

Serving the MCAGCC
Community at
Twentynine Palms, Calif.

VOL. 52 NO. 17
April 28, 2006



MIKE BATTERY, A3

OBSERVATION POST



IED AWARENESS, A5

BULK RATE
U.S. Postage
PAID
29 Palms, CA
Permit No. 8

THIS ISSUE

A4 – Sgt. Major of the Marine Corps

B1 – Band in La Quinta

B2 – Ridge Run

HOT TOPICS

CALLING ALL MOTIVATED

SERGEANTS. THE CORPORALS COURSE NEEDS YOU!

The next MCAGCC/MAGTFTC Corporals Course will take place from 3-19 May. Cut off for student registration is 25 April, but we are still searching for motivated instructors. There will be a 1 p.m. meeting today in the Headquarters Bn. classroom, Bldg. 1457, for any sergeants or staff sergeants interested in having a positive impact on the future of the Corps. Volunteers should have attended at least one resident PME Academy and need not be present for the entire course schedule. Course subjects that need instructors are: Drill; Land Navigation; History, Customs and Traditions; Leadership; Counselling; and Substance Abuse Prevention among others.

For more information about student enrollment, contact Debbie Watts, 830-7087.

For more information about being an instructor, contact Gunnery Sgt. Cox, 830-3760 or 641-2268.

TAX CENTER STILL OPEN FOR TAXPAYERS ON AN EXTENSION

The official tax season is over. If you served in a combat zone, you have a minimum of 180 days after leaving the combat zone to file your tax return. This extension allows you to file your return, pay taxes and take other actions with the IRS with no penalties or interest. You may elect to have your nontaxable combat pay included in earned income if this increases your earned income credit. The tax office is located at the Village Center, Bldg. 1551 is still open to assist you. Office hours are 7:30-11:00 a.m. and 1-3 p.m. (Closed 11-1) Monday-Friday. It is recommended that appointments be scheduled by calling 830-4829. 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 blank check showing your bank routing and account numbers. A joint tax return refund must be deposited into a joint banking account.

COMING NEXT ISSUE

• Delta Co. 3rd AAV Bn. Memorial

• Iraqi roleplayers

• SMP Volunteers

THIS DAY IN MARINE CORPS HISTORY

28 April, 1993

The last A-6E Intruder departed from Marine Corps service as the F/A-18D Hornet was phased in.

President Bush makes history at the Combat Center

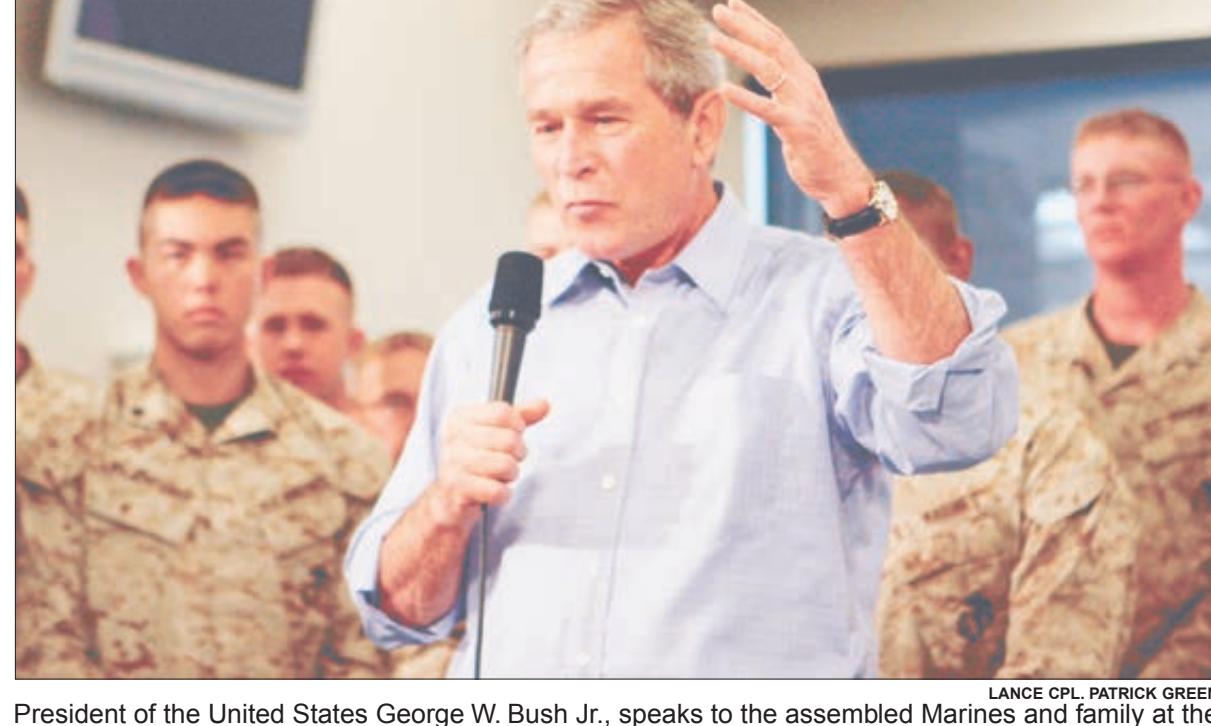
COMPILED BY MCAGCC PUBLIC AFFAIRS

President George Bush visited with Marines, Sailors and their families Sunday at the Combat Center as a part of his three-day tour through Southern California. Not only was this a notable visit by the commander in chief for residents here, it was also the first visit by a U.S. president in the Combat Center's 53 year history.

The president's Marine One UH-60 Blackhawk helicopter landed on the Combat Center's parade field near the Protestant Chapel where his morning was scheduled to begin with a church service. His next stop was the mess hall, where the president stood in line with the troops, ate lunch with them and their families and gave a short speech thanking them for standing up during the country's time of need.

"Because of your service, we're laying the foundation of peace for a generation of Americans to come," he told the gathered servicemembers and their families. "These are historic times, and your service makes me incredibly proud."

During his short address, President Bush also



LANCE CPL. PATRICK GREEN
President of the United States George W. Bush Jr., speaks to the assembled Marines and family at the 7th Marines chow hall.

shared his personal feelings about the war in Iraq.

"A lot of times people ask me about my attitude about things, and here's my attitude — *the only way we can lose in Iraq is if we lose our nerve*," he said. "*I'm not losing my nerve, and I know that the United States Marine Corps will not lose their nerve, either*."

One of the Marines who attended the lunch with the president was Lt. Col. Douglas Fairfield, commanding officer of 3rd Battalion, 11th Marine Regiment.

"The Marines and Sailors I spoke with were impressed that he took the time in the mess hall to

shake every hand and get a picture with everyone there," he said. "Our president is right on the mark. It is no accident that the third verse of our Marines Hymn includes the words, 'In many a strife we've fought for life and never lost our nerve.'

"I'm encouraged that our president shares our commitment," Fairfield said.

From the mess hall, the presidential motorcade drove back to the Combat Center parade field where he departed to the waves of many Marines, Sailors and family members gathered behind the barricades located near the Catholic Chapel.



CPL. HEIDI E. LOREDO
A Marine places a kevlar on top of an inverted rifle during a memorial ceremony April 21, to honor 13 Marines from 2nd Battalion, 7th Marine Regiment who died during their deployment to Iraq.



CPL. HEIDI E. LOREDO
Following the ceremony, the Marines took the dog tags off the rifles and gave them to the families.



CPL. HEIDI E. LOREDO
Families gather by the memorial to remember their Marines.

"I have been in the company of heroes..."

2/7 memorializes 13 fallen

CPL. HEIDI E. LOREDO
COMBAT CORRESPONDENT

Before leaving home for his second tour to Iraq, Staff Sgt. Daniel Clay left a letter with his family and an instruction to open it only in the event of his death. Clay was killed in action in Iraq on Dec. 1, 2005.

"But here is something tangible," wrote Clay. "What we have done in Iraq is worth any sacrifice. Why? Because it was our duty...Without duty, life is worthless."

Clay and 12 other Marines from 2nd Battalion, 7th Marine Regiment, who perished during their deployment to Iraq while performing their duties as Marines, were honored at a memorial service April 21 in the presence of their families and brothers-in-arms. The War Dogs deployed to Iraq for the second time in July and returned to Twentynine Palms late January.

"Every Marine we honor here this morning was a great and selfless man drawn to the Corps by a sense of duty," said Lt. Col. Joseph A. L'Etoile, commanding officer, 2/7. "A duty they were faithfully and bravely performing when they were taken by the enemy, an enemy that attacks hope

and the human spirit."

The first casualty the battalion suffered was Pfc. Ramon Romero, 19, of Huntington Park, Calif., Aug. 22, 2005, when the vehicle he was in was struck by an improvised explosive device near Fallujah. Romero's mother said her son aspired to study criminology after his enlistment and wanted to become a police officer.

