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SPMAGTF-CR-CC-15.2 Prepares to March

Marines with Company I, 3rd Battalion 7th Marine Regiment, escort role players onto an MV-22 Osprey at Barstow-Daggett Airport in Daggett, Calif., during a training non-combatant evacuation operation, performed by Special Purpose Marine Air Ground Task Force-Crisis Response-Central Command 15.2, Feb. 12.

STORY AND PHOTOS BY LANCE CPL. JOHN BAKER

BARSTOW, Calif. - As the week came to an end, training was just beginning for the Marines of Special Purpose Marine Air Ground Task Force Crisis Response Central Command 15.2, as they took to the field to begin their Certification Exercise for their upcoming deployment.

The SPMAGTF was spread throughout multiple locations in the Western United States, in preparation for the training missions that would take place from Feb. 9 through Feb. 14. Each of its locations simulated unique environments and scenarios using role players, creating realistic situations Marines could encounter during future operations. The dispersed locations were engineered to mimic the broad swath of land within U.S. Central Command's area of responsibility.

"All of the scenarios we've been put through are things that can or will happen wherever we go," said Sgt. James M. Horton, from Lynchburg, Tennessee, a platoon sergeant for Company I, 3rd Battalion, 7th Marine Regiment. "There are always things we can improve, but overall, this training has put us in a good spot."

The SPMAGTF is made up of a command element from 7th Marine Regiment, 1st Marine Division; a ground combat element from 3rd Battalion, 7th Marine Regiment; an aviation combat element from 3rd Marine Air Wing; and a logistics combat element from Combat Logistics Battalion 7.

"The main three parts of the SPMAGTF are the air, the ground, and the logistics portion," said Sgt. Ashley Nelson, from Delran, New Jersey, and an intelligence specialist with Expeditionary Operations

Marines with Company I, 3rd Battalion 7th Marine Regiment, set security at Barstow-Daggett Airport in Daggett, Calif., during a training non-combatant evacuation operation, performed by Special Purpose Marine Air Ground Task Force-Crisis Response-Central Command 15.2, Feb. 12.

Training Group, 1st Marine Expeditionary Force. "They all support the ground side that is out executing the mission."

This SPMAGTF is trained and equipped to quickly respond to any mission required by U.S. Central Command - including embassy reinforcement, tactical recovery of aircraft personnel, theater security cooperation, stability operations, humanitarian assistance missions, and more.

"When you're operating in these scenarios, there are a lot of eyes on you," said Horton. "When you have a quick response time, it puts everyone else on their heels and gives you the upper hand."

See **March pg.** A6

MWSS 371 Marines train on combined combat simulators

Lance Cpl. Andres Casteneda, security forces, Marine Wing Support Squadron 371, scans the area in front of his vehicle while acting as a long range Quick Reaction Force in the Combat Convoy Simulator at Camp Wilson, Feb. 11. The Marines of MWSS 371 responded to the simulation, even when the exercise did not go as planned.

STORY AND PHOTOS BY LANCE CPL. THOMAS MUDD

One dozen Marines and sailors rushed through the artificial world of the Combat Convoy Simulator and mounted their vehicles, acting as a Quick Reaction Force. Their objective was to provide aid to their comrades located in another realm, that of the Deployable Virtual Training Environment. With new capabilities of the Battle Simulation Center, these two worlds converged for the first time, expanding the virtual battle field and improving upon the Corps' training spectrum.

The DVTE and CCS, two training aids provided by Camp Wilson's Simulation Center, were merged for the first time during Integrated Training Exercise 2-15, Feb 11. This allowed Marines and sailors from Marine Wing Support Squadron 371 to operate simultaneously with in both simulators, while following orders from one centralized, simulated Combat Operations Center. This gave them a capability, which was never before possible in Marine Corps combat simulation.

"This is the first time multiple combat simulators have been added together on a company-sized level," said Capt. Peter Ciaston, Company C Commander, MWSS 371, native of Jersey City, N.J. "We have incorporated the CCS and the DVTE to report to a [simulated] COC in real time. All three simulations are able to see the same world, communicate with each other, and provide the Marines with the most realistic training possible with a condensed time line."

See **Train pg.** A6

Tax Center defends marines from California tax inquiries

STORY BY CAPT. KURT SORENSON

The California Franchise Tax Board is sending letters to service members stationed in California demanding to know why they did not file a California tax return in 2014. The Combat Center is helping Marines and sailors respond to these letters and avoid being sent to collections.

"California sees that a federal tax return was filed by someone living in this state," said Cpt. Kurt Sorensen, officer in charge, Combat Center Tax Center, "California wants to know where their piece of the pie."

Marines and sailors living outside of California do not owe state taxes to California. "So long as the service member replies to the letter with that information, California should leave them alone," Sorensen said. "It becomes a headache when service members don't respond because of a permanent change of station, deployment, or botched mail forwarding."

At that point, California often sends their claims to collections, which has a negative impact their credit scores. "We are not going to stand by while this happens to our Marines and sailors," said Gunnery Sgt. Ian Moore, staff non-commissioned in charge, Combat Center Tax Center. "Our office will do what is necessary to prevent California from sending letters to any of our customers."

