



SMP VOLUNTEERS, B4

OBSERVATION POST



RED CROSS CLASSES, B2

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THIS ISSUE

A5 - Language training simulation

A6 - 3/11 Mike Battery

B1 - Softball

Serving the MCAGCC
Community at
Twentynine Palms, Calif.

VOL. 52 NO. 18
May 5, 2006

HOT TOPICS

HQMC PROMOTIONS BRANCH VISIT

Headquarters Marine Corps' Promotion Branch will be here on May 18. The first brief of two will be for officers from 0900-0945, and the second one will be for enlisted Marines from 1000-1100. Both briefs will be at the Base theater.

MARINE CORPS EXCHANGE RENOVATION

Work has begun on the Marine Corps Exchange Main Store renovation. The remodeling will be done in phases by department. However, there will be a lot of rerouting due to pulling up old tile and carpet and laying new tile and carpet. So please pardon our dust. We apologize for any inconvenience, encourage you to still please patronize the store, and look forward to a new and improved Main Store. Some departments will be relocated, some will be expanded so we can offer more products, and, with the exception of high business areas requiring specialized product knowledge, there will be a centralized check-out. The remodeling timeline will go from now through May, notwithstanding any glitches. As always, thanks for your support!

TAX CENTER STILL OPEN FOR TAXPAYERS ON AN EXTENSION

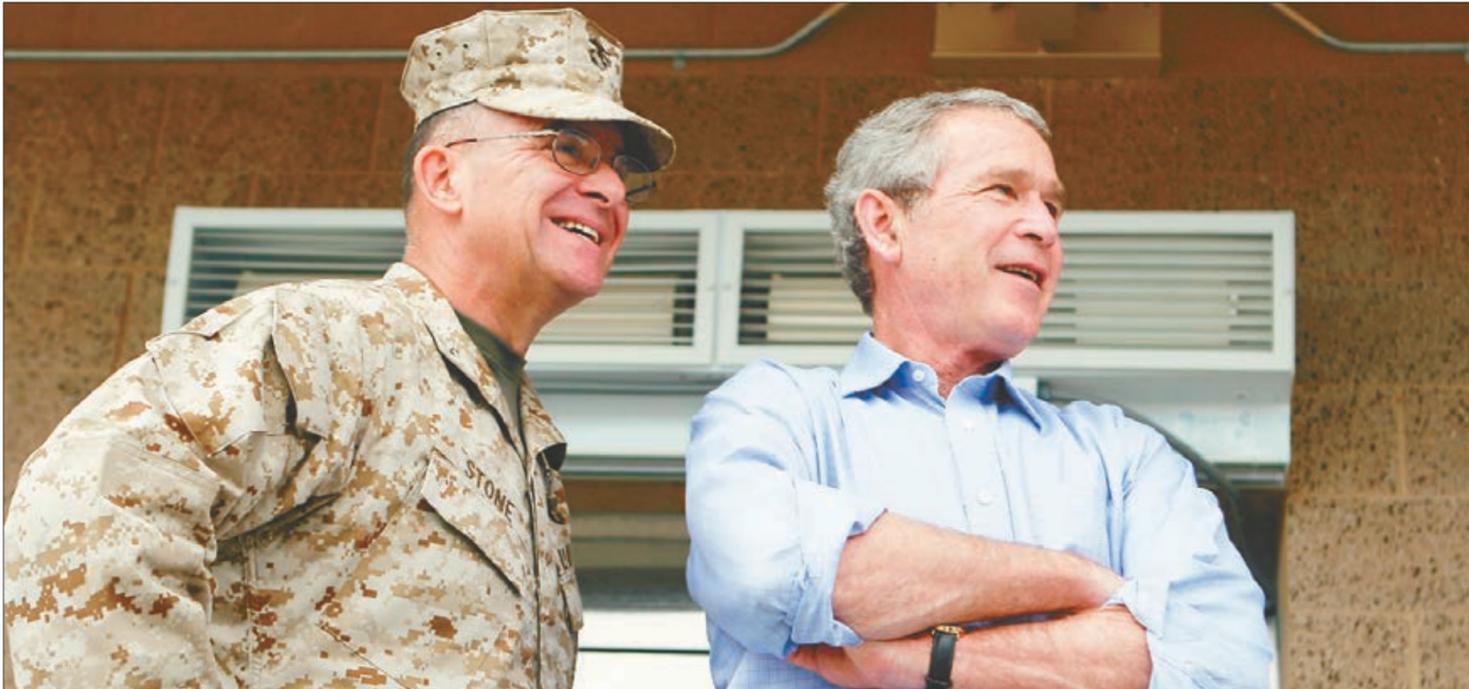
The official tax season is over. If you served in a combat zone, you have a minimum of 180 days after leaving the combat zone to file your tax return. This extension allows you to file your return, pay taxes and take other actions with the IRS with no penalties or interest. You may elect to have your 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