The lives of two other Marines were taken by the enemy Nov. 12 from an IED when they engaged enemy forces in Al Amiriyah. Lance Cpl. David A. Mendez Ruiz, 20, of Cleveland, Ohio, was on his second tour to Iraq. The youngest of eight children was born in Guatemala City, Guatemala, and moved to the United States when he was 6 years old.

Lance Cpl. Scott A. Zubowski, 20, of Manchester, Ind., was on his second tour to Iraq. Prior to his departure, Zubowski married his high school sweetheart, Klancey Eberly.

Disaster struck the battalion on Dec. 1, in one of the worst tragedies to occur to a Combat Center unit. Ten Marines died while on patrol from an IED fashioned from several large artillery shells.

Gone but not forgotten are:

- Lance Cpl. Adam W. Kaiser, 19, of Naperville, Ill.
- Lance Cpl. Andrew G. Patten, 19, of Byron, Ill.
- Lance Cpl. Holmason, 20, of Surprise, Ariz.

• Lance Cpl. Robert A. Martinez, 20, of Splendora, Texas

• Lance Cpl. Craig N. Watson, 21, of Union City, Mich.

• Lance Cpl. David A. Huhn, 24, of Portland, Mich.

• Lance Cpl. Scott T. Modeen, 24, of Hennepin, Minn.

• Cpl. Anthony T. McElveen, 20, of Little Falls, Minn.

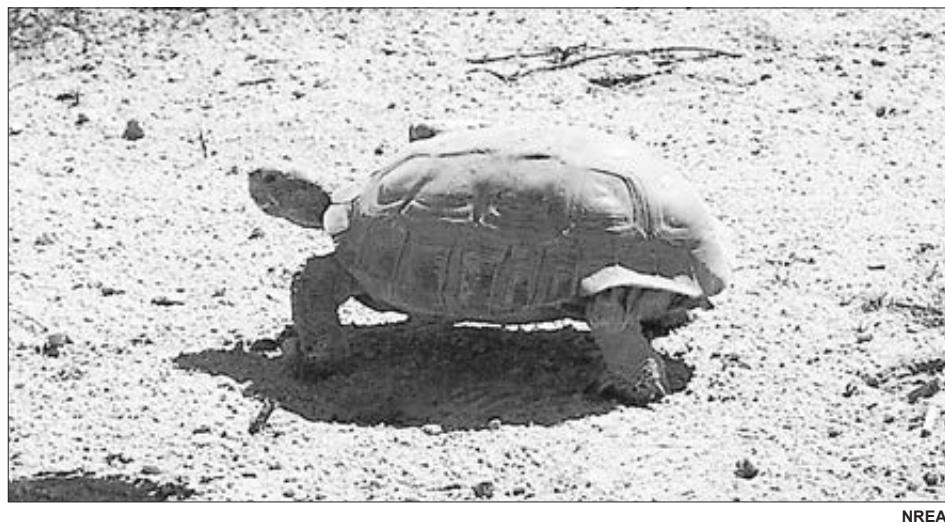
• Sgt. Andy A. Stevens, 29, of Tomah, Wis.

• Staff Sgt. Daniel J. Clay, 27, of Pensacola, Fla.

"When these Marines enlisted or reenlisted America was already at war," said Letoile. "The terrible nature of the war on terrorism was well known, and the list of fallen Americans was already long. They volunteered to place themselves between the murderous and the innocent. They accepted the bombs, mortars the snipers and the cost of protecting a vulnerable people."

The battalion believes their sacrifices were not without gain. They entered an area of operations of 50 square kilometers in Fallujah during its reconstruction phase and made it tougher for terrorists to operate. Additionally, their partners in the Iraqi Army and Iraqi Security Forces continued to make

See MEMORIAL, A8

REACH OUT 29 PRESENTS

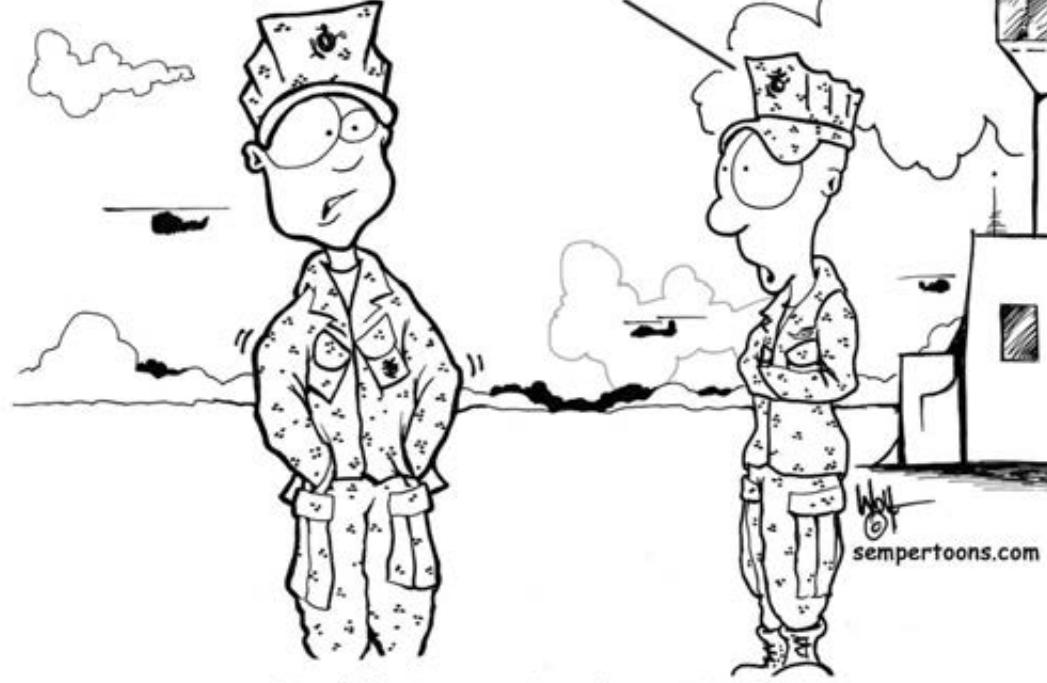
NREA

Spring is here and we tend to get out more with the warmer weather. Let's make the most of our desert experience by being on the lookout for our tortoise neighbors. On Wednesday, May 3, 2006, Rae Parker from Joshua Tree Tortoise Rescue will be presenting a program entitled "Turned onto Tortoises" at the Senior Center in Twentynine Palms at 12:30 p.m. Come and learn more about this organization and how you can be involved in this worthwhile endeavor.

Sempertoons

By Gunnery Sgt. Charles Wolf

"Looks like you forgot to put on your wings today, guess you can't put your hands in your pockets, huh?"

**Tuff times in the Air Wing**

C.O.P. Corner

Community Oriented Policing

The proactive voice of crime prevention



Presented by the Provost Marshal's Office Crime Prevention Section

Domestic Violence Prevention

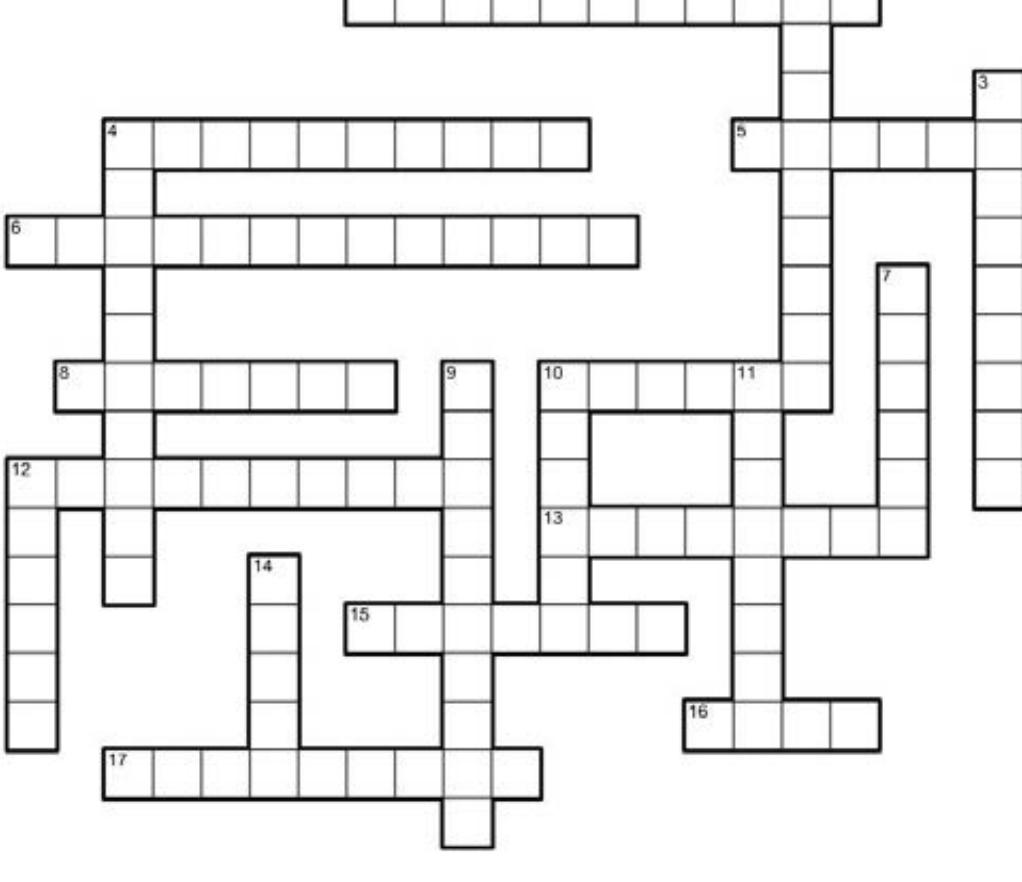
Domestic Violence is a pattern of behavior in an intimate relationship where one partner seeks power and control over another through intimidation, coercion, violence or the threat of violence. The abuse may be emotional, mental, verbal, physical, sexual, spiritual or economic. It often becomes more frequent and severe over time. Domestic violence is a crime and can be punishable under the Uniformed Code of Military Justice and applicable state laws. According to <http://www.endabuse.org>, a recent study shows nearly one-third of American women reported being victims of domestic violence, however, domestic violence is not limited to women being the victim. Though women are five to eight times more likely to be victims of domestic violence, men are also victimized. Domestic violence can have a severe impact on the whole family, especially children who have witnessed or been involved in an incident.

