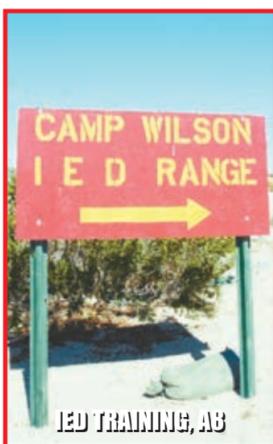


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Twentynine Palms, Calif.

VOL. 52 NO. 15
April 14, 2006



OBSERVATION POST



BULK RATE
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THIS ISSUE

A4 - 3/4 New Sgt. Major

A6 - TTECG "Coyote"

B1 - Shaved head for cancer

HOT TOPICS

COMMISSARY CLOSED EASTER SUNDAY

The Commissary will be closed Sunday April 16 in observance of Easter Sunday. The Commissary will reopen on Tuesday April 18 from 10:00 a.m. to 7:00 p.m.

LANDSCAPING

There will be landscaping construction at the bottom of the hill between the west side of Adobe road and the jogging trail, from the main gate to Del Valle. This work will take place from March till the end of May. Traffic will not be impeded during this period.

TAX DEADLINE IS MONDAY

The official season for the 2005 tax year is almost here. Last day to file your taxes is Monday. Late filing and payment fees along with interest on amount owed may be charged if taxpayers did not have enough withholding during the year.

The tax office is located at the Village Center, Bldg 1551. Office hours are 7:30 a.m. - 2:00 p.m. Monday-Friday. The office will close at noon today and be closed all day Monday due to the holiday weekend. Please plan accordingly. It is recommended that appointments be scheduled by calling 830-4829. Walk-ins are welcome but there will be a wait due to demand. No children are allowed at the tax center. Please make arrangements for day care.

If you prefer a direct deposit of your refund, bring in proof of your bank account, such as a MyPay print-out or a blank check showing your routing and account numbers. A joint tax return refund must be deposited into a joint bank account.

Service members who served in a combat zone may elect to have their non-taxable combat pay included in earned income if this will increase their earned income credit. A combat zone extension is available for filing tax returns, paying taxes, filing claims for refund and taking other actions with the IRS.

COMING NEXT ISSUE

- Iraqi role players
- 3/7 Sgt. Maj. change of command
- Volleyball finals

THIS DAY IN MARINE CORPS HISTORY

14 April 1865
Marines guarded
the body of
John Wilkes Booth
after
Abraham Lincoln's
assassination.

CLB-7 remembers lost warrior



Maj. Arthur J. Woods, Combat Logistics Battalion 7's executive officer, stands next to 1st Sgt. Jimmy S. Sanchez, Headquarters Company first sergeant, with CLB-7, during Staff Sgt. Abraham G. Twitchell's memorial service held at the Protestant Chapel Saturday.

LANCE CPL. MICHAEL S. CIFUENTES COMBAT CORRESPONDENT

Marines and Sailors with Combat Logistics Battalion 7 and families came together at the Protestant Chapel Saturday to mourn the loss of Staff Sgt. Abraham G. Twitchell, who died April 2 near Al Asad, Iraq, when the seven-ton truck in which he was riding rolled over during a flash flood.

Twitchell was a 27-year-old Yelm, Wash., native serving as the weapons infantry chief with CLB-7 during the deployment, which began in February.

The Marines who served with Twitchell remember him as an ideal Marine, a man with a great sense of humor, a loving father and husband, and a great leader.

"He was a great man to be around," said 1st Sgt. Jimmy S. Sanchez, Headquarters Company first sergeant, CLB-7. "He always brought a smile with him wherever he went. What I remember the most was he was always willing to teach something to someone. He never gave the easy answer to anyone. He even tried teaching me a few things."

"He was a loyal friend, a loyal husband and a loyal father," continued Sanchez. "He was very

proud of his kids...he thought about them a lot. He talked about his family a lot."

Twitchell's father, Maurice Twitchell, spoke to the Marines during the ceremony.

"This is the hardest moment of my life - from the moment the Marines showed up at my doorstep," said Maurice. "I know when Abraham died, he was angry. He knows he has a wife and kids... he had a duty. But, he had to accept it."

"I wish I could stand here in the uniform of a Marine today," continued Maurice. "I love you all and respect you for what you do."

Twitchell was born Jan. 20, 1978, in Olympia, Wash. He enlisted in the Marine Corps July 15, 1996, and reported to recruit training at Marine Corps Recruit Depot San Diego. His initial military occupational specialty was small arms repair specialist. His first duty station was with Marine Air Logistics Squadron 26 at Marine Corps Air Station New River, N.C.

In December 1999, at the rank of sergeant, Twitchell reenlisted and received orders for duty at Weapons Training Battalion, Quantico, Va., with precision weapons building and repair. Again,

Twitchell reenlisted in November 2003 and was promoted to staff sergeant. He was then transferred to CLB-7 at the Combat Center and was assigned to be the infantry weapons operations chief with Ordnance Platoon. Twitchell deployed Feb. 8 with CLB-7 in support of Operation Iraqi Freedom.

Twitchell's awards included the Navy and Marine Corps Commendation Medal, two Navy and Marine Corps Achievement Medals, three Marine Corps Good Conduct Medals, the National Defense Service Medal, and the Global War on Terrorism Service Medal.

Lt. Michael A. Taylor, the Headquarters Battalion chaplain, spoke to the gathering before the service ended.

"God understands the feeling of pain," said Taylor. "But, he says the day of one's death is better than the day of one's birth. When we come together for this sad day, we can honor the great life this man had. No one really knows much about anyone when they're born, but we know their whole life when they die. And today we honor his."

Twitchell is survived by his wife Stephanie, and his three children, Zachery, Zane and Makenzy.

Headquarters Battalion commander steps down from duties, joins RCT-7



Lt. Col. Ronald A. Gridley, commanding officer of Headquarters Battalion, relinquished command of the battalion Thursday to Maj. David M. Blankenship, executive officer of Headquarters Battalion.

LANCE CPL. MICHAEL S. CIFUENTES COMBAT CORRESPONDENT

After serving 22 months as the Headquarters Battalion commanding officer, Lt. Col. Ronald A. Gridley stepped down from his duties Thursday in a change of command ceremony held at the commanding general's parade field, continuing his journey in the Marine Corps with a deployment to Iraq in the near future.

Gridley's honorable service in the Corps began in April 1986 when he was commissioned a second lieutenant after completing the 10-week Officer Candidate Course. Prior to attending the course, he received a Bachelor of Science degree in business administration from California State University, Fresno, in December 1985. His interest in joining the Corps resulted from an experience when he was a senior at Lemoore High School.

"My girlfriend's father, who is now my father-in-law, invited us to his Marine Corps Ball," said Gridley, a Fresno, Calif., native. "He was a first sergeant. Up until that day, I was always bad-mouthing the military, but the experience I had at the ball changed my opinion. The camaraderie and bond the Marines had with each other that day made me want to be a part of them."

Gridley's first duty station was at Marine Corps Base Camp Pendleton, Calif. He was assigned as a platoon commander with Fox Company, 2nd Battalion, 7th Marine Regiment. His first command answered his ongoing question before joining the "War Dogs."

See GRIDLEY, A5

MARADMIN 143/06

Date signed: 03/24/2006

Lost Privacy Act data

1. The purpose of this message is to notify enlisted Marines, active and reserve, on active duty between January 2001 and December 2005 of the loss of Privacy Act information.
2. HQMC Manpower Information Systems Division was notified on 14 March 2006 by a Naval post graduate school student that a thumb drive containing partial records of 207,750 Marines had been lost. The drive was being used for a research project and contained Privacy Act data to include name, Social Security number, marital status, and enlistment contract information. Because the data was saved in an encoded software format that is in limited distribution and the location of the loss was aboard a government installation, the risk associated with the data loss is considered to be relatively low. To date, there is no evidence the information has been compromised. The Naval post graduate school is currently conducting a detailed investigation to determine the facts surrounding the case.
3. Affected Marines are encouraged to visit the Federal Trade Commissions Web site at <http://www.consumer.gov/idtheft> for guidance on protective action against identity theft. Additionally, affected Marines may also place a fraud alert on their credit files for up to 24 months. This will generate a free credit report from all three credit reporting bureaus. Marines should review their credit reports carefully for any suspicious activities (fraudulent accounts, un-requested loans, un-requested new accounts, activity on old or inactive accounts, etc).
4. Manpower & Reserve Affairs will continue to engage all users and systems owners to ensure proper steps are being taken to protect the critical information related to our Marines. For further information contact Mr. Clay Dubberly, M&RA by e-mail at thurman.dubberly@usmc.mil or by phone at (703) 784-0643, DSN 278-06

To see if your Social Security number was affected, visit the Web site:
<https://www.manpower.usmc.mil>

Sempertoons

By Gunnery Sgt. Charles Wolf

PART 4 of a 4 PART SERIES
SemperToons Presents: How Easter Eggs get hard for Easter.