This process will be time consuming, as the Tax Center will file an extra form with every qualifying tax return explaining that the service member does not owe California taxes. "We are also going to contact all of our previous customers to offer this additional service to them," Moore said.

Service members can find the Combat Center Tax Center on Brown Road between Adobe Road and 1st St., Bldg. 1110-R1. Customers with questions regarding these letters from California should call the Tax Center at (760) 830-4331.

"I don't know of any tax service out in town or online that is tracking on this problem faced by our Marines and sailors," Sorensen said. "But we are going to go above and beyond to help our [service members] with their taxes and helping their commands with maintaining unit readiness."

Marine Corps' Top Shot

[Every week, thousands of fans vote for the week on the best photograph, posted on the Corps' Facebook page. This weeks top shot comes from Cpl.Todd F. Michalek]

He captured this photo of a hospitalman with Bravo Company using a radio to communicate with a U.S. Army UH-60 Blackhawk Pilot on Feb. 5, 2015.

This Week in Combat Center History

Reprinted from the Observation Post
February 19, 1965

Washington Monument is Symbol of U.S. Freedom

The Washington Monument will be 80 years old Feb. 21. On that day in 1885, the impressive structure which is the focal point among the many monuments in the nation's capital was formally dedicated to the first President of the United States, for his leadership and deep desire for freedom.

Just as George Washington and the revolutionaries had to fight for the freedom of the United States, the Washington National Monument Society, formed in 1832, had a different struggle in building the monument.

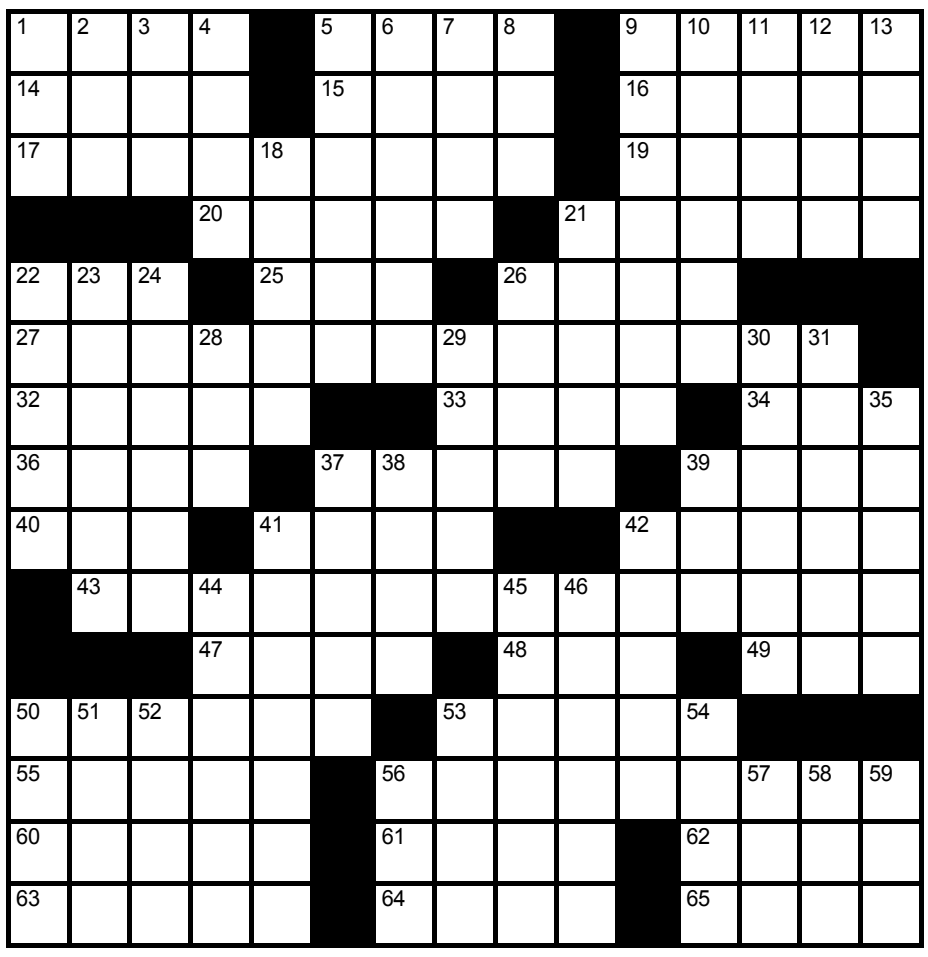
Although the cornerstone for the Washington Monument was laid in 1848, some unusual circumstances delayed its completion until December 1884. The monument society sent requests to states, organizations and other nations to donate memorial stones to be laid in the inner walls of the monument. Among the stones they received was a block of marble presented by Pope Pius IX from the Temple of Concord in Rome.

The marble block was stolen and supposedly thrown into the Potomac River by a group believed to be members of the American Party. This party was a secret society that protested against immigration and the election or appointment of foreign-born persons to official office.

