Many doubted, some laughed, but believe it or not, they won the championship!

Later, the team owner, the manager, coaches, and all the players gave Joe Gordon the credit. They all agreed it was his tough minded optimism that spurred them on to their triumphant season.

This column sponsored by:

Fritz Drumm Flamingo Heights

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Dr. Lou can be reached at 760-367-4627
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Summer Splash

Joshua Tree invites Combat Center Marines for fun in the sun

Story and photos by
Cpl. Alejandro Bedoya

The sun was shining and the smell of barbeque was in the air. Children played in the splash park and admired the tactical vehicles on display during the Joshua Tree Summer Splash at Joshua Tree Community Park, Saturday. The came the announcement, "5 minutes until the next event."

Everyone gathered, the families waiting patiently and listening to the Marines introduce themselves. After the introductions, a child stood up, raised his hand and politely asked, "May I pet the puppy?"

The Combat Center's Provost Marshal's Office K9 division and Combat Logistics Battalion 7 participated in the event. The Marines taught families about the tactical vehicles on display and performed a K9 demonstration for all to enjoy.

"I love doing demonstrations," said Sgt. Daniel Andrzejewski, K9 training chief, PMO. "It's always great to come out and do this. These events are always a great time for families and we like to add to that."

The Summer Splash was a free family event open to everyone. Along with the tactical vehicle static display and the K9 demonstration, there were booths and other activities by the local community members. There was a dunk tank where children threw balls attempting to hit the target to releasing the seat beneath the participant and sending them crashing into the water. There also were arts and crafts, a tractor show, barbeque, hoop classes, and dance and yoga demonstrations.

"We wanted to bring a community event back to Joshua Tree," said Linda Sande, Rotary Club of Joshua Tree. "The Marines are absolutely a part of our community. Everyone loves having them here."

The Joshua Tree Summer Splash doubled in size since last year's celebration. The celebration is over, but is scheduled to be back next year for more fun in the sun.



[Above] Children attempt to throw a ball and hit the target to dunk volunteers at the Joshua Tree Summer Splash, Saturday at the Joshua Tree Community Park.



[Left] Cpl. Teague Kelley, dog handler, Combat Center Provost Marshal's Office, runs, military working dog, through an obstacle course at Summer Splash. The Marines also demonstrated Gabi's basic obedience and aggression techniques.

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Summer Fight Night



Mixed-martial arts fights heat up Combat Center

Story and photos by Lance Cpl. Paul S. Martinez

Fighters entered the cage as equals, but would leave as one winner and one loser. A crowd of several hundred Marines, sailors and family members watched as the fighters touched gloves, and almost immediately, the faster of the two seized the opportunity to strike, beating down his opponent as the crowd roared. His arm was held high by the announcer as he was declared the victor as the next pair of fighters prepared for their bout, declaring Summer Fight Night had returned in full swing.

Rumbles could be felt inside of the cage and out as fighters clashed within during the 5th Annual Summer Fight Night at Del Valle Field, June 20. The event, sponsored by the Xplode Fight Series, featured 24 fighters in 12 matches.

"We're humble and proud to be here," said Gregg Sharp, chief executive officer, A2M Entertainment. "It's a real pleasure to put smiles on Marines' faces."

According to Sharp, the evening was coordinated in conjunction with Marine Corps Community Services. After the initial fight night proved popular, it became an annual event for the Combat Center.

Announcer Carlos Kremer fired up the crowd as referee Luis Cobian handled the battles that rocked the octagonal cage.

Fighters could be seen exchanging blows, from swift kicks to thunderous punches and merciless slams, all with the goal of besting the other. Each fighter took the time to personally extend their appreciation for their crowd of service members.

"This was my first time in Twentynine Palms," said Chris "Taco" Padilla, fighter, Hardbody Fitness MMA. "Fighting for the service members is an honor. They're the reason we are here."

True to the nature of a fight, most fighters wasted no time putting 'the hurt' on the other. Matches were set to consist of three rounds, but those that successfully forced their opponent to submit, or managed to knock them out, were declared victorious immediately. If the two fighters outlasted each other, judges determined the winner.

"It was fantastic," said Capt. James Tuck, training officer, Marine Corps Communication-Electronics School. "I love seeing service members out here, and

above all, a good fight."

During designated breaks, spectators took the opportunity to stock up on refreshments or take pictures and receive autographs from the fighters. The event also featured some of the Combat Center's very own fighting the good fight with the other challengers.

"I hope [the fights] brought morale," Sharp said. "That's the key component you can have with an event in this location."

The main event came at the very end of the night,

"Fighting for the service members is an honor. They're the reason we are here."

-Chris Padilla

when Manny Murillo, fighter, Team Quest MMA, challenged defending champion Daniel Hernandez for the championship title in the middleweight division of the Xplode Fight Series. Their clash ended with Hernandez securing his title once more, with the crowd applauding the bout and the evening altogether.

"We want [the Marines] to say, 'I can't wait to come back here and see a show like this again,'" Sharp said. "We really enjoyed coming here and hopefully we'll see you all again next summer."