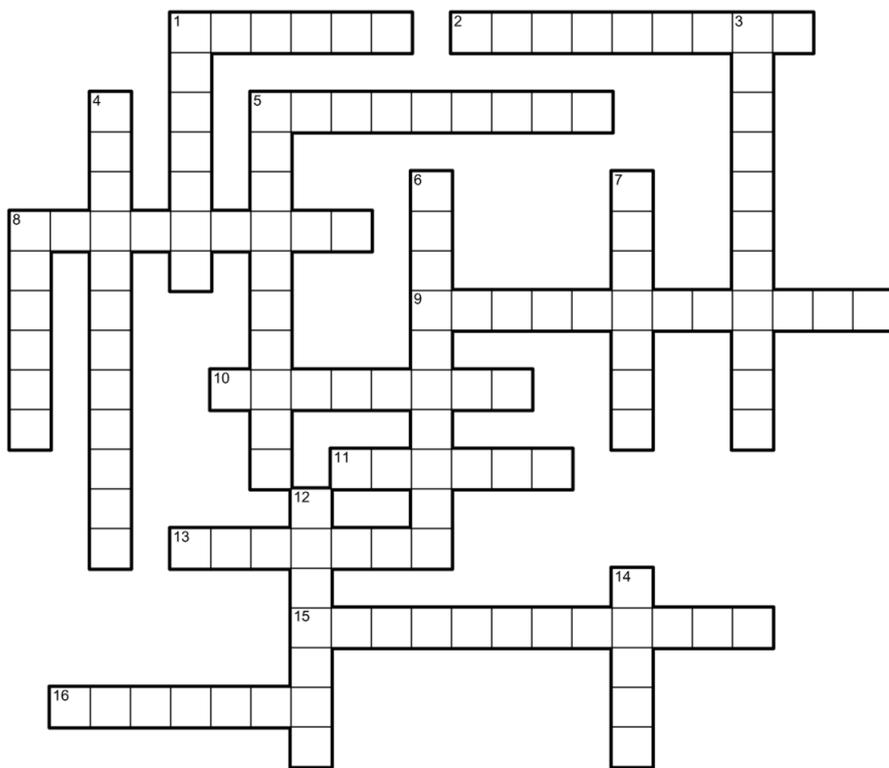
Prior to all EGGraduations, the OMLET-DANT and Sgt-Egger of the Carton Corps gives each hardboil a certificate of Eggenticity.

We at Sempertoons are honored to present the graduating Carton of Easter 2006. These twelve tuff and motivated Hard boiled eggs are ready for coloring in every clime and place. Please join us in a round of EGG-please!

Note: Carton 2006 1st Place trophies

SEMPERTOONS.COM

AMERICAN CITIES



ACROSS

- 1 The Mile-High City
- 2 The Forest City
- 5 Music City USA
- 8 Charm City
- 9 Large casino city in New Jersey
- 10 What happens in _____, stays in _____.
- 11 Home of the Cowboys
- 13 Gateway to the West
- 15 The City by the Bay
- 16 The Windy City

DOWN

- 1 Motown
- 3 The Big Apple
- 4 The City of Brotherly Love
- 5 Mardi Gras
- 6 The City of Angels
- 7 Emerald City
- 8 The City on a Hill
- 12 "_____, we have a problem."
- 14 The Magic City

[Solutions on A5]

C.O.P. Corner



Community Oriented Policing
The proactive voice of crime prevention



Presented by the Provost Marshal's Office Crime Prevention Section

Credit Card Crimes

Credit card crimes include unauthorized use of credit cards, ATM cards, and bank debit cards. Personal information is obtained by a lost or stolen wallet or purse, by phone, in person, through observing an ATM, through the mail and email. Technology today allows criminals to fix devices on ATMs and other card swiping machines that can copy the card information and obtain your personal identification number. As a result, criminals can duplicate the card and access your account. Some tips to help you prevent from becoming a victim are: never give anyone your personal financial information, check the ATM machine to see if it has been tampered with, check the ATM machine card slot to see if a card reader has been affixed and be vigilant at ATM machines. If you are victimized you should immediately cancel all cards, notify the card issuer and the three major credit bureaus to enable fraud protection.

The three major credit bureaus are Transunion 1-800-680-7289, Equifax 1-800-685-1111, and Experian 1-800-397-3742.

The following services are available to on-base personnel and residents through Crime Prevention: literature, briefs, education, crime assessments, safety tips, the Stranger Danger program, McGruff the Crime Dog, the Officer Friendly program, the Property Marking program, and the Child Identification and Fingerprinting program. For more information call Crime Prevention, 830-6094/5457.

Presented by the Provost Marshal's Office Crime Prevention Section

Marines, Sailors, and cab drivers: MCs will reimburse ANY licensed cab company for transportation to the Main Gate, Marine Corps Air Ground Combat Center. Drivers: please legally record information from your fare's military ID card. Thank you for participating.

ARRIVE ALIVE
A Combat Center Car Company 367-7433
Top's Taxi 361-6748

Signature _____
Outcomes _____
Driver _____
Date/Time _____
Total fee _____
Destination _____
Pick up at _____
ID # _____
Name _____

Centerspeak

"What is the most embarrassing thing your parents ever did to you?"

Opinions expressed in Centerspeak are not necessarily those of the OBSERVATION POST, the Marine Corps or Department of Defense.



SGT. FRANCISCO MARTINEZ JR.
3/4

"My mom put me into a boot, naked, when I was 5 years old in Mexico and some guy took a picture for a boot store ad."



PFC. YOUNG LEE
3/2

"My dad used to beat me with a bamboo stick in front of people for martial arts class."



LAUREN SMITH
DAUGHTER OF MAJ. MICHAEL SMITH, 3RD AABN

"My mom cheers too loud at sporting events. She's too loud as a parent to cheer."



SGT. IVAN VELASQUEZ
5/14

"I don't like dressing as a cowboy — with the tight jeans, and the boots. For my cousin's baptism, my mom dressed me as a cowboy, and I had to walk around in front of people."

What's on your mind?

Centerspeak welcomes questions or submissions from service members, Department of Defense civilians and family members.

Address submissions to:
Commanding General
Public Affairs Office
(Attn. Press Chief)
MCAGCC
Box 788200
Twentynine Palms, CA 92278-8200

Or E-mail to:
evan.eagan@usmc.mil

OBSERVATION POST

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Michael J. Armstrong
Sgt. Robert L. Fisher III
Cpl. Evan M. Eagan
Cpl. Heidi E. Loredo
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Lance Cpl. Michael S. Cifuentes
Lance Cpl. Regina N. Ortiz

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April is California Earthquake Preparedness Month

ASSISTANT FIRE CHIEF DARLENE HULL

COMBAT CENTER FIRE DEPARTMENT

Don't wait for the ominous sound of the earth splitting to spark your interest in earthquake preparation. Those of us that have lived in southern California for any length of time have likely heard the loud roar and felt the violent shaking that lets you know you are close to the epicenter of an earthquake. And, most of us that have remained after our first wild ride have accepted the fact that we live in earthquake country. The fact is it is not if our desert will shake again, but when.

While other parts of the world have seen recent devastation from various types of natural disasters, this part of the country has a recent history of memorable earthquakes. And, as a population "living on the fault lines," we always have our own ever-present reality of the potential for a large scale disaster. According to the United States Geological Survey there have been at least four significant events in this area over the last 14 years. In April 1992 we felt the jolt of a 6.3 in Joshua Tree, in June that same year Landers hit the national news with a 7.6 magnitude earthquake, and shortly after on the same day, Big Bear shook to the tune of a 6.7. In October 1999 the Hector Mine Earthquake (located in the northern section of the Marine Corps Air Ground Combat Center) rang in at an impressive 7.1 on the Richter Scale.