The robbery was such a shock to the public that contributions all but stopped. The monument society, realizing they had no chance of defeating the American Party alone, appealed to Congress for aid. Congress agreed to furnish them funds, but the night before the funds were to be given, members of the secret society struck again. They broke into the offices of the monument society and declared in possession of the monument. As a result of the publicity, Congress abandoned any attempt to help the society until 1876, when it voted to finish the monument at government expense.

Today, standing 555 feet, 5 ½ inches, the structure is a symbol of the courage and spirit of George Washington and of the country he helped create. About one million people visits the monument annually to pay respect to the Father of our Country.

CROSSWORD



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16 Indian coin
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21 Rectifiers
22 Army rank: Abbr.
25 ___ Lanka
26 Abs are below them
27 President's "theme song"
32 Having good timing
33 Times past
34 Society page word
36 Ron Howard flick of 1999
37 Diminutive
39 Sail in a gale
40 ___ Na Na
41 Tailored, in a way
42 They might swing
43 Classic dessert with whipped cream
47 Sunday event
48 Hither's pal
49 Certain addition
50 Belong to
53 Erie Canal city
55 Ballet's Shearer
56 Illicit reserve
60 Extempore
61 Memo subject
62 India's locale
63 Pen pals' homes?
64 Glazier's fitting
65 Split into pieces

Down
1 Co. nicknamed "Brown"
2 Ship unit or shipping unit
3 Gone by
4 1956 Allen Ginsberg poem
5 Suzuki in the MLB
6 Pluck
7 Bodybuilder's pride
8 180º from WNW
9 Crème ___
10 Actor Bela
11 Columnists' page
12 There's one for curly hair
13 Full collections
18 Stuff to toss
21 Disparage
22 They go about two feet
23 India's Indira
24 Itty-bitty breath mint
26 Menial farmhand
28 Sweetie, to Brits
29 Laughing beast
30 Scramble a message
31 During the knight-time?
35 One in the Ford line
37 Not long-winded
38 Shes who get sheared
39 Jesus, with "the"
41 Sacred bugs
42 Eat nachos, say
44 His catchphrase is "Bam!"
45 Eager player's cry
46 "Clearly"
50 Apple PC
51 Bump
52 Faith of Nashville
53 Arm bone
54 Quite a distance
56 Wine tasting
57 Put to a purpose
58 Writer Anaïs
59 Bill, to Chelsea

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Last week's answers

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3	2	4	9	8	5	6	7	1
9	5	1	3	6	4	7	8	2
4	8	2	7	1	9	3	6	5
6	7	3	8	5	2	4	1	9

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- Get It On Shoppe, 3219 Mission Blvd.
- Main Street Motel, 3494 Main St.
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- Puff's Tobacco Mart, 57063 29 Palms Hwy.

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- Whispering Palms Apts., 449 E. Arenas Road
- NYPD Pizza, 260-262 N. Palm Canyon Drive

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WHAT I'VE LEARNED

Ronald THOMPSON

Durham, N.C. 22, Administrative clerk , CLB-7

Pfc. Ronald B. Thompson, administrative clerk, Combat Logistics Battalion 7, native of Durham, North Carolina is the youngest of six boys. He enjoys fishing and hunting because it is a way for him to bond with his family.

> I like to fish, hunt and play football. I've been fishing and hunting since I was a little kid. I learned both from my dad.

> I started playing football when I was in middle school.

> I was 12 when I got started. My middle school teacher, who was a football coach as well, told me that he wanted me to come and try out. I did, and ever since then I've been playing. He's been a mentor to me. If there was a problem in school, I knew I could go talk to him about it or if he knew I wasn't doing what I was supposed to, he would come and talk to me about it. He helped me stay on the right path.

> Football is a fun sport to play. It's knowing that you have to work as a team to accomplish a goal and everybody has to pull their own weight. You might be the best player in the world but if your team doesn't pull together, it won't matter.

> On a football team you have a brotherhood and if you set out to accomplish a goal, as long as everybody on the football team is trying to accomplish the same goal, you feel like nothing can stop you. It gives you a chance to release any stress or frustrations that you've had during that week.

> I normally went fishing with my dad, but if my uncles were around then they would come too. I like to fish at lakes and rivers.

> It's a great time to relax and clear your mind. When you actually get a fish on the line it's exciting. The type of fish you catch depends on the type of bait you use, sometimes we try to catch catfish and other times we'll go for bass or crappie. With fishing you have to be patient in order to catch what you want.

> It's a bonding experience and I value family and the time I spend with them.

> I have five older brothers, and I'm the youngest of six kids.

> My brothers and I have certain things in common and I have learned a lot from them. They made sure that I learned from their mistakes so I wouldn't make the same ones they made.

> I like to go to the gym. Every morning before school, my oldest brother would pick me up, and we would go. That was something that we shared together.

> I love hunting. The catch is my favorite part. I love the adrenaline rush. You want to move fast but you know if you do too much you could startle the deer. You have to continue to have patience and be stealthy but at the same time you have to move fast because it will pick up on your scent and get away.

> I had two uncles that were in the military. One was in the Army, the other one was in the Marine Corps. I talked to them about joining and they were very supportive. We spoke about it while we were fishing one day and they were happy with my choice.

> I've been in the Marine Corps for seven months. I joined to better myself, and I knew it would be a great career to have. My friend that is in the Marine Corps told me great things and he persuaded me to join.