- Phelps dedication
- 3/4 Change of Command
- MCAGCC Male Athlete of the Year

THIS DAY IN MARINE CORPS HISTORY

May 5, 1919
HQMC moved into the new Navy building on Constitution Avenue in Washington, DC.



President George W. Bush and Brig. Gen. Douglas M. Stone chat outside the 7th Marines mess hall.

LANCE CPL. PATRICK GREENE

Combat Center Marines react to visit with President Bush

CPL. EVAN M. EAGAN
COMBAT CORRESPONDENT

President George Bush came to the Combat Center April 23, to visit Marines, Sailors and their families during a three-day tour of the Southern California area.

Marking the first time a president has visited the Combat Center, Bush attended church services at the Protestant Chapel and ate lunch with the service members and their families at the 7th Marines mess hall, where he addressed those who assembled.

During his speech, Bush expressed his appreciation for the Marines, Sailors and their families for the sacrifices they have made whether overseas or stateside.

"You represent the very best of America," he said. "You represent men and women who volunteer to serve during dangerous and historic times. And because of your service, we're defeating an enemy overseas so we do not have to face them here at home. Because of your service, we've liberated people from the clutches of a tyrant. And because of your service, we're laying the foundation of peace

for a generation of Americans to come. These are historic times, and your service makes me incredibly proud.

"And I also want to say something to your families," Bush continued. "It's hard when your loved one is overseas. I respect your sacrifice, and want to thank you very much for your service to our country, as well."

Many Marines who ate lunch with the president were excited to meet with their commander-in-chief.

See VISIT, A3

Delta Co. remembers fallen hero

LANCE CPL. REGINA N. ORTIZ
COMBAT CORRESPONDENT

Friends and family gathered for a memorial service in honor of Cpl. Solomon David Wingert of Delta Company, 3rd Assault Amphibian Battalion, at the Combat Center's Protestant Chapel April 27. Wingert sacrificed his life protecting a friend from an oncoming speeding vehicle on a street in Los Angeles the evening of March 31.

Wingert was with his fiancée and a friend, when a vehicle came speeding towards his friend. He pushed his friend out of harm's way and was struck by the vehicle, according to police reports.

A funeral service was held at his hometown, where many of his fellow Marines were unable to attend.

"We wanted to have a memorial service here to provide closure for the Marines who weren't able to make it to his funeral," said Gunnery Sgt. Marcos Enriquez, who was in a leadership position over Wingert for more than two years.

Some Marines who worked closely with Wingert spoke to family and friends at the memorial service, including two of his closet friends, Sgt. Ben Trujillo and Cpl. Derrick Rolfo.

Trujillo recalled the first time he met Wingert the first day at basic training, how he met up with him at military occupational specialty school, and then, became roommates after they both became part of Delta Co.

He was good people," said Trujillo during his speech. "He was a true hero to everybody, and especially me. I looked up to him, even though he was younger than me."

Rolfo became instant friends with Wingert when they met shortly after Rolfo joined the unit, he said.

He's one of the greatest guys I've ever met," Rolfo said. "He would give anyone the shirt off of his back. He was just the life of the party."