For more information on Domestic Violence go to <http://www.endabuse.org>.

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

<p>MCAGCC ARRIVE ALIVE A Combat Center Car Company 367-7433 Top's Taxi 361-6748</p> <p><i>Budweiser</i> WE ALL MAKE A DIFFERENCE THANKS FOR DRINKING RESPONSIBLY</p> <p>Marines, Sailors, and cab drivers: MCAGCC will reimburse ANY licensed cab company for transportation to the Main Gate, Marine Corps Air Ground Combat Center. Drivers, please legibly record information from your fare's military ID card. Thank you for participating.</p>	<p>MCAGCC ARRIVE ALIVE A Combat Center Car Company 367-7433 Top's Taxi 361-6748</p> <p><i>Budweiser</i> WE ALL MAKE A DIFFERENCE THANKS FOR DRINKING RESPONSIBLY</p>	<p>Name _____ ID # _____ Signature _____ Pick up at _____ Customer _____ Driver _____ Date/Time _____ Destination _____ Total fee _____</p>
---	---	---

"U" WORDS**ACROSS**

- 1 Without thought, feeling or physical awareness.
- 4 Carried out in secret
- 5 Disclose or reveal
- 6 A freshman or sophomore at a high school or college
- 8 Not common or ordinary
- 10 The seventh planet from the sun
- 12 Not changed, modified or affected
- 13 A portable device to shelter from rain or sunlight
- 15 Tense; nervous; outraged; angry; strict
- 16 Displeasing to the eye or very unattractive
- 17 Naked

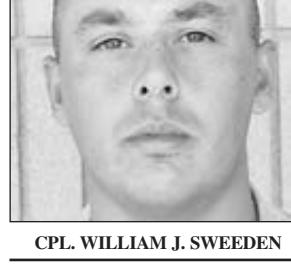
DOWN

- 2 Sharing the same opinions or views
- 3 A proposal or statement of terms and may imply a threat or penalty if not taken.
- 4 In a place beneath
- 7 An ideally perfect place.
- 9 One who arranges a the burial or cremation of the dead; mortician
- 10 Not honored or celebrated
- 11 One expected to lose the game
- 12 One appointed to rule in baseball
- 14 An inflammatory lesion, internal or on the body, or a continuing source of corruption

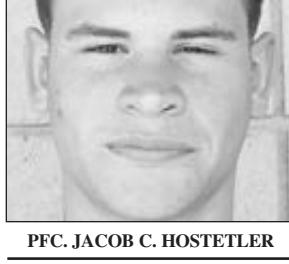
[Solutions on A5]

Centerspeak**"What are you going to get your mother for Mother's Day?"**

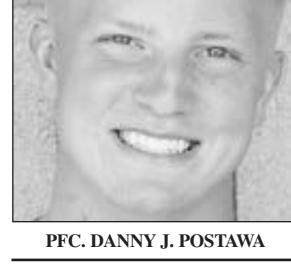
Opinions expressed in Centerspeak are not necessarily those of the OBSERVATION POST, the Marine Corps or Department of Defense.



KILO COMPANY, 3/4



9TH COMM. BATTALION



9TH COMM. BATTALION



CHARLIE COMPANY, MCAGCC

What's on your mind?

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

"I'm going to send my mom and all the women in my family some flowers and a card."

"I sent my mother an early Mothers Day gift. It's a Mother's Medal of Honor that I bought from Harris Jewelers."

"I'm going to send some gifts to my mother. I'm a mother myself too, so I am going to spoil myself all day."

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

Brig. Gen. Douglas M. Stone
Capt. Chad D. Walton
1st Lt. Christy L. Kercheval
Gunnery Sgt. Chris W. Cox
Sgt. Jennie E. Haskamp
Michael J. Armstrong
Sgt. Robert L. Fisher III
Cpl. Evan M. Eagan
Cpl. Heidi E. Loredo
Cpl. Brian A. Tuthill
Lance Cpl. Michael S. Cifuentes
Lance Cpl. Regina N. Ortiz

The OBSERVATION POST is published by Hi-Desert Publishing, a private firm in no way connected with the Department of Defense or the United States Marine Corps, under exclusive written contract with the Marine Corps Air Ground Combat Center. This commercial enterprise newspaper is an authorized publication for members of the military services. Contents of the OBSERVATION POST are not necessarily the official views of, or endorsed by, the United States Government, the DoD, or the United States Marine Corps. The appearance of advertising in this publication, including inserts and supplements, does not constitute endorsement by the Department of Defense or Hi-Desert Publishing of the services advertised.

Everything advertised in this publication shall be made available for purchase, use or patronage without regard to race, color, religion, sex, national origin, age, marital status, physical handicap, political affiliation, or any other nonmerit factor of the purchaser, user or patron. Editorial content is prepared by the Public Affairs Office, MCAGCC, Twentynine Palms, Calif. 92278. All photos, unless otherwise indicated are Official USMC Photos. Questions can be directed to the Public Affairs Office, located in Bldg. 1417, during normal working hours at (760) 830-6213 or FAX (760) 830-5474. The OBSERVATION POST is made with 60-percent recycled paper.

OBSERVATION POST

3/11 Mike Battery lights up Niland

LANCE CPL. MICHAEL S. CIFUENTES

COMBAT CORRESPONDENT

Hailing from the harsh and barren terrain of the Combat Center, Mike Battery, 3rd Battalion, 11th Marine Regiment, composed of roughly 100 Marines, trekked to a similarly desolate and unwelcoming desert of southern California to participate in the four-week Weapons and Tactics Instructors course March 24 to April 21.

The battery of artillerymen and logistical servicemen brought with them, along with their convoy, five M777 Lightweight Howitzers, crew served weapons and their infantry skills to Niland, Calif., neighboring the Salton Sea.

Their mission was to provide artillery support to Marine pilots who are going through WTI, which is basically a Marine aviation schoolhouse, said Capt. Kevin M. Stout, commanding officer of Mike Battery.

Squadrons throughout the Marine Corps send pilots to WTI for training on close-fire combat and call-for-fire missions. The pilot's mission after the four-week evolution is to return to their unit and teach the latest on weapons and tactics to other pilots in their squadron, added Stout, a Martinsville, Ind., native.

"Also from the squadrons were forward observers riding along in the cockpit with the pilots," said Stout. "Those FOs have been trained on how to call for fire. A lot of our missions were run by them. We'd mark their targets with artillery rounds, and they'd come through air and drop ordnance on them."

Mike Battery's mission was to provide artillery support when students needed it, said Stout. The battery fired rounds nine days in support of WTI out of the 29 days they were there.

"With only nine training days out of the 29-day evolution, you have to come up with your own things to do," said Stout.

The battery also trained for firing missions not in support of WTI, as well as sharpened their infantry skills.

"We did three separate emergency fire mission shoots," said Stout. "There were times when the battery convoyed down a road and the XO [executive officer] of the battery would give a fire for effect call. We'd just basically pull over to the side of the road, about 10 to 15 meters out, set up the [weapon systems] and get ready to shoot. In the final emergency fire mission, we had rounds out of the gun 14 minutes after the mission was called. It went really well considering we haven't done this before."

"From there we rolled into a hand grenade throw," said Stout. "Each Marine of the battery received one live hand grenade and two blue bodies [practice grenades]. We spent half of the day on grenade exercises and then moved on to a 50 caliber [heavy machine gun] shoot. Every Marine in the battery fired 100 rounds of 50 caliber ammunition. We used a brand new sport

utility vehicle for a target, which our Marines lit on fire after shooting the gas tank."