> My favorite thing about the Marine Corps is the brotherhood. I have seen a lot of camaraderie with Marines, things that most people won't do for a complete stranger.

Interviewed and photographed by Lance Cpl. Medina Ayala-Lo

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Integrated Trainin

PHOTOS BY: TECH SGT. EFREN LOPEZ

A Quick Reaction Force from 1st Marine Logistics Group respond to an indirect fire mock battlefield scenario at an entry control point during Integrated Training Exercise 2-15 Aboard the Combat Center, Feb. 11.

Lance Cpl. Brandon Torres, water support technician, Combat Logistics Battalion 13, provides security as part of a Quick Reaction Force team during an indirect fire mock battlefield scenario while participating in Integrated Training Exercise 2-15 aboard the Combat Center, Feb. 11.

A 1st Marine Logistics Group Marine takes cover behind a Hesco barrier and provide security as part of a Quick Reaction Force team during an indirect fire mock battlefield scenario while participating in Integrated Training Exercise 2-15 aboard the Combat Center, Feb. 11.

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ng Exercise 2-15

Lance Cpl. Brandon Torres, water support technician, Combat Logistics Battalion 13, provides security at an entry control point as part of a Quick Reaction Force team during an indirect fire mock battlefield scenario as he participates in Integrated Training Exercise 2-15 aboard the Combat Center, Feb. 11.

Marines from 1st Transportation Support Battalion, 1st Marine Logistics Group, remove the side rail and troop seats from a MK27 cargo truck during Integrated Training Exercise 2-15 aboard the Combat Center, Feb. 11.

Cpl. Corey Washington, a combat engineer, Combat Logistics Battalion 13, provides security as part of a Quick Reaction Force team during an indirect fire mock battlefield scenario while participating in Integrated Training Exercise 2-15 aboard the Combat Center, Feb. 11.

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March from A1

At one training area aboard Marine Corps Logistics Base Barstow, California, in scenario referred to as "Country X," the Marines were faced with multiple challenges that truly showed the diverse skill set of the SPMAGTF.

"Right now, we're in an embassy holding security to keep everyone safe," said Horton. "We're monitoring the populous to establish a baseline to see if we can get a grasp on what they are trying to do."

The embassy had initially asked for humanitarian assistance from SPMAGTF because of an influx of refugees putting a strain on the local and national economies. The SPMAGTF deployed a Forward Command Element and a Humanitarian Assistance Survey Team to evaluate the local resources and infrastructure in an effort to enable follow-on relief actions. While those teams were busy making plans to receive, coordinate and distribute humanitarian aid, a new problem arose.

"There was an escalation of force," said Nelson. "There was a buildup of hostile civilians outside of the embassy. [The role players] were using small arms fire as well as improvised explosive devices."

The SPMAGTF's mission quickly transitioned from humanitarian assistance, to embassy reinforcement.

"Once we got in, the local populous gave us very little time to set up," said Horton, "they started coming over the fence, our Marines, who had been briefed on our rules of engagement and escalation of force, were stopping and detaining them."

Lance Corporal Tranod Davis, from Lakeland, Fla., and Lance Cpl. Greg Torres, from Brooklyn, N.Y., both Marines with Company I, 3rd Battalion, 7th Marine Regiment, interact with role players who are acting as a local guard force during an embassy reinforcement training mission aboard Marine Corps Logistics Base Barstow, Calif., Feb. 10.

The Marines are well-trained and know exactly how they should respond to hostile situations. They were able to keep themselves and the embassy safe without having to engage the hostiles with deadly force. That can be important in the context of diplomatic relations between the U.S. and foreign countries.

"It's important to keep it a non-combatant mission because of the politics," said Nelson. "It's how America views us and how that country views us. If American troops go in, guns blazing at any threat that comes their way, they could end up the enemy of that country."

Though the riots had settled down, the local population continued to protest just outside the embassy, causing multiple close encounters.

"There were wedding processions through the streets, which can happen in real life; there were shots fired off in the distance; there were guys coming over trying to find weak spots in our security; there were people in elevated positions taking pictures," said Horton. "All of these things can happen wherever we go."

After securing the embassy, the situation on the ground was such that the role-player acting as the U.S. Ambassador to Country X requested help with a Non-combatant Evacuation Operation, during which the SPMAGTF would need to facilitate the movement of U.S. citizens out of the country. After quickly shifting focus and putting a new mission into motion, the Marines had to balance their focus between multiple tasks while still remaining aware of their surroundings.

"A non-combatant evacuation's purpose is to evacuate Americans out of any country," said Nelson. "They relocate the Americans [to a place where they can] provide them with medical care, food and shelter."

There are a lot of potential problems that Marines could face during a NEO, both from external forces and from our own American citizens.

"People could try to bring weapons or excess materials, such as pets or luggage that is not a necessity," said Nelson. "That takes up room that we need for American citizens."

Despite the challenges the Marines faced, they stayed focused and completed their mission.

"Good leaders always have their head on a swivel," said Horton. "We have a lot of experience, not necessarily in embassy scenarios but experience overall. This gives us a head start and an idea of things to look for so we can see problems coming before they happen."