These are all earthquakes that virtually no one sleeps through. But, the fact that we live in earthquake country shouldn't make you worry or feel uncomfortable, if you are willing to take a little time to prepare yourself for the potential problems a large quake can create. Earthquake preparation is just another part of the California lifestyle.

Why do you think the Fire Department is interested in whether or not you are prepared for an earthquake? The answer is easy: we may not be able to get to you right away. There is a distinct possibility that you or your family will be on your own during the immediate aftermath of an earthquake. The following information can help you to prepare yourself for the least impact due to an earthquake, and to help ensure your

short-term independence while awaiting additional assistance or support.

You can start by preparing your environment, both at home and work. Secure items that are high up, top heavy, or that can injure someone if it breaks loose. Using some common sense, walk through your rooms and look for things that could fall when shaken. Imagine the movement of a vehicle when it rolls down the road; the bumping, pitching and swaying felt inside a vehicle is much like the motion you might experience in a large scale quake. Would your television survive a ride down a bumpy road the way it's sitting now? What about your bookshelves — would they stay upright without hitting someone? Most of the losses that occur during an earthquake are property that is not secured in place. And the potential for injury is much greater from heavy objects being vaulted off the shelf or from tall cabinets tipping over on top of someone. Secure top heavy cabinets and things like bookshelves in place. Use latches on your cabinet doors to keep the contents from being thrown out.

Plan to get by on your own for a little while - look at it like an impromptu camping trip. Make sure you have a phone that doesn't require electricity to operate. Get supplies, food and water to last a week. Remember that if a quake hits during the summer months your water intake will need to be high if the power is out and there is no swamp cooling or air conditioning. Have a list of the things you need daily to get by, and make sure you have enough of those items to see you through. Do you have enough of your medications and an extra pair of prescription eyeglasses? Dog and cat food? Enough diapers for the baby? Will your food need to be cooked or your water sterilized? How will you cook or heat food? Do you have warm enough blankets or sleeping bags if the heat goes out? Think it through and make sure your own unique needs are covered.

Then take a look around, if there were a big "shaker" right here, right now, where would you go? Think quick now! Duck cover and hold right? But where? What if you're in your car? Think about it now and then, ask yourself where a safe place to ride out a quake in this room would be, on this highway, or at

this store. If you're driving, come to a stop where there are no overhead power lines, away from overpasses and other hazards. At home, work or school, identify areas that would provide good cover where you can wait it out if shaking is violent. And in public, look for hazards that might pose a threat if there was an earthquake.

And finally, know how to secure the utilities in your home. Keep a crescent wrench or emergency shut off wrench handy if you have natural gas. Know where the valves to shut off natural gas, propane, and water are located. Locate your electrical panel before hand and learn how to shut off the main breaker. How will you know if you need to shut off your utilities? If the power or lights dim and stay that way, if you smell burning wires, or if there is arcing or shorting — you need to shut off your electricity. If you hear gas escaping or smell the odor of rotten eggs — you need to shut off your gas and turn off any sources of ignition (pilot lights or open flame). If you have water leaking or flooding, you need to shut off your water. Only turn off utilities that have been damaged or otherwise compromised. And don't turn damaged or compromised utilities back on until a repairman has fixed the problem.

You can't control earthquakes, but you can take charge of your immediate environment and by doing so, you can greatly reduce the potential for personal injury and property loss. It's really up to you. Remember there are only a few fire department response teams, and during a large-scale event you may be on your own for a little while. Take care, plan to be a part of the many that will provide the solution, and do something to prepare for the inevitable "next time."

Want more information? Try an online search for "earthquake" or "earthquake preparedness," or stop by the Fire Department April 21. The Community Blood Mobile will be out front accepting donations and additional earthquake information will be available in the station. There will be personnel on hand to show you the types of equipment you might need to get by after an earthquake and to answer any questions you might have.

Defense Department celebrates 'Month of the Military Child'

PRESS RELEASE

WASHINGTON — The Defense Department has long understood the value of caring for and celebrating children of service members.

April is designated as the Month of the Military Child, underscoring the important role military children play in the armed forces community. The Month of the Military Child is a time to applaud military families and their children for the daily sacrifices they make and challenges they overcome.

Military children face many obstacles unique to their situation, such as having a parent deployed for extended periods of time and frequently being uprooted from school.

"Military children endure a great deal of change as a result of a parent's military career," Douglas Ide, a public affairs officer with the Army's Community and Family Support Center, said. "The military family averages nine moves through a 20-year career. And in doing so, their children must say goodbye to friends, change schools, and start all over again."

Throughout the month, numerous military commands will

plan special events to honor military children. These events will stress the importance of providing children with quality services and support to help them succeed in the mobile military lifestyle, defense personnel and readiness officials said.

"Installations are honoring military children by providing the month packed with special activities that include arts and crafts shows, picnics, carnivals, fairs, parades, block parties and other special activities, focusing on military children that highlight the unique contributions they make," according to a Defense Department fact sheet.

The Defense Department will also launch a new toolkit series called "Military Students on the Move." The toolkit includes material designed to promote more efficient and effective methods of moving military children from school to school. The toolkit includes material for parents, children, installation commanders and school officials, Defense Department officials said.

In addition, the U.S. Air Force recently launched its "Stay Connected" deployment program kits in conjunction with the Month of the Military Child. The kits include items like teddy

bears, writing pens and disposable cameras.

"The purpose of the Stay Connected kit is to provide young people and parents an avenue to keep a connection during the deployed members' time away from home," Eliza Nesmith, an Air Force family member programs specialist said. "The items in the kit come in pairs, so that the young person and parent can have an item that will help them remember each other."

Throughout the month of April, the U.S. Navy child and youth programs will also be hosting special programs and events to salute military children. These events will include, carnivals, health screening for children, youth talent shows, and more, Navy officials said.

"Events that celebrate the Month of the Military Child stress the importance of providing children with quality services and support to help them succeed in the mobile military lifestyle," Larrie Jarvis, a Navy child and youth programs analyst said.

The Month of the Military Child is part of the legacy left by former Defense Secretary Caspar Weinberger, who died March 28. He established the Defense Department commemoration in 1986.



LANCE CPL. REGINA N. ORTIZ

Sgt. Maj. Mark M. Geletko and Sgt. Maj. Harrison L. Tanksley walk side by side after the battalion inspection during their relief and appointment ceremony April 7.

3/4 welcomes new sergeant major, bids farewell to admired leader

LANCE CPL. REGINA N. ORTIZ
COMBAT CORRESPONDENT

The Marines and Sailors of 3rd Battalion, 4th Marine Regiment, bid farewell to Sgt. Maj. Harrison L. Tanksley, and welcomed aboard their new battalion sergeant major, Sgt. Maj. Mark M. Geletko, in a relief and appointment

ceremony at the Combat Center's Commanding General's Parade Field March 7.

Tanksley served as 3/4's battalion sergeant major for more than a year and four months and deployed with the battalion in January 2005 in support of Operation Iraqi Freedom.

Tanksley, a Warm Springs,

Ga., native, graduated boot camp from Marine Corps Recruit Depot Parris Island, S.C., in September 1981. He has served at more than 14 commands and deployed six times, including two deployments in support of OIF. Early in his career, Tanksley was meritoriously promoted to the rank of sergeant. Other

billets he has had in his career include drill instructor and Marine security guard, protecting three different American embassies and consulates in various countries. He was frocked as a first sergeant in July 2001.

He will continue his career as the sergeant major of Manpower Management Support

Branch, Headquarters Marine Corps, Quantico, Va.

"Three-four has the finest young men I've ever served with," said Tanksley. "They'll do everything and anything for you and accomplish any assigned task.

"I want to thank the Marines for their hard work, dedication to the Corps, their

country and this battalion," he continued.

Tanksley enjoyed his tour with the Marines and Sailors of 3/4, and wishes the best for the battalion and their new sergeant major, he said.

"I wish Sgt. Maj. Geletko a successful tour with 3/4," said Tanksley. "Take care of these men, and they'll take care of you."