The battery then transitioned into a three-day training period for squad leaders. The battery broke down into squads and trained for live-fire and maneuvering drills. They executed the drill successfully under horrible, windy weather conditions, said Stout.

"Our purpose in the field as artillerymen is to try to make timely and accurate impacts on targets, and to make targets for air support," said Sgt. Michael E. Gilliland, a 23-year-old artilleryman with Mike Battery, from Chula Vista, Calif. "We are also trained to do infantry work. When we are not firing rounds downrange from our guns, we must be prepared as grunts [infantry-men]. We're always up for any call."

During Operation Iraqi Freedom I, Mike Battery deployed to Iraq as an artillery unit, during OIF II, they deployed as a convoy security unit, and during OIF III, their mission was detainee operations.

"We can do most infantry tasks," said Gilliland, "but, not anyone can be a cannoneer and do our job."

This training evolution was very important to the battery, said Stout.

"We have a lot of time to train basically how we want to train," said Stout. "WTI in itself is a pretty undemanding shoot for us as far as 'need.' We shot about as many rounds for WTI that we normally would do in a two- or three-day training exercise back in Twentynine Palms. The best part about coming out here was the opportunity to train the Marines in areas we felt we needed to work on — one of them being squad live-firings."

"It's easy to say every Marine is a rifleman, but unless you practice it, that's usually not the case," continued Stout. "With all the provisional missions artillery has been tasked with, such as convoy security, detainee operations and being a provisional rifle company, there needs to be some level of expertise in the battery to take the fight to the enemy. That's the biggest training I believe we got out of this."

"We became pretty proficient at the squad level before we went to Iraq this past year," added Stout. "But it can be easily forgotten if you don't train. They [Mike Battery] certainly have a hard job. Infantry skills is one of the things that the Marine Corps says every Marine can do. But in reality, if you don't train for it then you won't be able to execute it well."

Along with the roughly 300 rounds they shot in support of WTI and the infantry training, the battery also executed their own firing missions. They shot over 700 rounds in support of battery objectives, said Stout.

"Right now we're manning five howitzers," said Stout. "Each howitzer is supposed to be chiefed by a staff NCO [noncommissioned officer]. Right now, as gun chiefs, we have one staff sergeant, three sergeants, and two corporals running their sections. Over the last five months we shot about 3,500 artillery rounds, and we've done so with a crew that's understaffed."

"The reason why this battery is so successful is because of the leadership that is exhibited by the NCOs in particular," said Stout. "I highlighted the guns platoon, but we have NCOs in every [element] — from motor transportation to communications and supply. This is a well-built team with a lot of talent in a lot of different positions. That is why we are capable of doing the great things we do."



LANCE CPL. MICHAEL S. CIFUENTES
Gun 4, Mike Battery, 3rd Battalion, 11th Marine Regiment shoots 100-pound rounds from their M777 Lightweight Howitzer during a firing mission in Niland, Calif., April 18.



Pfc. Rudy J. Gonzales, a 19-year-old artilleryman with Mike Battery, 3rd Battalion, 11th Marine Regiment, and a Bakersfield, Calif., native, cools the breach of Gun 5's M777 Lightweight Howitzer moments after shooting several rounds April 19 during a Weapons Tactics Instruction shoot in Niland, Calif.

"When I was a lance corporal, it was like this..."

Corps' top enlisted Marine visits units training and discusses concerns with all enlisted ranks

CPL. HEIDI E. LOREDO

COMBAT CORRESPONDENT

The Marine Corps' top enlisted leader visited the Combat Center Tuesday to view pre-deployment training and to speak with Marines and Sailors.

Sergeant Maj. John Estrada visited training grounds and declared his pride in the Marines and Corpsman preparing to deploy and those remaining behind to support. However, he also spoke to staff noncommissioned officers and noted his disappointment in the quality of life for single Marines living in the barracks.

"We spent much of our resources to take care of our married Marines," said Estrada to a group of senior enlisted leaders during lunch. "What we didn't realize was that caused us to neglect our single Marines. The commandant and I expect all of you to be advocates for those single Marines in the barracks."

The sergeant major referred to an opinion piece in the Marine Corps Times about the barracks living conditions written by a Marine stationed here and encouraged the senior leaders to drop the old mentality of the Corps. The article said single Marines are being treated unfairly with priority going to married Marines.

"If you're the only Marine in the barracks who can be found on a weekend and the officer of the day needs a duty clerk, guess who is 'voluntold,'" wrote the Marine. "The [officer of the day] is not going to call the homes of



CPL. HEIDI E. LOREDO

The sergeant major of the Marine Corps, Sgt. Maj. John Estrada, visits with Marines during Mohave Viper April 26. Among the various topics discussed by the sergeant major, Estrada discussed the quality of life for single Marines and pushed for better treatment.

married Marines to ask them to report for duty; he's going to go to the barracks to find the first Marine he can."

The writer continued about how married

Marines have the luxury to live in private quarters and come Friday are never inspected for field day; nor kept up to the same standards as those who live in the barracks.

"Those are the things we need to address immediately because the Marines we have today are smarter than when we came in," said Estrada to the leaders. "Some of their expectations are a lot higher than ours as they should be. We need to treat them a little better, and I need your help with that."

"If the plumbing goes out in housing maintenance fixes it right away," said Estrada. "It's a different story when something breaks in the barracks."

Lance Cpl. Mike E. Billy, barracks manager, Alpha Company, Headquarters Battalion, agrees the barracks are in desperate need of help, and anything wrong within the rooms should be reported immediately to the barracks manager or S-3 shop.

Billy said a Marine should contact their barracks manager, who would submit a work request via the Maxio system, which Facilities Maintenance Division aboard the base uses.

Once submitted, a request should normally fixed or otherwise addressed within three business days, but because of other FMD commitments around the Combat Center, work may take up to a week to be fixed, he said.

Estrada said the Marine Corps is changing and leaving the dinosaur way of thinking behind. The change will affect single Marines who make up approximately 55 percent of the Marine Corps. The commandant of the Marine Corps tripled funding to \$150 million to ensure adequate barracks around the corps and made the quality of life for single Marines one of his top priorities.

After touring the range facilities and Main-side, Estrada ended his visit aboard the Combat Center by speaking to enlisted Marines of all ranks to pass guidance and answer questions.

1st Tanks Marines returns home after third deployment

LANCE CPL. REGINA N. ORTIZ

COMBAT CORRESPONDENT

Family and friends waited anxiously at the Combat Center's Victory Field for the Marines and Sailors of 1st Tank Battalion, TOW Platoon, Headquarters and Service Company, to come home April 19.

After waiting well into the evening, the crowd grabbed their welcome home signs and moved into the West

Gym to wait as night fell over the field. Family members climbed the bleachers and shared a giant roll of tape to adorn the basketball court's bare walls with their signs and pictures.

"We've been waiting a long time for this," said Dorothy Delaroi, mother of Cpl. Ryan Delaroi, as she taped up one of two signs she and her husband made for his return.

"We're so proud of him and we can't wait to see him!"

said Kenneth Delaroi, Dorothy's husband.

Although the wait was long, the crowd was cheerful and friendly, and as patient as they could be, until more than 50 Marines and Sailors of 1st Tanks rolled into their arms 15 minutes past midnight.

Tess, an 11 year old golden retriever, traveled with the Sears family from Upland, Calif., to greet her best friend, Cpl. Brian Sears.

The two have been best friends since Sears was 11

years old, Sears said.

Tess' tail wagged and she tugged on her collar when she recognized Sears in the sea of desert camouflage utilities.

This was the second return of the week for 1st Tanks. On April 17, the Combat Center welcomed home more than 100 Marines and Sailors from Bravo Company and Scout Platoon.

The Marines and Sailors who returned last week just finished a seven-month stint in Iraq for the unit's third deployment in support of Operation Iraqi Freedom.

Bravo Co. and Scout Platoon served with Regimental Combat Team 7 for most of their deployment, while TOW Platoon served with RCT 5 and 8.

These Marines and Sailors

conducted security patrols along some of the most dangerous main supply routes through Al Asad and Fallujah, said 1st Lt. Adam Johnson, 1st Tanks' adjutant.

Leaving that behind to be reunited with loved ones is weight lifted off their shoulders, explained Lance Cpl. Dana Mullins, native of Jerome, Idaho.

"This is a great feeling," he said, as he held his 4 month old son, Tegan, for the first time. "It was hard to leave my wife by herself, but even harder to leave her while she was pregnant."

Mullins' wife, Tessa, just began her pregnancy when he left for his third deployment with the unit.

"It was hard to see him go," said Tessa. "He missed

the birth and the first months of his life, so they have a lot of catching up to do."

Mullins will spend the next few weeks getting to know his son and learning to be a daddy alongside his shipmates as they return to their lives at home.