Rolfo was only one of a few people who knew



LANCE CPL. REGINA N. ORTIZ

A picture of Cpl. Solomon David Wingert stands next to a gift from his unit, 3rd Assault Amphibian Battalion, Delta Company, at a memorial service held for the Marine who passed away March 31.

about the charities he donated to every pay day.

"He donated to these charities because he truly cared," said Rolfo. "That's the type of person he was."

Wingert's time in the Marine Corps was coming close to an end before his untimely death. He had been speaking with his leaders about his plans after leaving the Corps.

"He looked at me and said he had done his time and he wanted to go to college," said Maj. Michael Smith, Delta Co. commander. "He was a fine young man. His family and improving his education were the most important things to him."

1st Lt. Sean Thompson witnessed Wingert grow from a quiet, reserved junior Marine, to a leader he could trust, he said.

He was one hell of a man, one hell of a Marine," said Thompson. "We believe he is on guard at the gates of heaven. He will always be with us."

Wingert was born Nov. 4, 1984, in Victorville,

Calif., and grew up in Moraga, Calif., where he attended Jubilee Christian Academy and graduated in 2002. In August 2002, Wingert enlisted into the Marine Corps and began training at Marine Corps Recruit Depot San Diego.

After completing basic training, Wingert began his training for his primary military occupational specialty, assault amphibian vehicle crewman, at Camp Pendleton, Calif. After finishing MOS school, he reported to 3rd AABN, D Co., in March 2003.

While serving with Delta Co., Wingert participated in two unit deployments to Okinawa, Japan.

Wingert's personal awards include a Marine Corps Good Conduct Medal and a Navy and Marine Corps Achievement Medal, posthumously, for his heroic actions resulting in his death.

Wingert is survived by his mother, Mary Krueger, step-father Jim Krueger, and three siblings, Rick Wilkins, Jerome Wingert and Christy Penix.

"We Salute You" celebration coming May 21

4 pm	Event Begins: Opening remarks from MC	6:20 - 7:30 pm	DJ plays
	Food service/beer sales begin	7:30 pm	Food service/Inflatables closed
4 - 4:30 pm	Inflatable games for all ages	7:50 pm	Introduction of Lynyrd Skynyrd
4 - 5:30 pm	DJ plays	8 - 10 pm	Lynyrd Skynyrd performance
5:30 - 6:30 pm	MCAGCC Band takes stage	9:30 pm	Beer sales end
		10 pm	Event ends



LANCE CPL. PATRICK GREENE

President George W. Bush poses with Combat Center Marines at the 7th Marines mess hall.



LANCE CPL. PATRICK GREENE

President George W. Bush goes through the chow hall line with Combat Center Marines at the 7th Marines mess hall.

VISIT, A1

For Sgt. Daniel D. Reuss, an assault gunner with Weapons Platoon, Lima Company, 3rd Battalion, 4th Marine Regiment, meeting President Bush was a rewarding experience.

"I sat about 20 feet away from the president when I ate brunch with him," said the Redding, Calif., native, and two-time Operation Iraqi Freedom veteran. "He said he was very happy to see us. He told us the Marine Corps was doing an excellent job. It was an awesome experience, which was worth a lot. Not everyone gets to meet the president."

Lance Cpl. Christopher L. Parks, an infantryman with 3rd Platoon, Echo Company, 2nd Battalion, 7th Marine Regiment, wasn't seated as close to the president, but still had the opportunity to meet him.

"When he first came in to the chow hall, he became social with all of us who were standing in line," said the Corpus Christi, Texas, native, and Operation Iraqi Freedom veteran. "After eating, he walked around the whole chow hall to shake hands with everyone. When he got to our table, he told us how much of a good job we're doing. He also asked about our families and how things were going at home. It was a pretty

motivating experience. He gave me inspiration to keep doing my job and doing it well. He really showed us he cared and he wanted us to know that. It was an honor to see him because it's something that I might not have the privilege to do again."

Sgt. Matthew L. Barber, a machinegun squad leader with Weapons Platoon, Lima Company, 3rd Battalion, 4th Marine Regiment, was motivated by the president's visit. Eating with the president is an experience he won't soon forget.