Geletko was serving as the Marine Corps Communication-Electronics School first sergeant when he was promoted to sergeant major and received orders to serve as the 3/4 battalion sergeant major. He served as the MCCES first sergeant for more than one year.

Geletko, a Pittsburgh native, graduated boot camp from MCRD Parris Island, in January 1985. He went on to train in his primary military occupational specialty as a military policeman. He was meritoriously promoted to corporal in 1987. Other billets Geletko has filled include primary marksmanship instructor, drill instructor and platoon sergeant, company gunnery sergeant and first sergeant at Officer Candidates School.

Geletko has served at more than nine different commands and has been on four deployments throughout his career in the Marine Corps. As the 2nd Battalion, 7th Marine Regiment, Fox Company first sergeant, Geletko deployed to the Republic of the Philippines in support of Operation Enduring Freedom in May 2003 and to Iraq in support of OIF in February 2004.

Geletko and Tanksley have been friends for the past five years, crossing paths at the Combat Center, said Geletko.

"Sgt. Maj. Tanksley left me a good basis to start on," he explained. "He made it easy for me."

With more than 21 years in the Marine Corps, Geletko has developed his leadership style, sticking with what works.

"I like to be amongst the Marines," he said. "I like to pop-in on my first sergeants and the Marines to see how everything is going. I want to know my Marines, be able to put names to faces.

"I think it is very important to know your Marines," he continued. "If you know who they are and if you know how they are then you can successfully lead them."

Although Geletko started his career as a military policeman, he is familiar with leading and working with infantrymen, he said.

"I can identify with these Marines," said Geletko.

He is proud to be part of 3/4 Thunder, he said.

"I'll do everything I can for them," he said in regards to the Marines and Sailors of his new home.



LANCE CPL. MICHAEL S. CIFUENTES

Lt. Col. Ronald A. Gridley will report to Regimental Combat Team 7 to support efforts in Iraq.

GRIDLEY, A1

"I always wondered if I was prepared," said Gridley. "It was an eye-opening experience, but very motivating and rewarding. It was everything I expected it to be. I served with Marines of great caliber. The staff noncommissioned officers that I worked with then helped out a lot with my thoughts as a commander, as well as my career pattern."

Gridley left 2/7 in 1988 and was selected to serve as the Aide de Camp to the assistant division commander of 1st Marine Division. In August 1989, he was transferred to the School of Infantry, Camp Pendleton, Calif., where he activated Company I, Marine Combat Training Battalion.

"The school was growing large in students, so a staff was put together for another company, of which I became commanding officer," he said.

He also served as the Instructor Company commander, MCT.

In 1991, Gridley was promoted to the rank of captain and received orders to III Marine Expeditionary Force, Okinawa, Japan.

While assigned to III MEF, Gridley served as an action officer in the operations section and served as officer-in-charge of the command center. In 1992, he was assigned to the 31st Marine Expeditionary Unit, serving as the assistant operations officer.

In 1994, Gridley attended the Armor Officer Advance Course and Cavalry Leaders

Course at Fort Knox, Ky. Upon completion of the courses in January 1995, Gridley reported to 2nd Marine Division at Camp Lejeune, N.C., and became company commander of Bravo Company, 2nd Light Armored Reconnaissance Battalion. From there he deployed to Panama in support of security force operations. His company was tasked with providing security for Rodman Naval Station, a U.S. Naval station on the Panama Canal.

Gridley, at the rank of major in 1998, was reassigned to Marine Corps Recruit Depot Parris Island,

S.C. He was tasked to be the operations officer and executive officer for Weapons and Field Training Battalion, and as the operations officer for the Recruit Training Regiment.

"Parris Island was a great place to go after posting command most of my career," said Gridley. "I enjoyed watching the drill instructors turning long-hairs, which I once was, into Marines. It was a unique experience. It was the most positive, life-influential tour I had."

Gridley completed the Air Command and Staff non-resident program in 2001 and was

assigned to Manpower and Reserve Affairs, Headquarters Marine Corps where he served as the Ground Combat Arms Majors Monitor. Upon promotion to lieutenant colonel in 2003, he returned overseas to serve as the operations officer for the 31st MEU, Okinawa, Japan.

"I never really put a time limit on the years I served in the Marine Corps," said Gridley. "My wife and I always discussed that as long as I am still enjoying what I do in the Marine Corps, I'll continue to press on. I just have really been enjoying myself these past 20 years."

Gridley enjoyed his time and unique challenges as Headquarters Battalion commander, he said.

"I spent so much time working with infantry battalions that this assignment opened my eyes on what a lot of Marines do," said Gridley. "There are so many different military occupational specialties in this battalion. It was very rewarding to be a part of this battalion these past 22 months. I especially enjoyed talking to the Marines with different MOS's."

Gridley is expected to join Regimental Combat Team 7 and their efforts in Operation Iraqi Freedom this spring.

"Until the day I deploy, I'm going to do what I always enjoyed doing — watching my kids grow, spending time with them and my wife and settling into our new house," said Gridley.

Gridley, his wife, Michelle, his 15-year-old daughter, Lauren, and his 12-year-old son, Mark, recently moved into a new home in Yucca Valley, Calif.

His presence will definitely be missed in the battalion, said Master Sgt. Robert W. Cole, adjutant chief with Headquarters Battalion.

"It's been a pleasure working for him," said Cole, a Cortland, N.Y., native. "He's a fair man. He holds

every Marine accountable for their actions. He's the best commanding officer I had the pleasure of working with as a staff NCO. He's a compassionate person, but knows where compassion has to end. Marines respect him because he was a very respectable man.

"One of my highlights of coming in on Mondays was talking to him about NASCAR racing," he continued. "He was just as much a fan as I was."

His calm demeanor, high morale and great sense of humor is what most of his coworkers will miss, said Maj. David M. Blankenship, Headquarters Battalion's executive officer.

"I couldn't have asked for a better battalion commander than him," said Blankenship, a Baltimore native. "I worked with a lot of battalion commanders. I know that his relationship was the best with the Marines."

"I will never forget the colonel's Fresno State references and his 'Gridleyism,'" continued Blankenship. "'Don't be a chocolate mess' is the best example of one of his Gridleyisms. So, I wish him the best of luck

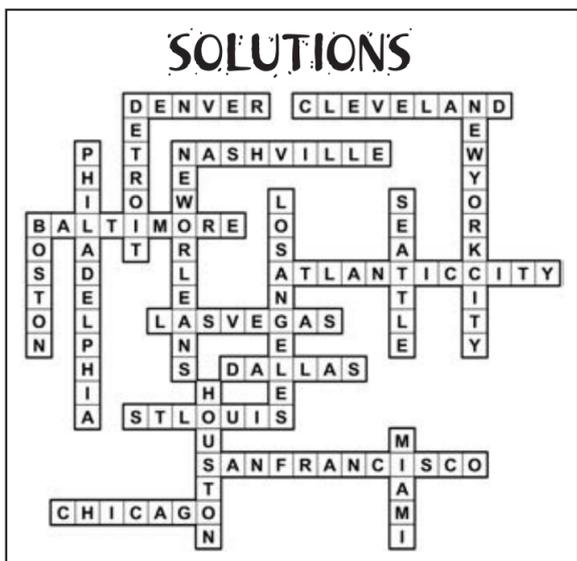
going back to the Fleet Marine Forces where the earth pigs rule. He's going to be missed. He was a favorable battalion commanding officer."

Being around Marines who are here to serve for one main reason has been the best feeling for Gridley, he said. He regrets the feeling of losing friends and Marines over his time in the Corps.

"It's hard being in this business, knowing some are never coming back," said Gridley. "But it's something we all accepted. There are families out there that feel the same pain, but it's a different business for them."

"Moving around all the time, before and during my tour in the Marines, I ran into a lot of people and their life stories," said Gridley. "I tried listening to as much as I could."

Gridley learned Marines need to take care of one another and take time to remember the sacrifices Marines are making today in order to enjoy what they have and what they do, he said.



Leader in the pack, TTECG "Coyote" sets bar high



CPL. BRIAN A. TUTHILL

Capt. Eric Meador gives a class to the Marines of 3rd Battalion, 2nd Marine Regiment, about FiST procedures.

CPL. BRIAN A. TUTHILL
COMBAT CORRESPONDENT

What does it take for a Marine rifle company caught in the heat of battle to call in support from aircraft, artillery, mortars and direct fire?