LANCE CPL. REGINA N. ORTIZ
Dorothy Delaroi tapes up a sign she made to welcome home her son, Cpl. Ryan Delaroi, from a seven-month deployment with 1st Tanks.

IED Awareness Day gives civilians first-hand perspective

Ideas to help improve tactics, technologies

CPL. BRIAN A. TUTHILL

COMBAT CORRESPONDENT

In the small, dusty desert village of Wadi Al Sahara, a foot patrol snakes the streets under watchful eyes. The group of 10 looks around anxiously as they pass numerous threatening windows, doors and blind corners.

The repetitive drumming of machine gun fire can be heard in the distance, while Arabic voices float on the wind. They know they are not alone. Suddenly, chaos erupts.

An improvised explosive device blasts to their left. Another deafening explosion to their right reverberates through their bodies. The sound of gunfire becomes more intense as they press on through the tight, narrow alleys.

Finally, a clearing, but a rocket propelled grenade nearly misses them, impacting nearby. Bloody victims of a firefight scream and fall near them while a vehicle-borne IED detonates in a ball of flame.

Then suddenly it ends. The chaos subsides. This battlefield was actually held at the Combat Center's Range 200 training area and was the culmination of a specially designed tour for 84 guests who took part in the IED Awareness Day rehearsal April 20.

"For the rehearsal day, we invited friends and family, directrories, retirees, as well as local dignitaries, Marines and spouses to come out," said Lt. Col. Raymond Liddy, G-3, who served as the action officer for the event.

Both the rehearsal day and the two event days included a full schedule. Visitors were broken in to four groups named after Iraqi cities and rotated through different stations during the tour.

Before splitting up, all were greeted by Brig. Gen. Douglas M. Stone, Combat Center commanding general, and received information on IEDs as well as desert safety.

The stations included a guided walkthrough of a static display of IEDs by Explosive Ordnance Disposal Marines, an MRE (meal ready to eat) lunch and the Virtual Combat Convoy Trainer, where Marines go on a simulated vehicle convoy and learn to react to various threats.

The "live fire" portion of the training had visitors in flak jackets and helmets riding through the Prospect training area and Range 205 in the back of seven-ton trucks while a tank cleared a path for the convoy as Marines took out silhouette targets with small arms fire.

Guests were also greeted with a blast as a live demonstration of a daisy chain of 155mm artillery shells were detonated hundreds of meters away. They were also given the opportunity to feel the blast of a single 155mm round from behind a sand wall which was exploded only 80 meters away from the group.

The final event was the IED Lane at Range 200 where the tour groups walked through the "city" and saw how intense close-quarters patrols can be with an added IED threat.

"The rehearsal day was a success," said Liddy, who reviewed much of the feedback received from guests that day. "We had everyone provide feedback about their time with us and overall it was good criticism. The rehearsal also gave us the ability to finesse our timeline down and make sure things ran smoothly."

The actual IED Awareness Days, which took place Tuesday and Thursday, featured an identical schedule for a crowd of 140

and 75 people, respectively. These days were geared at helping to develop new ways to battle the IED threat by getting advice and new ideas from major industries, said Liddy.

Representatives from a broad spectrum of companies came to the Combat Center for those two days to observe the IED threat environment first hand and in turn, give suggestions on what their company, or the Department of Defense itself, could do to help defeat IEDs, perhaps the biggest threat to coalition forces in Iraq.

Ideas from each IED Awareness Day will be submitted to the Joint IED Defeat Task Force, which helps devise new strategies and adapt new technologies to battle the ever-changing threat, said Liddy.

"A lot of these people have never been to the desert, never been aboard a military base, have never seen Marines train and don't know what an up-armored Humvee looks like," he said.

"This gives them an opportunity to come down and learn about the IED threat environment."

Liddy said the Combat Center's unique role in training Marine units with Mojave Viper predeployment training gives them the opportunity to fully immerse someone into that environment.

"I hope that it does two things – gives a better understanding and better motivates companies to help with IEDs and gives those not currently involved with defense an overview and understanding as well as motivates them," he said.

For a few participants who are spouses of Combat Center Marines, the exposure to the realities of Iraq's dangers were not entirely comforting.

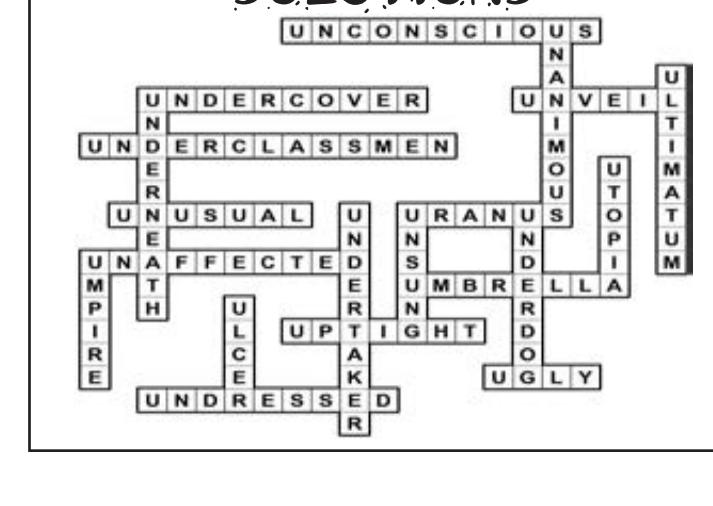
"I thought today was incredible," said Amy Rafferty, whose husband is a "Coyote" controller for Mojave Viper assigned to the Tactical Training Exercise Control Group. "It was extremely informative, and it gave me a greater understanding of my husband's job."

"What left the biggest impression on me would be the IED lane," said Rafferty. "It's scary to think they are just trying do their daily business and there are so many things that could be an IED. I feel more caution should be put out to wives because it may be too much information for them. Ignorance is bliss sometimes."

Although the realism may be intense, this accurate portrayal of conditions in Iraq is necessary for Marines to train, as well as give guests participating in the IED Awareness Day a realistic view so they can better help to defeat the IED threat and save lives.



CPL. BRIAN A. TUTHILL
A daisy chain of four 155mm artillery shells produces a towering dust plume as they explode 800 meters from bystanders during the IED Awareness Day Rehearsal April 20.



Marines make final boarding on 'Soul Train'

CPL. ANTONIO ROSAS

1ST MARINE DIVISION

CAMP AL QA'IM, Iraq — The Marines and Sailors boarded the train and were ready for its final departure at 9 p.m.

This train, however, was going nowhere.

The Camp Al Qa'im Chapel, or "Soul Train" — a name adopted by the 1st Battalion, 7th Marine Regiment — is an Iraqi passenger boxcar converted into a chapel and was decommissioned as the camp chapel on April 10.

A newly constructed chapel for the battalion marked the end of the Soul Train's nearly three-year stretch as a house of prayer.

The boxcar served as a chapel for many Marine and U.S. Army units that passed through the camp since Coalition

Forces made their push to Baghdad in 2003.

Due to the boxcar's small size, Marines here say they decided to build a new, and larger, chapel to house an increasing number of worshippers.

"The soul train was pretty small," said Navy Lt. Richard A. Townes, 1st Battalion, 7th Marines chaplain. "Still, many Marines had strong emotional ties to it. They loved its uniqueness."

After two deployments to this region along the Syrian border, some of the battalion's Marines gave the old box car a second nickname — "Holy Roller."

Whether called "Soul Train" or "Holy Roller," the mention of this makeshift chapel sends many of the unit's Marines into grandiose

recollections of their history with the facility.

"I remember seeing a Marine from my old platoon get baptized there," said Chief Warrant Officer 2 Peter O. Parker, the battalion's gunner. "I also remember an Iraqi make a profession of faith and get baptized there, too."

A house of worship for many people of different faiths, the boxcar served not only American service members but civilians and Iraqis as well.

On the day of its decommissioning, service members shuffled inside the cramped quarters, sitting on wooden benches which have replaced the box car's original bucket seats. The large windows have been boarded up with plywood and an altar has been built at one end of the boxcar.

Stuffed inside the box car's

confined quarters, Marines and sailors gathered for the "Soul Train's" final religious service.

"It was cramped in there, but once the service began it provided a good focus for prayer," said Parker, 39, a Woodson, Texas native. "It was a great place to stand in the presence of God."

Parker, an ordained southern Baptist minister, conducted services there and recalled his first religious service in the boxcar, which is believed to be more than 40 years old.

"When you walk in you know you're stepping into a piece of history," Parker said.

With the newly built St. Michael's chapel merely a few yards from the railcar, service members can now enjoy a little more elbowroom and privacy, said Townes, 45.

Townes cites the railcar's small space as an inconvenience to those who need to speak with the unit's chaplain one-on-one.

"My job requires me to have 100-percent confidentiality," said Townes, of Brookings, S.D. "In order for that to happen I needed a good counseling facility where I can meet privately with people."

Townes is happy about the new facility, which doubles the space of his old office, he said.