"I was very motivated to even get to see the president," said the Olathe, Kan., native. "When he first got to the chow hall, he busted out with a 'Semper Parvum.' That was very motivating."

"We all were very happy to have the president come to our base," continued Barber. "He actually took the time from his very busy schedule to come see us for a day. I know everyone in 3/4 was honored to talk to him. It was my best experience here. It was just some motivating stuff."

After spending time with the Marines, Sailors and their families, President Bush made his way to the Combat Center parade field where he boarded Marine One and departed.

"I sat about 20 feet away from the president when I ate brunch with him. He said he was very happy to see us. He told us the Marine Corps was doing an excellent job."

—SGT. DANIEL D. REUSS, 3/4

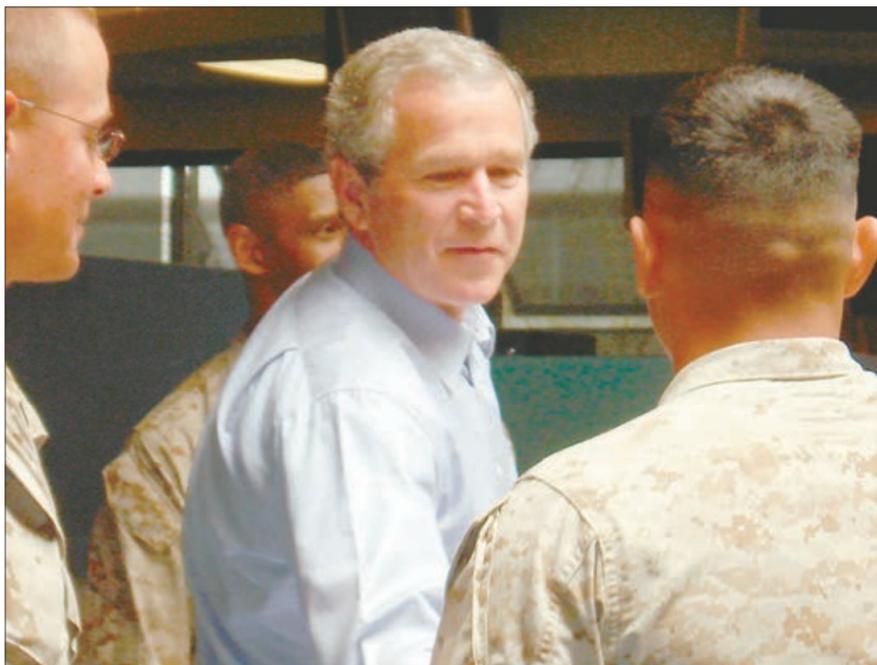


WHITE HOUSE PHOTO BY ERIC DRAPER

President George W. Bush greets parishioners at the end of a church service at the Combat Center's Protestant Chapel.

"It is such an honor to be here with the mighty United States Marine Corps and their families. May God bless you all, and may God continue to bless our country."

—PRESIDENT GEORGE BUSH



COURTESY OF 3RD BATTALION 11TH MARINES

President George W. Bush greets Marines at the 7th Marines mess hall during his visit April 23.



LANCE CPL. MICHAEL S. CIFUENTES

Steven H. Dell, a retired gunnery sergeant and a Vietnam War veteran, pauses for a moment Tuesday on the quarterdeck of the Robert E. Bush Naval Hospital in front of a portrait of the late Robert E. Bush, who was a corpsman and a Medal of Honor recipient after performing heroic actions during World War II.

Local Purple Heart chapter redesignates name to Robert E. Bush

BY LANCE CPL. MICHAEL S. CIFUENTES
COMBAT CORRESPONDENT

The Military Order of the Purple Heart Chapter 2929 based in Joshua Tree, Calif., was renamed the Robert E. Bush Chapter 2929 Tuesday on the quarterdeck of the Robert E. Bush Naval Hospital.

Steven H. Dell, commander of the chapter and a retired gunnery sergeant, represented the chapter during its redesignation at the Naval Hospital.