Its fire support team, or FiST, is the voice of the commander to direct the fires of

multiple external sources on selected targets on the field of battle.

This complex skill set is taught in phases to Marines taking part in Mojave Viper exercises by the "Coyotes" of the Tactical Training Exercise Control Group and not many know the devastating results of effectively directed fire

better than FiST lead instructor Capt. Eric A. Meador, who came to TTECG after serving as a platoon commander and later a company executive officer with 1st Battalion, 2nd Marine Regiment.

"He is not just a combat veteran, he is one of the few Marines in the Marine Corps today who can say they have experienced the receiving end of enemy artillery," said Maj. Scott J. Kinner, combined arms training operations officer. "He was at An Nasiriyah in 2003 and it was his company that was hit by 120mm mortars and 122mm artillery. Not just once or twice, but like you're supposed to do

with artillery fire. He has truly been on the receiving end of what we train our Marines to do to the enemy. He has a unique understanding of this and there is no one better suited to do this job."

Meador, currently in his third year with TTECG, said his job is simple, "I teach those teams the proper use of combined arms with competency so they can realize the application of combined arms anywhere."

Kinner said the job Meador does for the Coyotes is unique in that it is not practiced outside of the Combat Center.

"This is the only place in the Marine Corps where units come and practice the things he teaches," said Kinner. "He puts a group of Marines together to control air, artillery, direct fire, mortars and do all of that at the same time, same place."

"Within this particular place, he is the lead instructor so it's not an exaggeration to say that he personally, over his three years here, has trained almost every fire support team in the Marine Corps," Kinner said. "On top of that, his performance over the past three years has been superior and exemplary."

Each rifle company has a FiST to direct fires for the unit. The FiST is literally in control of all non-organic fires, which don't originate from their company, said Meador.

"TTECG teaches FiST with a series of classes, practical applications and a field exercise," said the 34-year-old Jones County, Miss., native. "We go from a crawl, to a walk, to running because we want to make sure they understand it all."

Meador enlisted in the Marine Corps Reserves in 1991 and served with 4th Armored Amphibian Vehicle Battalion at Marine Corps Base Camp Lejeune, N.C.

Meador studied psycholo-

gy at William Carey College in Hattiesburg, Miss., after leaving the Marine Corps and went to Officer's Candidate School in 1994 to begin his career in the infantry as an officer of Marines.

In 2004, Meador went to Iraq as part of a group of TTECG Marines to help train Iraqi Army units.

One of the most challenging and complex concepts taught by Coyotes to Marines going through Mojave Viper are the FiST classes, said Kinner.

"Marines sometimes question why they have to learn certain skills," said Meador, who usually speaks with his hands from behind wire-rimmed glasses.

"In Iraq, some of the main threats to U.S. and coalition forces come from IEDs, enemy vehicles, rocket-propelled grenades and small arms fire," he explained. "But FiST teams at Mojave Viper train to attack heavily fortified enemy defenses because Marines do not know who or where the Corps will fight next."

"A good analogy is that if a boxer wins a fight with an uppercut, he is not going to go home and practice only uppercuts," Meador continued. "No, he will train his entire body to be strong so he can be completely ready for the next fight. And that is a concept Marines have to be able to accept when they come here for this FiST training."

Meador said nearly all of the battalions who come through his class had a certain method which worked for them in a specific battle, but Marines need to be able to see past that to a bigger picture.

"Captain Meador brings a lot of things to the table here," said Kinner. "He has a lot of personal experience, natural leadership ability, his ability to communicate and his endurance all make his performance here exceptional."

"In the last year, though, he worked about 320 days out the year, literally," said Kinner. "There were about 40 days last year where he was-

n't here. He has done that for three years straight."

Although Meador said that he could not do his job without the support of the other Marines at TTECG, he also gives credit to his loving family who supports him.

"My wife Teresa, and my three boys, Glenn, Ray and Dillon, have always supported me here," said Meador. "Families, and kids especially, really have a hard time dealing with a job like this. My wife is amazing and my family has been so supportive of me and that has made such a difference for me during my time here. The hours are not the best but they have been there the whole way for me. In the end, it's the spouses that take the brunt of military service. They make a lot of sacrifices and have to do things on their own sometimes."

In June, Meador will leave the Coyote team to go to the Expeditionary Warfare School in Quantico, Va.

"He will be missed, there is no doubt about that, but nobody in the Marine Corps is irreplaceable," said Kinner. "He is already training someone to take over for him, but there may be a time where the quality of instruction isn't what it was. He is certainly a force multiplier."

"Around here there is a 'groundhog day' effect every few weeks where you get a new group of Marines who have the same general errors and lack of experience as the group before them," continued Kinner. "The sacrifice with family time and not having a lot of time off can defeat a weaker man, but he comes here and that endurance shows. He comes in and gives 100 percent for everybody who comes in, and the last FiST team he teaches will get the same attention to detail, the same compassion, the same training and care as he gave to his first one, and that's key."



CPL. BRIAN A. TUTHILL

1st Mar Div CG welcomes 2/7 home

Maj. Gen. Richard F. Natonski, commanding general, 1st Marine Division, welcomed home Marines and Sailors of 2nd Battalion, 7th Marine Regiment, from their recent deployment to Iraq Tuesday at the base theater. Natonski was joined by Sgt. Maj. Frank E. Pulley, division sergeant major, and spoke about 2/7's performance and upcoming challenges in Iraq.

'Iraqi Freedom Day' more than falling statue, says Marine

MARINE CORPS PRESS RELEASE

WASHINGTON — Three years ago, on live television, the world watched Saddam Hussein's statue fall in downtown Baghdad, but a Marine who saw it firsthand believes that image doesn't tell the full story he lived.

"It may have been a pretty amazing event to watch back home on TV, but (it) barely registers as a memory," Maj. Matthew Baker told American Forces Press Service from his present assignment on Marine Corps Air-Ground Combat Center Twentynine Palms, Calif. Baker was executive officer of the unit that pulled down the statue during Baghdad's capture after a crowd of Iraqis tried to do it on their own.

"I think it was one of many images," Baker said, recalling the days surrounding that moment in Firdos Square. "I remember things like being incredibly tired or having an explosion go off very close to me and thinking, 'Wow, that was awfully close,' or things like that — not, 'Well that was really cool. We pulled down a statue today.'"

Still, Baker said, he recognizes the falling statue has become an important image for many.

He recently spoke with a teenager who told him he believed the scene had been staged. Baker said, "He started talking about how it was amazing how the U.S. had been able to

put that whole ... thing together and bus people in." That's one of the tallest tales Baker said he's heard in a long time. "That was as spontaneous an event as you could have," he said.

On April 9, 2003, Baker's infantry unit, the 3rd Battalion, 4th Marine Regiment, was ordered to secure the Palestine Hotel, across the street from Firdos Square. "There were a bunch of Westerners there, and the fear was that they would be harmed in some way, and so we kind of departed from a methodical clearing of the city and shot forward to the vicinity of the Palestine," he said. The unit was not told that dozens of Western reporters were staying at the hotel.

While most of the battalion secured the area, Baker and his group pressed deeper into the city before returning to Firdos Square to liaise with the rest of the battalion. By that time, people had gathered around a 20-foot statue of Saddam in the center of the square, and Baker stood by to watch the scene.

"When I came up on the square, the crowd had already formed, and the tank retriever was being hooked up to the statue," he said. "It had a massive crane on it and a very powerful engine."

After the statue slid off its mounting pipes, Iraqis crowded around it and hit it with their shoes, Baker said. "They took the statue apart pretty quick, and people hauled off pieces of it."

Baker admits he's not an expert on measuring crowds, but estimated it at more than 1,000 people. "It was quite noisy because of the crowd being very excited," he said.

Outside the square, the sounds of battle continued, although no one appeared worried or took cover. "It wasn't particularly close, but the battle was still very much going on," he said.

In the following days, Baker's battalion quickly found itself changing focus to stability and support operations, he said. Their area of responsibility included several hospitals, Baghdad's city hall, the central banking district and the water and sewer bureau.

Without any military police as part of their regiment, the Marines quickly started enlisting some of the local police, encouraging them to put on uniforms and help keep citizens from looting. "It was a pretty unruly time," he said.