Though the new chapel is appreciated by the Marines here, religious services can be held just about anywhere, said Townes.

Since the birth of America, U.S. military chaplains have held religious services in the midst of combat, offering sacrament, prayers and scrip-



CPL. ANTONIO ROSAS

Wooden benches served as seating for U.S. service members and other worshippers who worshipped in "Soul Train" for nearly three years.

ture readings in a variety of tactical environments.

"When you're out on the road, the back of the humvee is the altar," said Townes.

The railcar was just another location Townes added to his list of unconventional places to conduct church service, he said.

"The main focus is to take the word of God out to the Marines to the different battle positions," said the seven-year Navy veteran.

Townes regularly takes his show on the road, visiting the various posts throughout the Al Qa'im area of operations where 1/7 is currently eating, sleeping and fighting alongside Iraqi Army units.

While many seem sad to see the old chapel go, many more welcomed the thought of having a new place to conduct religious services.

The new church has the capability to support large numbers of church-goers, especially on festive days such as Easter Sunday, when dozens of Marines and sailors packed into the new church for the Christian holiday.

"It's very important for me to have the services available to me. It's comforting to know the church is there when I need it," said Lance Cpl. Jonathan A. Humphries, a mail clerk with the battalion's Headquarters and Support Company.

The 24-year-old donated a painting to the church of the archangel Saint Michael, for which the church is named after.

The religious holiday drew a larger crowd than the Soul Train could have provided, according to Lt. Cmdr. Christopher M. Jack, forward resuscitative surgical suite officer for Combat Logistics Battalion 7.

"I am happy with the move to the new church," said Jack, who missed out on two special days with his family back in the States last week — Easter Sunday, and his son's fourth birthday.

"I've been thinking about my wife and son the entire time," said Jack, who is on his first deployment to Iraq. "My thoughts are with them now."

CPL. ANTONIO ROSAS
Navy Lt. Richard A. Townes, chaplain for 1/7, administers pastoral prayer during a deactivation ceremony of the "Soul Train" April 12, 2006.



CPL. ANTONIO ROSAS

Drug and alcohol treatment patients gather for good, clean fun

LANCE CPL. REGINA N. ORTIZ

COMBAT CORRESPONDENT

YUCCA VALLEY, Calif. — More than 300 patients and their family members from seven alcohol and drug treatment facilities from the area gathered at the Yucca Valley Community Center for a barbecue and softball tournament April 19.

The event is planned and organized every year in April in commemoration of Alcohol Awareness Month, said Trish Kotila, Morongo Basin Mental Health Panorama Ranch prevention coordinator.

As part of the recovery treatment, the event gives patients a time to relax and have fun participating in non-alcohol and non-drug related activities, she explained.

While some of the facilities provide out-patient treatment, some facilities are residential. Residential facilities give care to patients while living at the treatment facility. They are only allowed family visits once a week, said Kotila, so gatherings like this bring a positive event in the midst of a serious situation.

"There's a lot of work put into gathering and coordinating this crowd," she said. "But it's worth it, and we all have a great time."

The Combat Center's drug demand reduction coordinator, David Roman, attended the event to show his support.

"We have to stay connected to the community," he explained. "There are Marines who have drug and alcohol problems, and these are the facilities that they will turn to."

The facilities at the event are home to the alcohol classes required to be taken by alcohol abuse offenders, including driving under the influence charges, said Kotila.

Some patients are in the treatment facilities by Proposition 36, she continued.

The act mandates all non-violent drug offenders, including drug dealers, to serve probation while completing treatment instead of being incarcerated, according to the California Substance Abuse and Crime Prevention Act.

"There are patients here that have sold drugs to Marines," said Roman. "These facilities are helping to get rid of that link between drug dealers and Marines."

Marshall Wright, the primary counselor at the Morongo Basin Mental Health Panorama Ranch at Joshua Tree, has been a drug and alcohol abuse counselor since retiring as a chief warrant officer in the Marine Corps.

"After 32 years serving in the Marine Corps, I decided to



LANCE CPL. REGINA N. ORTIZ

A large yellow sign adorned the fence surrounding the softball field to remind drug and alcohol treatment patients of the negative affects of substance abuse. There were more than seven treatment facilities at the event in commemoration of Alcohol Awareness Month.

give back to the community," said Wright. "It's my little war against drugs and alcohol."

The event gives Wright the opportunity to exchange tactics with other counselors as well, he said.

"It's a great chance for all of us to talk about what's working at our facilities," said Wright. "We talk about the different approaches we have all tried and what seems to work. It's important that we keep that fellowship strong."

"It also gives the families an opportunity to meet with counselors that are treating their loved ones and find out what they can do to help in the treatment process," he continued.

For some, this is the first non-drug or alcohol related activity in years, said Wright.

And it's becoming more common with a steady rise in the

drug and alcohol abuse statistics, according to the Department of Health and Human Services Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration Office of Applied Studies.

More than 22.5 million people, 12 or older were classified with substance dependence or abuse in 2004. Of these, 3.4 million were classified with dependence on or abuse of both alcohol and illicit drugs, 3.9 million were dependent on or abused illicit drugs but not alcohol, and 15.2 million were dependent on or abused alcohol but not illicit drugs, according to the U.S. Dept. of Health & Human Services Office of Applied Studies.

Drug and alcohol treatment facilities, such as the ones at the event, are taking this problem head on, continuously seeking new and improved approaches to terminate the problem, one patient at a time, said Wright.

1st Battalion, 7th Marines mourns loss

CPL. ANTONIO ROSAS

COMBAT CORRESPONDENT

Marines' various forward operating bases.

Taylor's passing marks the battalion's first death since taking control of security operations in the region more than a month ago.

This was the young Marine's first deployment.

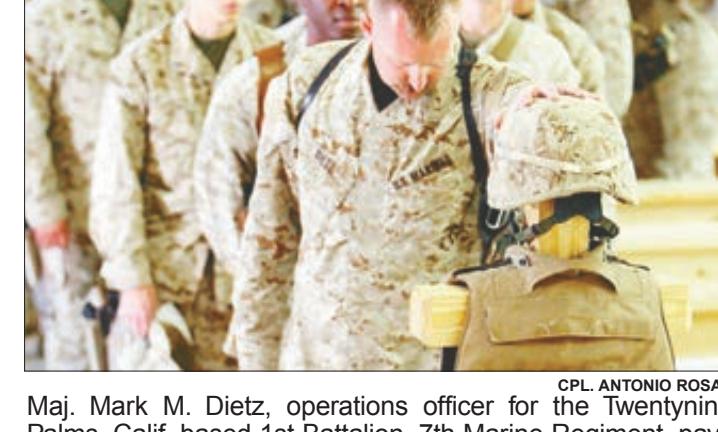
"Scarecrow," as his fellow Marines affectionately called him, earned the moniker because he had bad knees and would wobble around like a scarecrow following physical training sessions back at Twentynine Palms, Calif., where 1st Bn., 7th Marines is based.

Several of Taylor's closest peers choked back tears while they took turns sharing their experiences and memories of Taylor with the hundreds of servicemembers who attended the service.

"He would always offer anything he had to anybody," said Lance Cpl. Jamie R. Hughes, 20, from Spruce Pine, N.C., and fellow platoon member. "That's just the way he was. He was always looking out for everyone else."

That mentality was important in Taylor's line of work, which could be dangerous at times, according to his unit's noncommissioned officers.

The humvees Taylor



CPL. ANTONIO ROSAS

Maj. Mark M. Dietz, operations officer for the Twentynine Palms, Calif.-based 1st Battalion, 7th Marine Regiment, pays final respects to Marine Lance Cpl. Bryan N. Taylor during a memorial held at the Marines' camp in Al Qa'im, Iraq, Apr. 9.

maneuvered throughout the rural towns of western Iraq reminded one Marine of another of Taylor's favorite activities back in the States — "mudding" in four-wheel-drive vehicles.

"On weekends, we would get into trucks and get in the mud, trying not to get stuck" said Cpl. Joshua D. Plass, a 22-year-old who serves in Taylor's platoon.

"It was our idea of fun," said Plass, from Fayetteville, W.Va.

Fun times were always at the top of Taylor's list according to Hughes, who said he "spent nearly every second of

every day since Marine Corps Combat Training" with the 20-year-old.

The two were "inseparable," said Hughes.

Before his death, Taylor had spoken about his plans for life after the Corps with his invisible friend.

"He had told me that he wanted to go to college to become a teacher when we got back," said Hughes. "I don't know if he ever told anybody that."

"Mourn the loss of that Marine, but don't forget that we have a job to do here. Stay strong," said the 38-year Marine Corps veteran during a "town-hall"- style meeting with Marines and sailors.

Taylor was part of the Camp Lejeune, N.C.-based 2nd Combat Engineer Battalion, which supports the southern California-based 7th Marine Regiment in Iraq's western Al Anbar Province. Combat engineers perform a variety of duties in Iraq, from searching for hidden weapons caches and clearing areas laden with improvised explosive devices to fortifying structures and beefing up security measures at the



CPL. HEIDI E. LOREDO

Lance Cpl. Eric R. Acevedo embraces family after the ceremony.