The late Robert E. Bush was a corpsman with 2nd Battalion, 5th Marine Regiment during World War II. On May 2, 1945, the rifle company he was serving with met resistance from Japanese forces in Okinawa, Japan. Bush maneuvered through artillery, mortar and

machine-gun fire to care for casualties. While feeding plasma into a fallen Marine officer with a severe chest and shoulder injury, he refused to leave his exposed position on a ridge in the midst of a Japanese counterattack. Bush held the plasma bottle up with one hand while he took the officer's carbine with his free hand, and fired at the charging Japanese claiming six enemy lives at the cost of his right eye after hand grenades exploded around him.

As an 18-year-old Seaman, Bush was the youngest Sailor to receive the Medal of Honor during WWII.

Bush was also a recipient of the Purple Heart and a member of Chapter 2929. It is with pleasure and great honor that the chapter be named after Robert E. Bush, said Dell.

The chapter has been in existence for

roughly 11 months, supporting 63 Purple Heart recipients, to include Bush.

"Before he passed away, I asked Mr. Bush if we could use his name to rename our chapter," said Dell, a Griffith, Ind., native. "He was honored that we wanted his name as our chapter. I told him we were honored to have him as a part of the chapter. He gave us a written statement to do so before he passed away.

After Bush passed away, Dell spoke with Bush's son about the redesignation. His son went along with his father's wishes.

"It gives the chapter great prestige being named after a true hero," said Dell. "Knowing that our chapter is named after this man feels like it raises our title above the rest."

The mission of the chapter, coinciding with the mission of the Military Order of the Purple Heart, is to foster an environment of goodwill and camaraderie among combat wounded veterans, promote patriotism, support necessary legislative initiatives, and provide service to all veterans and their families.

The Robert E. Bush Chapter 2929 bears Purple Heart recipients from Operation Iraqi Freedom to World War II, said Dell. The membership is free to any active duty personnel who've been awarded the Purple Heart.

Dell was awarded the Purple Heart after sustaining battle wounds during combat operations during the Vietnam War. He served as an anti-tank infantryman with Weapons Company, 1st Battalion, 3rd Marine Regiment.

Dell, and Petty Officer 1st Class David Pope, a corpsman with Combat Logistics Battalion 7, started the chapter less than a year ago.

The chapter meets monthly, said Dell. Aside from a brotherhood of combat veterans, the chapter also discusses events in the local community they participate in, such as the upcoming Soap Box Derby at the Combat Center in June. The chapter will be sponsoring a soap box car, and a racing team, said Dell.

Anthony Sanchez, the 11-year-old son of Sgt. Mark N. Novello, an artillery mechanic with Exercise Support Division and a member of the chapter, will be the sponsored race team of the chapter.

"Members of the chapter came to me and asked if they could sponsor me and my son in the race," said Novello, a Los Angeles native who was wounded during convoy operations in Iraq while serving with Lima Battery, 3rd Battalion, 12th Marine Regiment. "This was a great opportunity to have a good time with my son that I normally wouldn't be able to do.

"This association is definitely a brotherhood of men and women who share a common bond, but with different experiences," continued Novello. "It's great to be a part of this chapter, and it's an honor to have the chapter named after Robert E. Bush. Not an average man in the military can achieve such a high honor to risk their own life to save others and earn a Medal of Honor as [Bush]. It's no wonder why the chapter is named after him."

Language trainer teaches Marines to build rapport in Iraq

LANCE CPL. MICHAEL S. CIFUENTES

COMBAT CORRESPONDENT

Currently at the Combat Center's Battle Simulation Center is a personal computer-based stand alone trainer designed to allow an individual to develop proficiency with the Arabic language. This simulated program is known as the Tactical Iraqi Language Trainer.

The program uses a mixture of skill building lessons and practice "talk-em-up" missions. It is intended for all skill levels and uses voice recognition systems to enable speaking practice. Unlike most simulation systems, this generally requires a significant investment in time for anything beyond the most basic language skills.

"This program is great for Marines who are eager to learn," said Maj. William W.