The unit did its best to defend the banks in the area. The Marines used Amphibious Assault Vehicles to secure the buildings one at a time, sometimes filling the vehicles with money and valuables to move them to more secure locations, he said.

At one point, one of his platoons stopped a bank robbery in progress, he said. Instead of the usual denominations of Iraqi currency, this time the captured bag of loot contained \$3.6

million in American dollars.

"I thought the great thing was [these Marines] brought \$3.6 million and just gave it to me as the XO and continued on their way again," he said. "That's kind of an example of their integrity, and just trying to help people out."

Connecting with the local population went well. "We started making friends pretty quickly with that neighborhood," Baker said. When the battalion was sent home, many of his Marines, who had learned Arabic phrases and worked with the local population to secure their homes, were concerned for the people's safety.

Baker continues to work with Marines on Twentynine Palms as deputy for Marine Corps Community Services. He helps the troops transition between deployment, their return home and new deployments. Every deployment is unique, and the mission continues, he said.

"Each subsequent deployment has its own images," and it goes far beyond images of a statue being toppled, he said.

"[Reporters] want a lasting memory of this event," he said. "That's not necessarily the way that Marines focus in on it because when you've lived the event, there are other things that are a lot more important to you."



Lance Cpl. Branden Lynch, followed by Pfc. Kenneth Strell, both with Weapons Company, 3rd Battalion, 2nd Marine Regiment take notes on possible improvised explosive devices along the IED Lane at Camp Wilson.

CPL. BRIAN A. TUTHILL



A static display of an ordnance shell and a mine lay half-buried in the sand at the Camp Wilson IED Lane.

CPL. BRIAN A. TUTHILL

Mojave Viper IED training bigger, better

CPL. BRIAN A. TUTHILL
COMBAT CORRESPONDENT

"I want you all to patrol down and observe and record what you think is a possible IED, and we'll go over it at the end."

Marines of Combined Anti-Armor Platoon, Weapons Company, 3rd Battalion, 2nd Marine Regiment, walked down the 100-meter-long simulated improvised explosive device training lane at Camp Wilson Monday as part of 3/2's Mojave Viper training. Moving in a staggered column, they quickly scribbled notes about suspicious objects they passed along the black trail of ground asphalt.

Cardboard boxes, tires, trash, discarded ammunition cans, even an abandoned car, were all suspect along the alleyway as Marines walked past and meticulously eyed them as possible threats.

The platoon gathered at the end of the lane near a three-foot-high pile of broken concrete, which hid an inert 120mm artillery shell beneath it, as their instructor reviewed with them what they had identified.

"Who saw this arty shell in the concrete pile here?" asked Staff Sgt. Bryan K. Burgett, a combat engineer with the Tactical Training Exercise Control Group who led the evolution for CAT Platoon. Most raised their hands.

"How many saw the make-shift rocket launcher pointing at you from the bushes behind us?" he asked as another instructor revealed a homemade four-tube launcher just out of sight. None raised their hands. Some shook their heads, knowing what could have happened if this scenario had played out for real in the streets of Iraq. "That's why we're out here."

Out with the old...

Marines participating in Mojave Viper will now take part in an improved and expanded version of the IED indicators and detection lane as well as review skills they need to know before taking part in the new Motorized Operations Training Package which recently replaced the convoy course exercise.

"The current IED Lane at Camp Wilson is a static display of various IEDs, where Marines gain experience recognizing IEDs and their indicators," said Gunnery Sgt. Kelly Crawford, explo-

sive ordnance disposal technician. "We try to let them know that they will get a very small indicator, if anything. But if you're not developing your senses to pick up on these things, you're not going to see them until they have already detonated."

Crawford said the IED Lane is continually updated by EOD and can be changed almost instantly from reports of other EOD teams currently serving in Iraq to give Mojave Viper participants the most accurate and up-to-date training possible.

"IEDs are so important because they are killing so many Marines and more focus needs to be put on them," said Crawford. "I tell Marines in my classes that I'm not the one who is going to save your life. You are going to save your life by being aware of these things, and you've just prevented that device from going off on you or somebody else."

In with the new...

One reason for the redesign of these portions of Mojave Viper is to provide a more structured training progression where TTECG can gauge the training's effectiveness for participating battalions. Another reason is some Marines were often lacking

See IED TRAINING, A9



Staff Sgt. Bryan K. Burgett reveals a 500-pound bomb hidden in the trunk of an abandoned car at the IED Lane at Camp Wilson.

CPL. BRIAN A. TUTHILL



Staff Sgt. Bryan K. Burgett, points out a possible improvised explosive device indicator to Marines.

CPL. BRIAN A. TUTHILL

IED TRAINING, A8

certain necessary skills before they progressed to live fire exercises.

"The convoy course did not have a building block approach to it, so now we have devised the MOTP," said Maj. Mark P. Gianotti, TTECG assistant infantry representative. "It's called a package because we now start with academic classes up front followed by the lane training, then we do the live fire later.

"Our [convoy course] debriefs all told us the same thing and that was we needed to approach this in a different manner. It's now more of a crawl, walk, run method that will set them up for success on the live fire portion of the MOTP, which is essentially the old convoy course," he said. All of this is geared to the private first class or the lance corporal straight out of the School of Infantry, the major explained.

Gianotti said Coyotes now monitor units more closely to ensure they are familiar with the skills they will need for the live fire portion of the MOTP.

Changing lanes

Lane training at Camp Wilson is conducted on a company level with platoons rotating through three different lanes at once, and one company can complete the course per day. The three lanes total five individual stations which are each about an hour and a half in length.

The IED Lane is the first lane of the training, which is broken into three different sections itself, and comes only after Marines have completed a day of classroom learning from TTECG "Coyote" controllers and EOD technician instructors.

Section 1 of Lane 1 was designed by TTECG combat engineers working with EOD and is the guided walkthrough with a Coyote down the IED indicator alley. The second section shows Marines how to

properly react to a suspected IED while on a patrol. They then move on to the third section: reacting to a detonated IED.

"The second lane was designed by our logistics section and deals with vehicle recovery and casualty evacuation considerations," said Gianotti, a Coyote with TTECG for two years.

Lane 2 also gives Marines information from Navy corpsmen on what to do if they are a first responder to an injured comrade who may need to be evacuated from the field of battle.

Lane 3 was devised by the TTECG infantry shop and is based on pre-combat checks and pre-combat inspections prior to any mission. Marines must perform practical applications of how to properly set up heavy and crew-served

weapons on vehicle mounts and prepare for combat operations.

"Machine gunners know all of this inside and out, but the ones manning the weapons may not be machine gunners and need to be taught this," said Gianotti.

Controller training

Another new aspect of the training is use of Marines from Mojave Viper battalions being trained as controllers to monitor other companies from their unit as they go through the lanes.

"The battalions who come through here will designate between a dozen and 20 controllers who we train as we put that first company through on the first day of the lane training," said Gianotti. "They will run those lanes for us as their battalion goes through them.

"Each of [the controllers] will see their lane executed three times that first day and from then on they will be teaching it, but we'll have a Coyote there for quality control as those Marines instruct each of the lanes," he said. "Our Coyotes will always be out there floating around to assist and critique the instruction."

Getting Marines to understand the value of this training is not hard, some Coyotes say, because of the significant threat IEDs pose in Iraq.

"One of the biggest things for defeating IEDs is training, knowledge and preparation, and that's what the main focus of the lane training here is on," said Gianotti.



EAF gets a facelift

Corporals Willk Marilao and Josh Rookey, both with Airfield Company, Marine Wing Support Squadron 374, wedge a connecting panel into the Expeditionary Airfield taxiway during a scheduled upgrade April 6.

CPL. BRIAN A. TUTHILL

SPORT SHORTS

INTRAMURAL
SOFTBALL

The Commanding General's Intramural Softball season is about to begin and teams are looking for players. Pre-season begins April 17 and the regular season will start April 25. Games are Tuesday and Thursday nights and open to all base personnel. Call Randy Husted 830-4092 to get in contact with a coach.

20th ANNUAL
RIDGE RUN

The 20th annual Ridge Run is scheduled to take place April 21 at 7 a.m. 5K and 8K routes are available. Race day registration will begin at 6 a.m. at the starting line immediately behind the hospital for individual racers and five-man squads. Call Lt. Henderson at 830-2474, or Lt. j.g. Nelson at 830-2029 for additional information.