[Top] Chris "Taco" Padilla, fighter, Hardbody MMA, strikes Kenny Wyckoff, fighter, Fight Ugly MMA, during Summer Fight Night V at Del Valle Field, June 20.

[Bottom, left] Luis Cobian, referee, declares Daniel Hernandez, fighter, The Vault MMA, reigning champion of the middleweight division.

[Bottom, right] Daniel Hernandez, fighter, The Vault MMA, executes a slam against Manny Murillo, fighter, Team Quest MMA.



Liberty Call



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Sunset Cinema

Friday, June 27

6 p.m. – Mom’s Night Out, PG
8:30p.m. – Godzilla, PG-13
11:30 p.m. – Blended, PG-13

Saturday, June 28

10:00 a.m. – Free Admission Muppets most wanted, PG
12:30 p.m. – Godzilla 3-D, PG-13
3:30 p.m. – Maleficent 3-D, PG
6 p.m. – Neighbors, R
8:30 p.m. – Blended, PG-13
11:30 p.m. – Godzilla, PG-13

Sunday, June 29

12 p.m. – Million Dollar Arm, PG
3 p.m. – Maleficent 3-D, PG
5:30 p.m. – X-Men: Days of Future Past 3-D, PG-13
8:30 p.m. – A Million Ways to Die in the West, R

Monday, June 30

6 p.m. – Blended, PG-13

Tuesday, June 31

6 p.m. – Godzilla, PG-13

Wednesday, July 1

5 p.m. – Mom’s Night Out, PG
7 p.m. – Million Dollar Arm, PG

Thursday, July 2

5 p.m. – Free Admission Captain America: The Winter Soldier, PG-13
7 p.m. – Maleficent 3-D, PG
9:30 p.m. – Neighbors, R

The sweet teenage suffering of 11 million fans hits the big screen

NEIL POND
“The Fault in Our Stars”

Starring Shailene Woodley & Ansel Elgort
Directed by Josh Boone
PG, 97 min.

“What’s your story?” Augustus “Gus” Waters asks 16-year-old Hazel Grace Lancaster early in this highly anticipated movie adaptation of the wildly popular novel by author John Green that’s sold almost 11 million copies and been on the New York Times bestseller list for almost three years.

In answering the question about “her” story, then dissecting it, Hazel (Shailene Woodley), who’s fought cancer nearly her entire life, and Gus (Ansel Elgort), the 18-year-old fellow cancer survivor who becomes her soul mate, set the stage for a much bigger story — about two young people determined to make their story more than just a “cancer” story, refusing to let their disease rule their lives or their future.

Green’s romantic, heart-aching, heartbreaking, poignant melodrama of two kids on a “star-crossed” course with fate has teen-DNA strands stretching all the way back to antiquity, running from Romeo and Juliet through the classic 1970s tear-jerker “Love Story.” The title, a twist on a quote from Shakespeare’s “Julius Caesar,” refers to the world as a “profoundly unjust place where suffering is unfairly distributed,” according to Green.

As Hazel, Woodley is sensational, especially given that she’s got a breathing tube in her nostrils constantly and she lugs around a canister of oxygen the entire movie, physical limitations that focus us even more on the breadth of emotions she can coax out of even the smallest of facial expressions.

There’s a marvelous scene when Gus tells her that he loves her, and we watch her eyes well with emotion in the soft glow of a restaurant’s hundreds of twinkling (star-like) lights. It’s a moment that taps into all that the movie has been about up until that point, much more complex and nuanced than it might sound, and the camera lingers on Woodley’s radiant face, empowering it to carry the entire weight of everything that goes unsaid.

Her handsome, hunkish co-star, Elgort, who also appeared with her earlier this year in “Divergent,” is a bit hammy by comparison. But the book’s legions of (mostly) female fans likely won’t be grading his acting chops between sighs and swoons.

Laura Dern and Sam Trammell play Hazel’s loving, protective parents, and Willem Dafoe is the scotch-swilling author of that book Hazel adores. Nat Wolff portrays Gus’ friend Issac, who’s losing his eyesight, but not his droll wit, to cancer.

Smarter, sharper and deeper than most movies aimed at teens, “The Fault in Our Stars” doesn’t dumb down its story, its dialogue, or its realities for its target audience, and it blends in some heady existential nuggets — and metaphors — on death, dying, living, suffering, religion, theology, ethics, miracles, time, space, infinity, eternity and oblivion.

For everyone who’s already fallen under the spell of Green’s book, this movie will complete a magnificent arc that began with words on a page, bringing beloved characters, places and conversations vividly, emotionally to life, larger than life, on a giant screen. For everyone else, well, climb on board, better late than never, and get ready to find out what all the fuss has been about—and why, for millions, Hazel’s tale has become so much more than just a cancer story.

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- ✓ Inspect Tires & Valve Stems ✓ Check all Lights and Reflectors Lubricate
- ✓ Chassis ✓ Inspect Spring Shackle Bushings
- ✓ Inspect Shock Absorbers and Springs ✓ Pressure Wash Undercarriage
- ✓ Clean and Detail Entire Cart

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