Yates, modeling and simulation officer with the Battle Simulation Center. "It's the best tool I've ever seen for Marines who are deploying soon and would like to understand the language the Iraqi civilians are speaking."

The simulation teaches an array of concepts to personnel who use the program. From meeting strangers to introducing your team and learning the duties as a guest, to body language and hand gestures, the program teaches customs and courtesies that are very important in Iraq.

Each skill builder, or short lesson, is followed by a quiz. The individual's learning ability or understanding of the language allows him to move up in levels.

"If Marines come in several hours a day for a year, their level of proficiency would significantly increase," said

Yates. "It's simple enough to learn and use, all that is needed is the time to come in and use the program."

Echo Company, 2nd Battalion, 7th Marine Regiment, trained in the simulation center April 20.

"From the beginning the program was easy," said Lance Cpl. Andrew E. Mauk, an infantryman with Echo Company. "We started off on how to say hello, and hello back to Iraqi civilians. The program also gave us some good examples of what type of conversations and situations we might see out there."

The program was a first experience speaking Arabic for most of the Marines with Echo Company. Some have not deployed yet and do not know what to expect or consider when dealing with Iraqi civilians, said Yates.

"This program will defi-

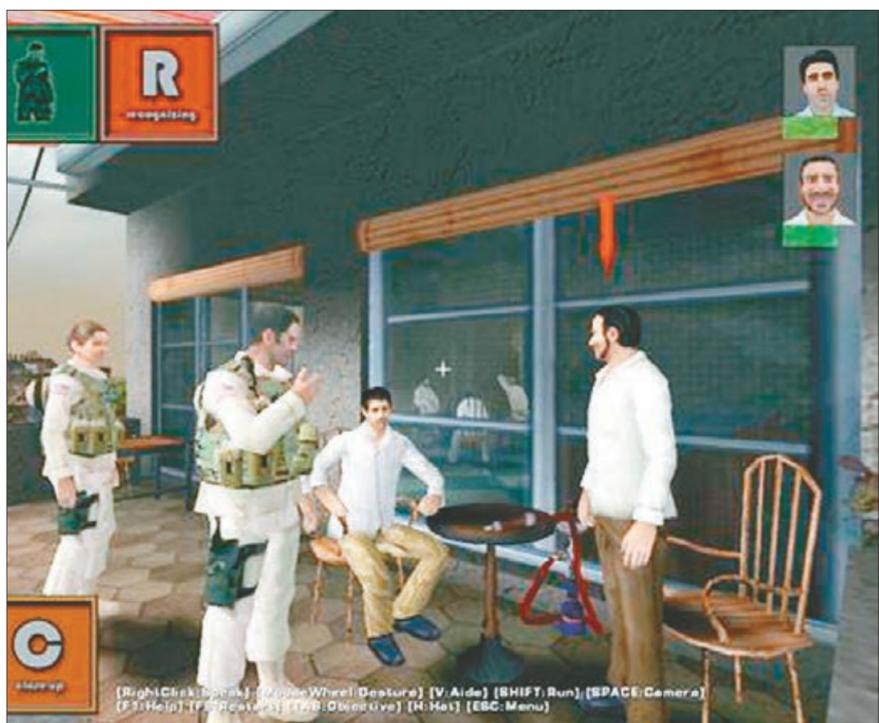


PHOTO COURTESY OF THE BATTLE SIMULATION CENTER
A pair of American soldiers speak with two Iraqi civilians, introducing himself and building rapport, in a simulation from the Tactical Iraqi Language Trainer.