MEMORIAL, A1

great strides toward a new democracy with their help. At the end of their deployment, the battalion's area of operations had grown to 750 square kilometers. The 13 Marines sacrificed to give the Iraqi people a liberty they could never have gained without their help, and a chance to

live in fearless freedom.

"These young men, these Marines, intuitively understood that free nations stand on the foundation of sacrifice," said Letoile. "Our future as a free and prosperous people depends on strong men and women who understand duty, who understand honor and are willing to risk all."

Feelings of profound debt were displayed from the Marines to the families of the fallen as they gathered together after the ceremony to offer their sorrow and stories of time spent with their sons, brothers and husbands. Letoile encouraged his Marines and Sailors to honor those memories by being faithful to the ideals they died

for and to be honorable men.

"As a Marine, this is not the last chapter," wrote Clay in his final letter. "I have the privilege of being one who has finished the race. I have been in the company of heroes. I now am counted among them. Never falter! Don't hesitate to honor and support those of us who have the honor of protecting that which is worth protecting."

The solemn occasion was all the more haunting as the wind caused dog tags to jingle against inverted rifles staked between a set of boots and photograph of the life it represented. A stirring rendition of "Taps" and the ceremonial detail's rifle shots ringing out through the morning sunshine left people in no doubt of the huge emotion surrounding the occasion.

"I'm standing in front of 13 memorials which represent 13 of the greatest men I have ever known," said Letoile. "They were proud of our nation, they were proud to be Marines, and they were proud to serve in Iraq. God bless the families, God bless America and God bless the United States Marine Corps."



CPL. HEIDI E. LOREDO

Christine Patten kneels in front of her son's photo.

IN THE SPOTLIGHT

MCAGCC Band performs for Low Desert communities

"We are just so proud to have with us the Marine band from Twentynine Palms."

—Don Adolph, mayor of La Quinta



Staff Sgt. Rodney Warner, Sgt. Brian McCartney, Cpl. Luke Osborn, and Cpl. Kevin Knight play during Concert Under the Stars Saturday.

STORY & PHOTOS BY
CPL. BRIAN A. TUTHILL

Combat Correspondent

LA QUINTA, Calif. — Hundreds of spectators gathered here and in Palm Desert, Calif., to welcome the Marine Corps Air Ground Combat Center Band for two nights of performances for the community.

The Desert City Classic and Concert Under the Stars concerts were held in the evenings April 21 and 22 in both cities, and the Marines were one of many bands to perform for each.

Marines and spectators alike were forced to battle 20 mile-per-hour evening winds during the latter performance outside the La Quinta Civic Center through the entire performance.

"We are just so proud to have with us the Marine band from Twentynine Palms," Don Adolph, La Quinta mayor said into the microphone over the boom of the wind before the concert. "We know this will be as great as it was last year."

The Marines performed more than 15 songs for the mainly senior citizen crowd, including "St. Louis Blues", "Jack Tar", "Circus Days", and the jazz classic "Sing, Sing, Sing;" as well as a blend of traditional songs and marches such as "America the Beautiful" and "Stars and Stripes Forever".

To close the performance for the night, the band played service songs to honor the many veterans seated before them. They were met with cheers and a standing ovation as they played the Marines Hymn. The band also performed an encore presentation of "Semper Fi" before taking their bows.

"The Marines did an amazing job again this year," said Kristin Riesgo, recreations supervisor for the city of La Quinta, who organized the concert last year. "It was a great event, and I think the community really appreciated them coming down to play for us. They represent the country and a lot of veterans come to this event, and they really enjoy it. We have a lot of veterans and retirees in our community, so it's great they can come to this."

Riesgo said this year's crowd was smaller because of the cooler weather, which was understandable because it was held a month earlier than the last year's May performance, when the climate was more forgiving.

For many members of the band, the concert was a welcomed change of pace from the many homecomings the Combat Center has seen in recent weeks.

"It was a more relaxed concert for us, and it was a nice atmosphere," said Cpl. Kevin Knight, trombone player. "There were a lot of elderly folks and veterans, and it was great to play for them. With a gig like this, you really feel how much they enjoyed hearing us play."

"When we go to some gigs like homecomings, it's great to be able to play for the families, but they are more focused on their Marine coming home," Knight continued. "Sometimes it's just background noise to them. It's concerts like these where we really feel appreciated and it feels good. I think everyone who came enjoyed these concerts."

To attend one of the Concerts Under the Stars in La Quinta, visit <http://www.la-quinta.org>.



Joan Bulkeley-Stade claps as she and her husband, Herb enjoy the Combat Center Band performance for the La Quinta, Calif., community Saturday.



Corporals James Dempsey, Victor Norris, Kevin Oess, and Kyle Nelson play for the city of La Quinta, Calif.'s Concert Under the Stars Saturday.



Jack Murgatroyd and Mildred Donley, along with other members of the La Quinta, Calif., community, cheer as the Combat Center Band plays.



The Combat Center Band plays at the La Quinta, Calif., Civic Center Saturday as part of the La Quinta "Concert Under the Stars" series. More than 150 residents attended the event which included senior citizens, military veterans and families.



LANCE CPL. REGINA N. ORTIZ

Team Minority Report pushes for the last part of the Ridge Run. Team Minority Report was made up of students from the Marine Corps Communication-Electronics School.

Sandy hills of fun at the 20th Annual Ridge Run

LANCE CPL. REGINA N. ORTIZ

COMBAT CORRESPONDENT

More than 200 runners participated in the 20th Annual Ridge Run across the mountainous back drop of the Combat Center's Mainside April 21.

This is the largest single organized sporting event hosted at the Combat Center, said Lt. j. g. Thomas W. Nelson, assistant Ridge Run coordinator this year, and who will be next year's overall coordinator.

Participants entered either the 8-kilometer or the 5-kilometer run as an individual runner or as part of a team. Awards were presented at the end of the race to first, second and third place male, female and team for each age group. Age groups were broken down to 25

and under, 26 to 35, 36 to 45, and 46 and over.

Awards were also presented to the first, second and third place team and an award presented to the first overall male and female finishers.

Although there is an entry fee for the Ridge Run, all proceeds went to the Marine Corps Community Services budget for the morale and welfare of Combat Center troops, Nelson explained.

"The Ridge Run is not only to raise funds for MCCS," he continued. "The main focus is on fitness and getting a good, solid challenge out here in the desert."

For some like Pamela and Amanda Henderson, the 8K was hardly a challenge. Pamela, 10, finished first in her gender and age group, 25 and under, at 1 hour, 13 minutes, with her

sister, Amanda, 11, flew across the finish line right behind her at 1:15.

"We run all the time just for fun," said Amanda, catching her breath. "We got some help from our PE coach to prepare."

The two young girls whizzed past Marines and Sailors left and right, leaving a trail of motivation to push the troops harder.

"We kept looking up and seeing them ahead of us," said Brandon Taylor, 23-year old native of Fortworth, Texas, who saw the girls during the race. "It gave us an extra bit of energy to try harder."

Taylor was part of a team — dubbed The W's — comprised of students from the Marine Corps Communication-Electronics School who wanted to try the event for fun.

While some participants take part in the Ridge Run for fun or exercise, there are some who came back to defend titles and feed prolonged rivalries, such as MCCES' and the Robert E. Bush Naval Hospital's team rivalry for the Captain's Cup, said Nelson.

The Captain's Cup is awarded to the first place team and is usually a toss-up between MCCES and Hospital, he explained.

And the Captain's Cup went to ... MCCES' A Team, led by Donald Tolbert, for the second year in a row.

"The team strategy was to sprint to the top of the first hill to prevent getting bogged down by the single file accent and then to hold off all runners until the finish," said Tolbert. "A Team" went on to defeat our closet rival and

successfully defend the Captain's Cup."

The second place team trophy went to the Naval Hospital and third place went to a team from the Installation Personnel Administration Center.

The female first place runner, Jessica Souther, Robert E. Bush Naval Hospital, crossed the finish line at 49:10. The first place overall male award went to Kenneth Parisi, Installation and Logistics' Exercise Support Division, with a run time of 50:03.

"It was an extremely challenging course," said Parisi. "The hardest part was the last two hills because you've already exhausted yourself and then the hills were made up of deep sand. But I've been training, and this was one of my best runs to date."

This year's run had a good turnout, but not the largest, said Nelson.

"We would like to see a bigger crowd next year," he said. "For those who might be intimidated by the course, we build safety into it and it is our top priority."

While some may be intimidated, there are runners who would like to see a change in the course, said Nelson.

"This has been the same course since the first Ridge Run," he explained. "We feel it presents just enough challenge and the 5K is good for those who aren't ready for the 8K."

The Ridge Run is held the third week in April every year and is open to all Department of Defense employees, civilians and military members.