Several other missions were thrown at the SPMAGTF during the same time period, requiring concurrent planning for TRAP, air strikes, and mass casualty evacuations, in addition to the heavy load at the embassy in Country X.

Resource allocation and mission de-confliction at the SPMAGTF staff level is essential to success on the battlefield, said 1st Lt. Matthew Gonzales, from Jacksonville, North Carolina, the SPMAGTF Forward Command Element assistant officer in charge. The exercise is just as important for the Marines planning in the operations center as it can be for those on the ground.

By successfully completing the Certification Exercise, the SPMAGTF demonstrated the ability to go forward as a shore-based, scalable Marine Air-Ground Task Force available to meet any mission that may present itself.

Train from A1

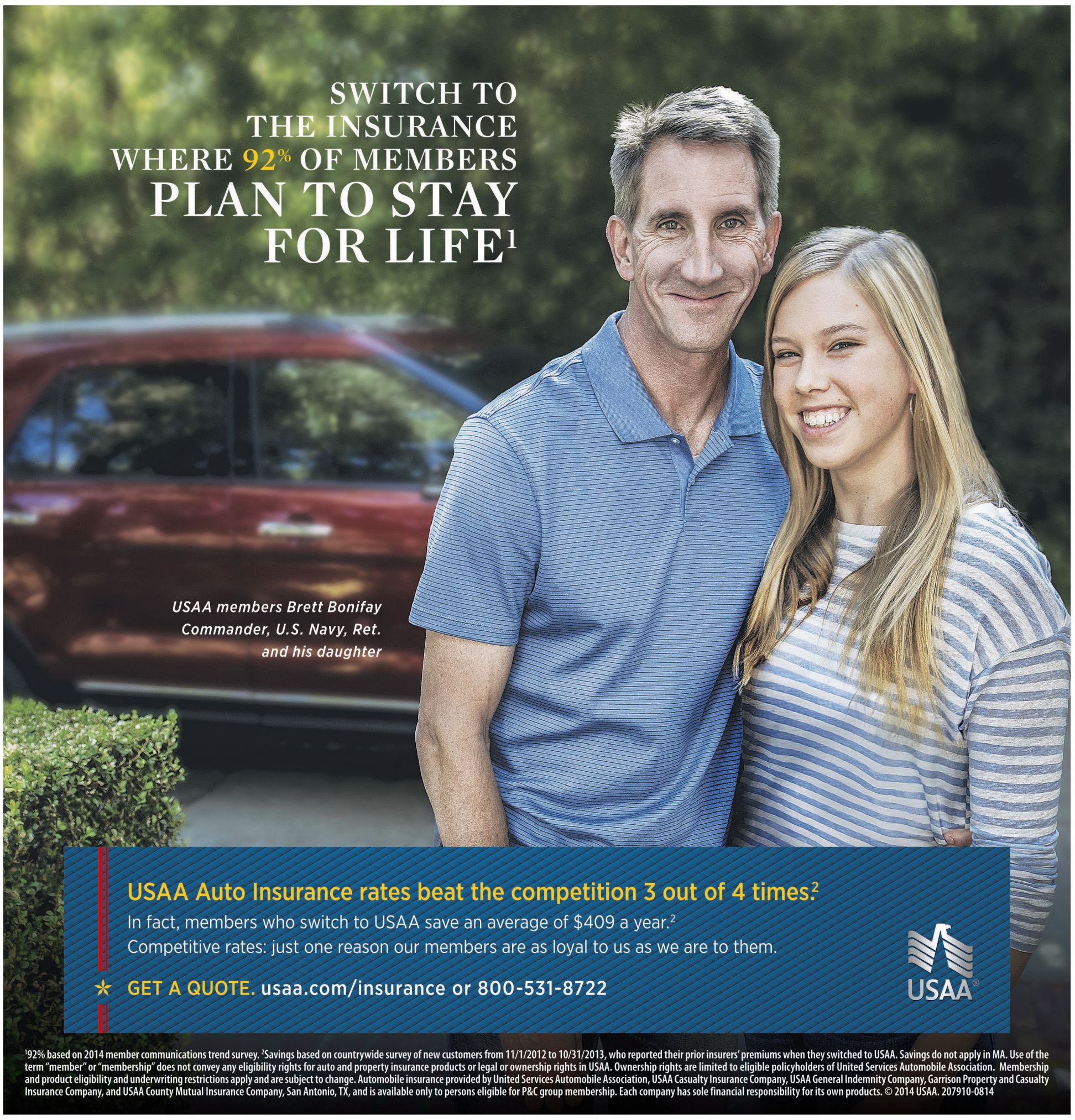
Lance Cpl. Joshua Robinett, security forces, Company C, Marine Wing Support Squadron 371, uses a signal flag to halt a simulated bystander while training in the Combat Convoy Simulator at Camp Wilson, Feb. 11. The Marines handled events in real time while following the Standard Operating Procedures they will use when the unit deploys.