LEISURE

EASTER EGG HUNT

Religious Ministries is sponsoring an Easter Egg Hunt Saturday. Come to Felix Field from 12 p.m. to 3 p.m. and play games, eat food, have fun, and find Easter eggs! No pets or alcohol will be allowed. The football field will be off limits due to re-sodding. Parental supervision is required.

AMERICAN CANCER
SOCIETY "RELAY
FOR LIFE"

There will be an American Cancer Society Relay For Life from 9 a.m. on April 29 to 9 a.m. on April 30 at Yucca Valley High School. You do not have to be there the entire 24 hours, members can sign up for time slots. Relay For Life is a community gathering where everyone can participate in the fight against cancer. Teams camp out at a local high school, park, or fairground and take turns walking or running around a track or path. Each team is asked to have a representative on the track at all times during the event, because cancer never sleeps. Relays are an overnight event, up to 24 hours in length. Relay For Life brings together millions of people to raise money to help prevent cancer, save lives, and diminish suffering from the disease. The relay brings people together from all walks of life with the common goal of eliminating cancer. For more information, contact HM2 Sjaarda at 830-2140 or 367-2324.

FIRE DEPARTMENT
OPEN HOUSE

The Combat Center Fire Department will have an Open House and Blood Drive April 21 between 10 a.m. and 2 p.m. All are welcome. Those that can be encouraged to donate blood while they are there. Everyone is invited to stop by the station to pick up fire prevention and earthquake preparedness information, and to take a quick tour of the firefighters' home away from home.

Did You Know?

The most pushups performed in one day was 46,001.

Hair today, gone tomorrow

MCCES master guns shaves her head to support ill friend



Sgt. Allan E. Magnuson takes a little off the top of Master Gunnery Sgt. Cheryl L. Gillon.

STORY & PHOTOS BY CPL. HEIDI E. LOREDO
COMBAT CORRESPONDENT

The petite Marine paced back and forth in the conference room before she finally sat down in a chair. As she heard the buzzing sound of the hair clippers, she hung her head low and closed her eyes.

On April 7, Master Gunnery Sgt. Cheryl L. Gillon, operations chief, Charlie Company, Marine Corps Communication-Electronics School, lost a level of comfort when she shaved her head completely, losing eight inches of her blonde hair.

Gillon, a Cleveland native, shaved her head to raise breast cancer awareness and to support her close friend, a Marine recently diagnosed with the disease and awaiting chemotherapy.

"She is way too young to have breast cancer," said Gillon, who will don a wig to keep with Marine Corps grooming regulations. "She's the salt of the earth, and there isn't anything I wouldn't do for her."

It was in December when 40-year-old, Staff Sgt. Diane M. Durden, supply chief, Exercise Support Division, Installation and Logistics Directorate, noticed a lump in her breast during a self-exam.

"I already had scheduled a women's health appointment, so I figured I'd bring that up at my exam," said Durden, a Fremont, Calif., native. "It was pretty scary for me. It's a common thing for women my age to find a lump because many times it's not cancer. But when I found out it was cancer it went from one extreme to 'Oh my god I'm going to die!'"

After the diagnosis, fluctuating emotions confronted Durden. She relied on support from loved ones during the emotional roller coaster.

"I was devastated. I felt really bad for her," said Gillon. "She's a healthy, vibrant, beautiful girl and she has this ugly thing in her."

Many factors can influence a woman's risk of getting breast cancer, however, Durden did not fall into any risk category and maintained a healthy lifestyle.



Staff Sgt. Diane M. Durden shaves the hair off Master Gunnery Sgt. Cheryl L. Gillon.

"It was a complete shock to me because over the past few years I've made changes in my life," said Durden, a member of the Combat Center's powerlifting team. "I stopped drinking — ran three marathons. I consider myself healthy, and that is helping me get through this. I know I'm going to recover."

Durden will undergo chemotherapy in upcoming weeks. Among the various side effects which come along with the chemical treatment is loss of hair. Gillon decided in order to make her friend feel more comfortable with her hair loss, she too would lose her hair.

On Saturday, May 6th, Gillon will race in the Komen "Race for a Cure" in Las Vegas, organized by a beneficial charity that raises money for breast cancer awareness, education, research, and support programs in the local area. To support her friend, and in order to raise money for the Susan G. Komen Breast Cancer Foundation, Gillon gave away the opportunity for contributors to shave her head.

"Wow, I don't have to be bald by myself," said Durden, who has already undergone two surgeries related to the illness. "I don't have a choice. By the end of the month my hair will fall out. It's either take medication and lose my hair or not take medication and let the cancer spread. Here she is choosing to lose all of her hair. That is an amazing sacrifice for anybody."

"I didn't do it to send a message," said Gillon. "I did it for her, for empathy. And yes, I did it to raise awareness."

Durden said she has her good and bad days. For the most part she tries to think positively with the help from her support system of family and friends. By joining forces with loved ones, Durden is determined to weather the changes together.



Staff Sgt. Diane M. Durden and Master Gunnery Sgt. Cheryl L. Gillon share a moment together after Gillon shaved her head to show her support for Durden, who was recently diagnosed with breast cancer.

HOW TO FIGHT THE BIG 'C'

CPL. HEIDI E. LOREDO
COMBAT CORRESPONDENT

The American Cancer Society reports about 212,920 women in the United States will be found to have breast cancer in 2006 and about 40,970 women will die from the disease.

Although the incidence of breast cancer-related deaths in the United States is daunting, there is hope. More than 96 percent of women who are diagnosed with breast cancer at an early stage survive more than five years.

Registered Nurse Pamela Jones, Breast and Women's Health, Robert E. Bush Naval Hospital, emphasizes that taking preventive measures reduces the risk of breast cancer. Screening and early detection improve treatment outcomes for those who are diagnosed with the disease.

"We don't get a ton of breast cancer diagnosis here because our population tends to be young,"

said Jones. "Breast cancer is generally a disease that affects women over the age of 50. The older a woman gets — the higher the risk of getting breast cancer is. There are cases when younger women are diagnosed with the illness, and it's usually more aggressive."

The earlier breast cancer is found, the better the chances the treatment will work. The goal is to find cancer before it causes symptoms. The size of the cancer and how far it has spread are the most important factors in predicting the outlook for the patient.

"The main message is all women have lumpy breasts and most women know what their breasts feel like," said Jones. "They usually diagnose their own lumps, and that's what sends them rushing to the doctor, especially if they're under 40."

Jones recommends all women over the age of 40 visit their physician for a yearly screening mam-

mogram and clinical breast examination.

"The beauty of a mammogram is that they can detect a lump before you feel it," said Jones. "Mammograms are so incredibly important to get every year. By the time you can feel a breast lump, chances are it's been there anywhere from seven to 11 years. Some are more aggressive and grow faster than others. If a woman finds a lump, there is no way that lump has been there for only a month."

"The good news is that once diagnosed at an early stage, patients have the time to make treatment decisions," said Jones. "Treatment is a very complex time that takes about a year out of your life."

Although cancer cannot be prevented, women can protect their health by detecting it early. Recognizing symptoms, getting regular check-ups, and performing self-exams are just a few ways to do this.

FACTORS THAT MAY INCREASE YOUR RISK OF BREAST CANCER

- Getting older — the older you get, the greater your risk of breast cancer
- A personal history of breast or ovarian cancer
- having a mother, daughter or sister who has had breast cancer
- having a previous biopsy showing hyperplasia or carcinoma in situ
- being young (<12 years) at the time of your first period
- starting menopause after age 55
- having inherited mutation in the BRCA1 or BRCA2 breast cancer genes
- having more than one drink of alcohol per day
- being overweight after menopause or gaining weight as an adult
- Taking birth control pills for five years or longer
- never having children
- having your first child after age 30
- currently or recently using combined estrogen and progesterone hormone replacement therapy
- being exposed to large amounts of radiation, such as having very frequent spine X-rays during scoliosis treatment or treatment for Hodgkin's disease at a young age

Headquarters Battalion rules the court



LANCE CPL. REGINA N. ORTIZ

Rose Silvas, Headquarters Battalion, prepares to serve the ball to Tanks during a match in the Commanding General's Intramural Volleyball League.