LANCE CPL. REGINA N. ORTIZ

Steven Singletary, Brandon Taylor and Rex Ludwig demonstrate team work as they help each other to the top of the sandy hill in the Ridge Run.

SPORT SHORTS

STEP CLASSES

Step Classes are available at the West Gym on Mondays, Tuesdays, Thursdays and Fridays at 6 a.m. For more information, call 830-4131.

YOGA CLASSES

Yoga classes are available from 9 to 9:45 a.m. at the Community Center and from 5 to 5:45 p.m. at the East Gym. For more information please call 830-4131

LEISURE

CINCO DE MAYO

DANCE

The Hispanic Heritage Committee will celebrate Cinco de Mayo with a dance Saturday, May 6, 2006 at Hashmarks Staff NCO Club from 9 p.m. to 1 a.m. Enjoy prize giveaways, food, and music. Cost is \$5 singles and \$8 couples. All proceeds will benefit graduating 29 Palms High School seniors. ALL HANDS WELCOME. For more information call 830-6366 or 367-5380.

ARTS AND CRAFTS

ROUND-UP

Annual Chaparral Artists will hold an "Arts and Crafts Round-Up," tomorrow from 9 a.m. to 3 p.m. at the Joshua Tree Community Center located at 6171 Sunburst Rd. For more information or if you would like to be a vendor call Julia at 365-6236.

WE SALUTE YOU

CELEBRATION

Marine Corps Community Services is hosting the We Salute You Celebration on May 20 from 4 to 10 p.m. at Victory Field. The event is free and will include BBQ, games, with a concert featuring the Combat Center Band and Lynyrd Skynyrd. The event is open to all eligible patrons. No outside alcohol, pets or audio, video or flash photography.

Did You Know?

The most one finger pushups performed consecutively is 124.

Hey! Batter batter batter!



CPL. BRIAN A. TUTHILL

Commanding General's Intramural Softball Standings as of 4/27/2006

TEAMS	WINS	LOSSES
VMU	2	0
PMO	2	0
MCCS	1	0
SJA	1	0
TANKS	1	0
CLB-7	1	1
HQBN # 2	1	0
HQBN (BP)	1	1
IPAC	1	1
AAV's #1	1	1
3/11	1	1
ESD	0	1
AAV's #2	0	1
2/7	0	1
HOSPITAL	0	1
TTECG	0	1
HQBN	0	2
TANKS (Comm)	0	2



LANCE CPL. REGINA N. ORTIZ

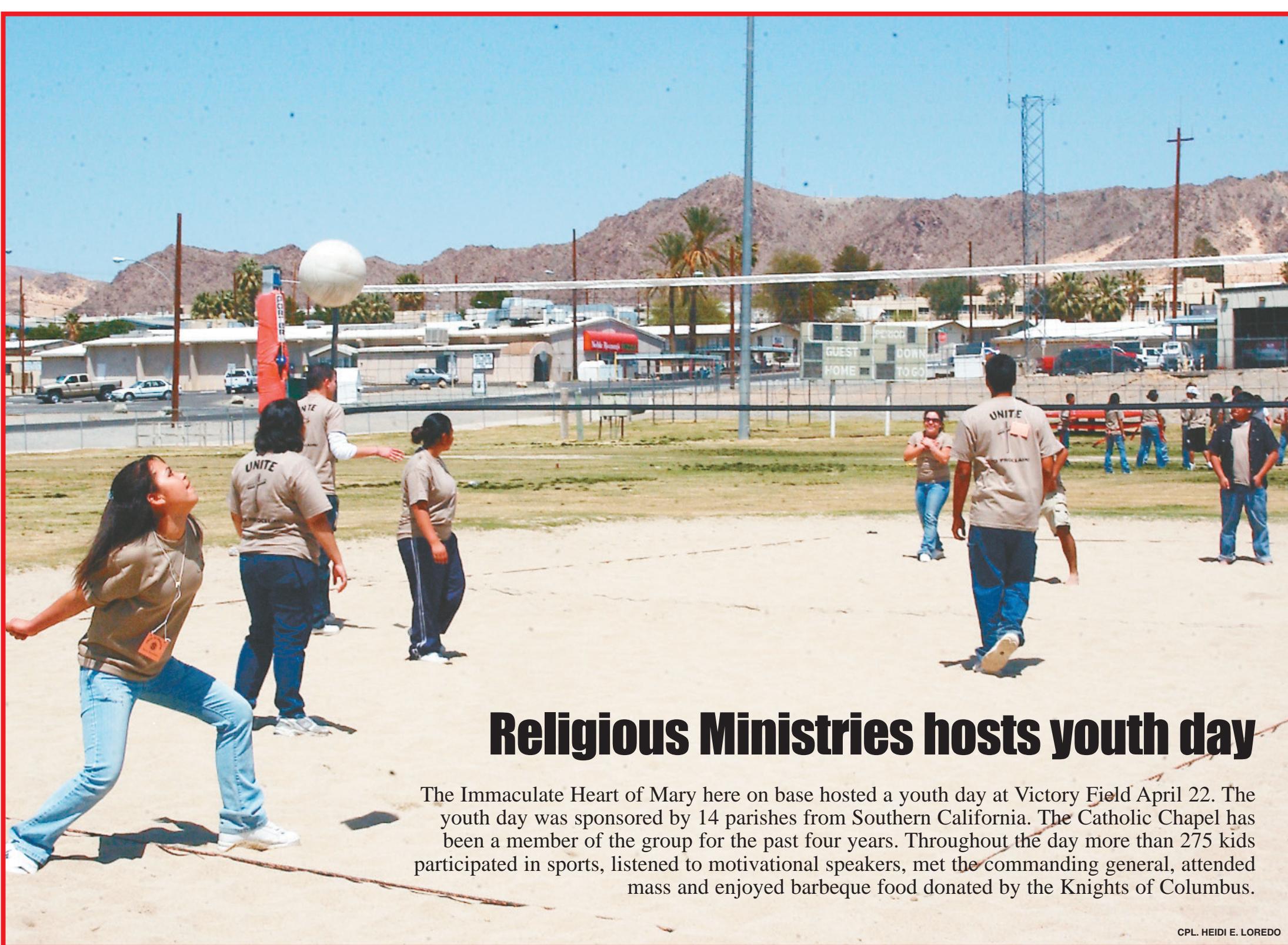
A taste of home sent overseas

Brittney Golden writes the address of her deployed husband, Lance Cpl. Kristopher Golden, 3rd Battalion, 11th Marine Regiment, on the care package she prepared to send to him at the Main Exchange April 20. Marine Corps Community Services sponsors a Care Package Day every third week of each month. Packaging materials, a Polaroid photo of the sender and a discount on shipping are provided to family members of deployed Marines and Sailors at the event. The only cost is the cost for shipping, which does not exceed \$6, said Jacqueline Reimers, MCCS sales associate.

AUTHORIZED WEAR OF CAMOUFLAGE UTILITY UNIFORMS FOR COMMUTING TO AND FROM THE WORK PLACE

The following is a list of authorized stops. These authorized stops do not apply to the green, white, or blue coveralls or the mess hall uniform.

- Dropping off or picking up children from day care centers or schools
- Drive through windows at banking and eating establishments and drive up automatic teller machines.
- Dropping off or picking up dry-cleaning or vehicles at repair shops or gas stations.
- Obtaining gas or essential driving aids (wiper blades, fluids, lights, etc.) at gas stations.
- At convenience stores or drug stores for the purchase of emergency child care or health products (milk, diapers, medicine, etc.). The purchase of alcoholic beverages while stopping for emergency child care or health products is prohibited.
- Meal and or rest stops authorized by convoy commanders
- On official business, having been dispatched in a government vehicle, when the service uniform would not be more practical or appropriate.
- Financial institutions for brief, essential stops.



Religious Ministries hosts youth day

The Immaculate Heart of Mary here on base hosted a youth day at Victory Field April 22. The youth day was sponsored by 14 parishes from Southern California. The Catholic Chapel has been a member of the group for the past four years. Throughout the day more than 275 kids participated in sports, listened to motivational speakers, met the commanding general, attended mass and enjoyed barbecue food donated by the Knights of Columbus.

CPL. HEIDI E. LOREDO

HEAT CONDITIONS FLAG COLORS

GREEN
80° – 84.9°*

Exercise can be conducted and discretion is required for all heavy exercise unless acclimatized to desert conditions.

YELLOW
85° – 87.9°*

Strenuous exercise and activity must be reduced for new, unacclimatized personnel during the first three weeks of heat exposure. Avoid outside classes.

Strenuous exercise must be halted or reduced for Marines and Sailors who haven't had up to 12 weeks to acclimate.

All outdoor activities and training must be suspended. Weather conditions are too dangerous for exercise or movement outside.

RED
88° – 89.9°*

BLACK
90°* – ABOVE

*According to the Wet Bulb Globe Temperature index