The CCS is an immersive training environment for convoy operations to include basic procedures for driver, gunner and passenger in tactical scenarios related to combat operations, and the DVTE is a laptop PC-based simulation system capable of emulating organic and support infantry battalion weapons systems and training scenarios to facilitate training and readiness-based training. The combination of simulators is designed to improve how the Marines respond to operational situations. If a Marine takes enemy fire or a military vehicle flips over, the unit is able respond appropriately, and waits for requested support in real time.

"One of the biggest things that improved since we started this type of exercise was how the Marines sent information to the COC," said Cpl. Brett Cleary, fire team leader, Company C, MWSS 371, native of Boise, Idaho. "Before, the COC had to pull the information from the Marines on post; now the Marines send information up on their own and the COC is overflowing with information like it should be."

After working through initial system errors, MWSS 371 effectively utilized the simulator for the remaining two days to improve their skills.

"We have been able to keep the Marines training for approximately 10 hours a day; and they rotate positions every 5 hours," Ciaston said. "We have accumulated about 30 hours of training over the last three days. I have seen a drastic improvement in the way the Marines watch their post or field of fire, as well as what they report to the COC. I feel when we are tested at the end of our ITX we will be able to run our drills much smoother."



Good Samaritan amongst our ranks

STORY BY LANCE CPL. THOMAS MUDD

TWENTYNINE PALMS, Calif. - George Schadegg, a sports specialist with Marine Corps Community Services, and retired Navy Corpsman of 24 years, has lived in the same home, right off of highway 62, for more than 10 years. On Jan. 14, 2015, at approximately 5:30 p.m., he heard a strange sound as he was making dinner. He looked through his window and saw traffic on the highway slowing down considerably. Not knowing the severity of the situation, Schadegg went down to see if he could help.

"When I saw the change in the speed of traffic I knew something had happened," Schadegg said. "I turned off my stove, grabbed a coat and went to see what was going on."

It was a three-vehicle accident that started with a rear-end collision. The vehicle hit was forced across the undivided highway and collided, head on, with a third vehicle. When Schadegg arrived, he ran to the first car he could get to.

"A Marine was helping a man, who was already taken out of one of the cars," Schadegg said. "Then I heard someone say that there was a baby in one of the cars. I could see gas that had leaked from one of the vehicles and saw something like smoke coming from the front end. My biggest worry was getting the people out in case there really was a fire."

Schadegg went over to the car with a family inside and saw his neighbor trying to help evacuate them. After noticing the crying baby strapped into her car seat, he saw the father who asked him to get the child.

"The car was on its side and my neighbor was trying to get into the car through the back window," Shadegg said. "I am skinnier than my neighbor and was able to get in. I unstrapped the bottom portion of the car seat buckles and carefully got the baby out of the car."

A group of Marines began prying the door open on the vehicle to free a Marine and his wife, who were trapped inside.

"After they got the door open, I helped the father out of the car," Schadegg said. "His wife was stuck inside the [vehicle] and was freed with the help of the Twentynine Palms Fire Department.

According to Shadegg, many accidents have occurred by his home. He has helped in many, feeling as though has simply done what many others would.

"I don't feel as if I had done something special," Schadegg said. "I did what I had to do. I have seen military [members] get out and take charge in these situations all the time. I believe any military [member] would have gotten out and done something in that situation."

Living so close to a busy highway, Schadegg assists in any way he can until first responders arrive to the scene.

"My help is often anonymous most of the time and that is OK," Schadegg said. "It makes me feel good, but when all is said and done, I go back up to my house and know that the fire department and paramedics will take care of everything."

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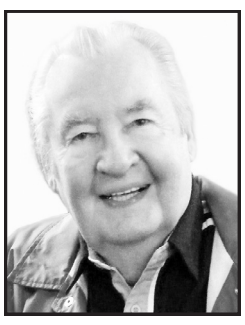
TOUGH MINDED OPTIMISM

by Lou Gerhardt



I recently wrote of how much I enjoy officiating at weddings here in the High Desert. Since then a several of you have asked me whether or not I marry people who have been divorced. My strong and positive answer is yes.

In 1964 I wrote a widely circulated magazine article on this very subject. (If you contact me, I'll send it to you.)

As a tough minded optimist I have complete confidence in the possibility of individuals who have experienced extremely troubling personal difficulties in their past being able to have beautiful and lasting relationships in their future.

I am aware that there are those who disagree with me. These people are almost always very legalistic in their interpretations of what is right and what is wrong. They offer quotes from the Bible and other documents to justify their opinion. However, I have always maintained that we should be ever mindful of these perceptive words from the Bible: *"The written code kills, but the spirit gives life."*

My dear friends, please know that I do not take this subject lightly. As I have stated many times, every marriage is precious and should be maintained. However, sometimes failed marriages become a reality. It is then we must respond as tough minded optimists.

Here is a Biblical paraphrase that should apply to people entering into a new commitment: *"Forgetting what lies behind, we are straining forward to what lies ahead as we face life together."*

This column sponsored by:

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WeekINPhotos

JGSDF Observes Marine Corps Air Delivery Capabilities

U.S. Marine Corps Staff Sgt. Patrick E. Ward, section Staff Non-Commissioned Officer in Charge assigned to Transportation Support Battalion, Special Purpose Marine Air-Ground Task Force 4, discusses Marine Corps air delivery capabilities to Japanese Soldiers with the Western Army Infantry Regiment during Helicopter Support Team training in support of Integrated Training Exercise 2-15 at Sandhill Landing Zone aboard Camp Wilson, Marine Corps Air Ground Combat Center Twentynine Palms, Calif., Feb. 11.