LANCE CPL. REGINA N. ORTIZ

COMBAT CORRESPONDENT

Headquarters Battalion won three matches, back-to-back, in the Commanding General's Intramural Volleyball League April 5 at the Combat Center's West Gym.

These were the last matches of the season before the playoffs, where all teams are scheduled to face off to determine the top team of this year.

The night began when Hospital stepped onto the court to match up against HQBN and ended quickly with a HQBN win, 25-7, in the first game, and 25-13, in the second game. Hospital finished the regular season with a 1-7 record.

Hospital won their first match of the season against Provost Marshal's Office, March 29.

Provost Marshal's Office didn't show up to the court the following week. They forfeited their match against Marine Corps Communication-Electronics School, bumping up the 1st Tank Battalion against HQBN double-header.

In the first match, HQBN won two out of three games. The first game was quick and painful for Tanks. Headquarters Battalion won 25-8.

In the next game, Tanks seemed to come back and take over. They took the win, 25-16. But they quickly handed the match back to HQBN, losing the third game, 15-7.

Round two began with a serve by Tanks

Commanding General's Intramural Volleyball League 2006 Team Standings Apr. 6

UNIT TEAM	WIN	LOSS
MCCES	7	1
HQBN	6	3
Tanks	5	3
Naval Hospital	1	7
PMO	1	7

going directly into the net, giving HQBN the first point within seconds of the start of the first game.

Headquarters Battalion's defense was on point as they repeatedly blocked kill attempts from Tanks.

Tanks tried to stay in the game, but the spikes by HQBN's Clayton Dooley had them diving to the ground and digging up nothing, giving HQBN the lead throughout the game.

The game ended with a HQBN victory, 25-21.

The second game started out looking like a Tanks win, but midway through the game, HQBN stepped back and unleashed Dooley to spike their way to victory.

The game ended quickly and HQBN won, 25-17.

"The games tonight were great," said HQBN's Robert Cortez. "We were all psyched about the outcome.

"There were a couple of changes we made before tonight," he continued. "A couple new players, but it didn't affect us in a negative way."

Cortez has noticed a difference in the team since the beginning of the season that might have helped their game, he said.

"We have a stronger bond now," he explained. "We almost know what each other are thinking and we can tell who and when someone is going to go for the ball."

Headquarters Battalion has high expectations for the playoffs, said Cortez.

"Anything's possible," he said. "We have a good chance of being the number one team."

Tanks felt like they finally got a challenge this season playing against HQBN, said Tanks' head coach Steven Santana.

"They played a hell of a game," he said. "It's going to be fun to play them again in the playoffs."

Santana didn't expect to lose after defeating MCCES the week prior, but knows they can come back in time for the playoffs, he said.

"We need to regain focus on the fundamentals," he explained. "We let one man beat us. That's all Headquarters has, and we'll figure out how to beat him by next week."

Intramural softball swinging into gear

The smell of cut grass, the crack of the bat, the shouts from the dugout and a pop fly snatched from the air as everybody gasps means that the Commanding General's Intramural Softball League season is about to begin.

CPL. BRIAN A. TUTHILL

COMBAT CORRESPONDENT

Seventeen teams are signed to play this year, despite the number of Combat Center units currently deployed to Iraq.

"We have 17 teams that are going to play this year, but I honestly only expected to see 10 or 12 out there," said Randy Husted, Marine Corps Community Services Sports coordinator. "This is a really good turnout."

Although teams are still gearing up for the preseason, which will be played over two days of tournaments Tuesday and Thursday, the rivalry and tension is already starting to take hold.

For Eric A. Morley, assistant head coach for 1st Tank Battalion Communications team, getting ready for the preseason may be a challenge unto itself.

"We're a little nervous going into the preseason tournament coming up here because a lot of our guys have been gone for training," said Morley, who helps manage the team of about 25 players. "So in a way, this will be like four practices for us."

Morley said that facing off against their main rivals, 1st Tank Battalion 1, will probably be the highlight of the season for his Tanks Comm players.

"We're looking forward to playing the other Tanks team," said Morley. "There has been a lot of talk about it already. We joke that we can lose every game of the season, just as long as we beat their team."

"The reason we formed the team in the first place was because here in [communications] we have a lot of individuals who want to get out and play these sports, but didn't make it on the bigger team," he said. "We're not intimidated by them, though. As long as my guys get out there and have fun playing sports, that's all that matters."

After the preseason tournament, the regular season will begin with the first games being played the night of April 25 at Felix Field.

"Our regular season will go from April 25 until July 6," said Husted. "Then there is the double elimination tournament which starts July 10 and goes until the thirteenth."

"Everything is starting off pretty well," he continued. "This looks like it's going to be a great season, and everybody is really pumped up."

To get in contact with your unit coach or for more information, call Randy Husted at 830-3227.

Tech Expo gives IT insight

SGT. ROBERT L. FISHER III
COMBAT CORRESPONDENT

Combat Center residents, government employees and contractors received the opportunity to see new innovations at the technology exposition at the Community Center Tuesday.

The show offered glimpses into the current technology behind communications solutions, information technology products, software, storage solutions, security equipment, training and data storage.

"It's a way to bring the latest technology available that cater to the Marine Corps," said Kristin Francies, tech expo promoter. "Technology is rapidly changing."

The expo is to inform and educate people on the base about current technology, said Francies.

"The expo offers visibility into business operations — to see who the customer is, and what the needs of the customer are," said Eric Peterson, with Tandberg, a leading provider of visual communication systems. "It helps us understand the customer and how we can be better partners to Marines."

Most of the vendors are government contractors, but some of the vendors show their products, hoping to catch the interest of the Marine Corps and acquire a contract, said Francies.

"[The expo helps companies] meet the right people who are interested in what we have to offer," said Greg Shaver, Imtech Corporation. Shaver said Imtech creates display systems for command and control systems.

Many of those who attended the event said they enjoyed themselves, but some had their own thoughts on improvements for the next tech expo.

"It was full of a lot of great innovations," said Capt. Leroy Hessner, 1st Tank Battalion communication and electronics maintenance officer.

While largely pleased with the expo, Hessner did have some complaints with the products offered overall.

"We're not the guys they should be talking to," said Hessner. "We need things more applicable to the division side, the mobile side."

A fellow officer with 1st Tanks, 1st Lt. William Gibbs, communication officer, agreed with Hessner.

"There were too many garrison-side communication ideas," said Gibbs. "They need more on the moveable communication ideas."

The show left vendors with ideas for new products, and consumers caught a glimpse of the latest in technological innovations as well as what the future may hold for information technology in the Marine Corps.



SGT. ROBERT L. FISHER III

Steve Jochim and Jason F. Morrison, Panasonic Computer Solutions Company, explain the strength and versatility of Panasonic's Toughbooks to Capt. Leroy Hessner and 1st Lt. William Gibbs.

Children meet Twentynine Palms wildlife at library

LANCE CPL. MICHAEL S.



LANCE CPL. MICHAEL S. CIFUENTES

Rick Boyd holds a boa constrictor as children pet and feel the harmless snake.



LANCE CPL. MICHAEL S. CIFUENTES

Rick Boyd handles a 3-month-old Great Horned Owl for children aboard the Combat Center to see.

2006 Western Division Rifle and Pistol Match Results

Wilcox Range Complex
Camp Pendleton, Calif
March 3-31

Six competitors represented the Marine Air Ground Task Force Training Command this year in the 2006 Western Division Rifle and Pistol Matches.

Individual Rifle Match

- Chief Warrant Officer Clint J. Bickle earned his 1st Bronze Medal bringing his career competitive rifle points to 30. He was awarded the Distinguished Rifle Marksman Shield during a ceremony at the end of the competition.
- Staff Sgt. Brea A. Witt earned her 3rd Bronze Medal.

Individual Pistol Match

- Chief Warrant Officer Bickle earned 2nd Gold Medal. He was awarded the Distinguished Pistol Shot Shield during the end ceremony. He is now double distinguished.
- Gunnery Sgt. Tracy D. Coyle earned his 4th Bronze Medal.
- Staff Sgt. Witt earned her 5th Bronze Medal.

Rifle Team Match

- MAGTFTC's team finished in second place behind Marine Corps Recruit Depot San Diego.

Pistol Team Match

- MAGTFTC's team finished in second place behind Marine Corps Recruit Depot San Diego.