A U.S. Marine CH-53E Super Stallion, assigned to Marine Heavy Helicopter Squadron 462, lifts a load of 6,150 lbs. during Helicopter Support Team training, which shows off the Marine Corps' airlifting capabilities in support of Integrated Training Exercise 2-15 at Sandhill Landing Zone aboard Camp Wilson, Marine Corps Air Ground Combat Center Twentynine Palms, Calif., Feb. 11. ITX 2-15, being executed by Special Purpose Marine Air-Ground Task Force 4, is being conducted to enhance the integration and warfighting capability from all elements of the MAGTF.

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Chaplains train for suicide prevention

Chaplains discuss their history and experiences working with suicide cases during the Professional Development Training Course at Marine Corps Base Camp Pendleton, California, Feb. 11. The training focused on suicide prevention and intervention and included discussion of what methods are being used and developed throughout the services.

STORY AND PHOTOS BY
LANCE CPL. CAITLIN BEVEL

CAMP PENDLETON, Calif. - The military provides service members with hours of training every year to ensure that they are proficient in their job skills and prepared to face whatever obstacles they might find. While some training can be conducted online or on a rifle range, others require a more personal touch.

Chaplains provide a unique resource for service members by creating a safe space where they can discuss anything without fear of judgment or repercussions. That confidentiality is defined and protected by Secretary of the Navy Instruction 1730.9.

> ***"The Chaplain Corps is the one entity where somebody can go to talk about their deepest thoughts and concerns in confidence."***
>
> *— Rear Adm. Margaret Kibben, the Navy Chief of Chaplains.*

"The Chaplain Corps is the one entity where somebody can go to talk about their deepest thoughts and concerns in confidence," said Rear Adm. Margaret Kibben, the Navy Chief of Chaplains. "That inspires individuals to grow wholly and reminds them that they are not just a pawn being moved around, but they're a human being with thoughts and feelings."

Recently, chaplains and religious programs specialists participated in a Professional Development Training Course focused on suicide prevention and intervention conducted at Marine Corps Base Camp Pendleton, California, Feb. 9-12.

In 2013, the Department of Defense Suicide Event Report showed that the suicide rate for active duty service members was approximately 18.7 out of every 100,000, a significant improvement from the 22.7 in 2012. However, suicide prevention requires more than understanding the statistics.

Petty Officer First Class Zachariah Whitrock, a religious programs specialist with 1st Medical Battalion, 1st Marine Logistics Group, I Marine Expeditionary Force, said that this training goes deeper into the realms of what the Navy and the Marine Corps have to offer.

Whitrock explained that the training involved discussions with subject matter experts with more than 30 years of experience, as well as case studies showing what tools are most effective.

"If a Marine or Sailor comes in with suicidal ideations, the most important thing a chaplain can do is just care for them," said Whitrock.

Beyond just listening, chaplains can help Marines and Sailors find tools to navigate the obstacles of military life.

"Most people who have suicidal ideations are looking for a solution to a problem," said Whitrock. "Chaplains are very good at finding resources for them and even better at identifying the cause of their pain."

Support provided by the Chaplain Corps makes a difference in terms of how individual service members not only function, but thrive, and that they could not be effective without the support of each branch of service, according to Kibben.

"Of all the services, the Marine Corps really has demonstrated their appreciation and their value for what chaplains and RPs bring to the individual and to the organization," she said.

Rear Adm. Margaret Kibben, the Navy Chief of Chaplains, speaks to area chaplains and religious program specialists during the Professional Development Training Course at Marine Corps Base Camp Pendleton, Calif., Feb. 9.

Rear Adm. Margaret Kibben, the Navy Chief of Chaplains, speaks to area chaplains and religious program specialists during the Professional Development Training Course at Marine Corps Base Camp Pendleton, Calif., Feb. 9.

Living Works, a suicide intervention training company, provides speakers to support recent training for chaplains and religious program specialists during the Professional Development Training Course at Marine Corps Base Camp Pendleton, California, Feb. 11.

Combat Center Events

The Education Center will be offering free SAT preparation from Feb. 1 to March 22 in bldg. 1524. The course topics that will be focused on are math, writing and critical reading. The course's objective is to increase test scores, introduce test –taking strategies, and connect students with others who are taking the SAT and many more. For more information call 760-830-6881.

Stop by the Combat Center Library anytime during February to go on a blind date with a book. All you have to do is pick up a wrapped book and return it with a short review and your name will be entered in a drawing for a date night for two. You can pick up as many blind date books as you want.

MCCS will host an empowerment workshop in bldg. 1707 classroom A, Feb. 20. The class is open to teenagers and their parents to teach them how to recognize the signs of an unhealthy relationship and what to do if they should find themselves in one.

The Combat Center and Copper Mountain College are scheduled to host a free mid-air safety class March 7th at Copper Mountain College in Phase I, rm. 119. This class will identify safety issues facing military and general-aviation pilots flying in the Morongo Basin Area. For more information, contact Kristina Becker at 760-830-6213.

Head to the base theater for military savings week main event Feb. 25. The event is free and open to all active duty personnel, family members, retirees, and department of defense civilian employees.

Sunset Cinema

Friday, Feb. 20
6:00 p.m. - Paddington, PG
8:30 p.m. - American Sniper, R
11:30 p.m. -The Wedding Ringer, R

Saturday, Feb. 21
10:30 a.m. - Charlotte's Web (free admission), G
1:00 p.m. - Paddington, PG
3:30 p.m. - Women in Black 2 Angel of Death, PG-13
6:00 p.m. - American Sniper, R
9:00 p.m. - The Wedding Ringer, R
11:30 p.m. - Taken 3, PG-13

Sunday, Feb. 22
12:00 p.m. - The Wedding Ringer, R
2:30 p.m.- American Sniper, R
5:30 p.m. - Selma, PG-13
8:00 p.m. - The Boy Next Door, R

Monday, Feb. 23
6:00 p.m. - The Imitation Game, PG-13

Tuesday, Feb. 24
6:00 p.m. - American Sniper, R

Wednesday, Feb. 25
5:00 p.m. - Paddington, PG
7:00 p.m. - Taken 3, PG-13

Thursday, Feb. 26
5:00 p.m. - Woman in Black 2: Angel of Death, PG-13
7:00 p.m. - The Gambler, R

Friday, Feb. 27
6:00 p.m. - Big Eyes, PG-13
8:30 p.m. - American Sniper, R
11:30 p.m. - The Boy Next Door, R

'Vice' Is Nice

'70s counterculture detective yarn is one heck of a trip, man

NEIL POND

Inherent Vice
Starring Joaquin Phoenix, Josh Brolin, Reese Witherspoon & Katherine Waterston
Directed by Paul Thomas Anderson
Rated R

A swirling, swingin' sleuthing tale set at the dawn of the '70s on the seedy coastal side of Los Angeles, Inherent Vice stars Joaquin Phoenix as a keep-on-truckin' private investigator coasting on a cloud of dope smoke, Josh Brolin as a hippie-hating L.A.P.D. detective who likes licking on chocolate-covered bananas, and a cavalcade of other characters who pop in and out to move the story along.

Director Paul Thomas Anderson's dark-comedy adaptation of author Thomas Pynchon's 2009 crime-noir/counterculture novel is a thing of cinematic achievement, fitting in comfortably with his other critically lauded films, There Will Be Blood, The Master and Boogie Nights. And it's also one heck of a trip, man.

Phoenix plays Doc Sportello, who's hired by a damsel in distress, his ex-lover Shasta Fey Hepworth (Katherine Waterston, actor Sam's daughter), to investigate the disappearance of her new boyfriend, a wealthy real-estate tycoon, possibly arranged by his wife. But when Shasta Fey also goes missing, Doc realizes that he's dealing with a love triangle that's become an even bigger, much more unwieldy geometric tangle.

How much bigger, and how complex? Well, there are Nazis, black power groups, a mysterious offshore schooner, a cabal of heroin-smuggling dentists, a surf-saxophone legend (Owen Wilson) who's faked his own death, Eric Roberts in a looney bin, Reese Witherspoon as a federal district attorney who likes an occasional walk on the wild side, and a massage-parlor hoochie-coochie mama whispering a cryptic warning: "Beware the Golden Fang."

As Doc tries to sort out who's who and what's what, things keep getting weirder and wilder. The characters' names give you some idea of the story's stoned-out La-La-Land twists and turns: Michael W. Wolfmann, Sauncho Smilax, Coy Harlingen, Rudy Blatnoyd, Puck Beaverton.

Brolin, with a perpetual scowl and a serious crew cut, nearly steals the show as Lt. Det. "Bigfoot" Bjornsen, who also moonlights as an actor (watch for him late in the movie cropping up in a "doctored" episode of Adam-12). Phoenix sports a set of mutton-chop sideburns that look like they're about to invade his mouth at any moment. Funnyman Martin Short gets only 10 minutes onscreen as a lecherous dentist, but he makes the most of every second. Witherspoon and Phoenix have one entire conversation against the backdrop of a country song, Jack Scott's "Burning Bridges," which seems to be a nod to not only their relationship in the movie, but also their previous co-starring roles as John and June Carter Cash in Walk The Line (2005).

Phoenix worked with Anderson previously, in The Master, and the two have another fine synergy here. As Doc stumbles, unwashed and unkempt, through the case, he's also stumbling through the end of an era, the come-together, flower-power '60s, and into another, the uncertain, unhinged '70s. Doc knows the times, they are a-changin'—and that wistful, wayward, weed-saturated vibe seeps into everything about Inherent Vice.

The story takes its title, we learn, from a maritime term about a piece of cargo's hidden defect, something that makes it an unacceptable risk to insure. People—and places, relationships, even moments in time—can be defective, too, can spoil and go bad, as Doc knows all too well. But the defective, "damaged goods" Inherent Vice parades on screen only adds to the fractured fun of its hippy-dippy, time-tripping yarn.