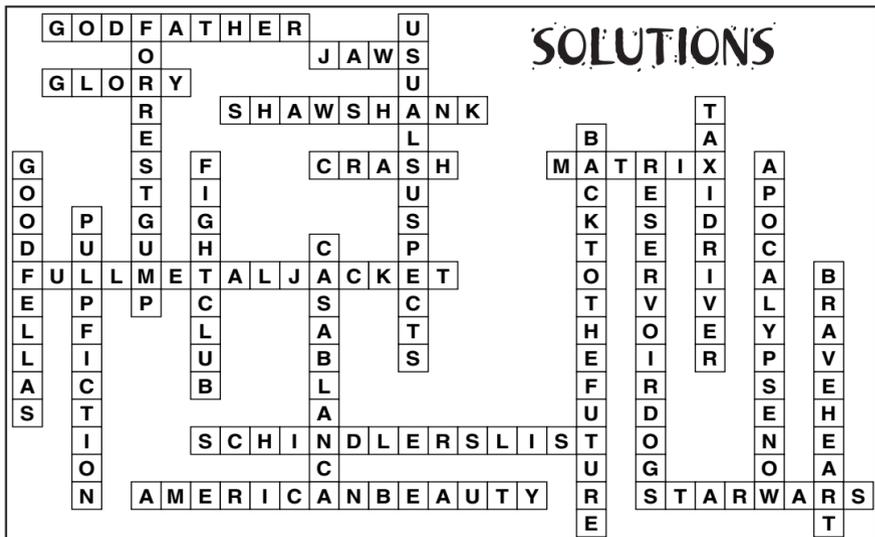
nately help us out when we deploy," said Mauk. "Just being able to say hello and make a welcoming gesture to them can break the ice when approaching them. It also taught a lot about the gestures that I wouldn't even think of doing. It's a very easy program to use, and we're definitely going back."

The program's potential hasn't been fully recognized, said Yates.

"We understand training is tight and learning Arabic is something Marines do on their off time," continued Yates. "The simulation center is available for units 24-hours-a-day, so anyone can come in after work during their spare time to learn the language in an interactive method."

Since the simulator deals with language, there are no weapons or tactical missions,

said Yates. The purpose is to provide simulation-based training to exercise forces who are participating in Mojave Viper, a month-long predeployment training evolution. Learning how to interact and build rapport with the Iraqi civilians during a deployment is very critical to Operation Iraqi Freedom. The language simulator was created for that mission.



Downtime important for Mike Battery, 3/11

LANCE CPL. MICHAEL S. CIFUENTES

COMBAT CORRESPONDENT

They're an artillery battery that can load a 100-pound artillery round into an M777 Lightweight Howitzer, capable of destroying any target up to 18 miles away.

Upon a call for fire, they can execute the mission on a moment's notice, whether or not their howitzer is hitched to a 7-ton truck. They're trained proficiently in the field of artillery, as well as in their infantry skills. Their noncommissioned officers are known as great leaders, contributing to their overall expertise in the field.

In the training area is where they reign, commonly known to them as "the field." But what does this regime of artillerymen do when they're not in a firing mission?

"My next tattoo is going to be a cyclone of water and fire," says one to another. "I can't wait to go home and see my girl on leave," says another. "You're expected to take initiative in this battery, but you need to know your boundaries," says one, counseling another.

The downtime of an artillery battery dominates their time in the field. This is the time when the Marines and Sailors reflect on their past times, whether good or bad. They also talk about their personal lives, become familiar with one another and, more so, counsel and teach each other about their military occupational specialty and their role in the Corps.

Mike Battery, 3rd Battalion, 11th Marine Regiment, convoyed to Niland, Calif., March 24 in support of a Weapons Tactics Instructions course, a training evolution, which lasted until April 21.

The battery was tasked with providing artillery support for Marine pilots who were attending the aviation schoolhouse.

During this four-week long training evolution, the battery supported the course on several different occasions over nine days. They also executed their own battery objectives, to include enhancing their infantry skills. But most of their time spent in the field was "downtime," a time when they were waiting for a firing mission.

"Most of the time I try to give a class on the weapon system to the Marines," said Cpl. Guillermo J. Alvear, a 21-year-old artilleryman with Mike Battery and a Charlotte, N.C., native. "I also include the M198 Towed Howitzer in the classes, since we will be using them on our next deployment to Okinawa [Japan]. Other than knowledge, we try to talk about ourselves.

"It's important that everyone in each gun section familiarizes themselves with each other because those are the people they will be depending on and living with in the field," he explained.

For 20 of the battery's Marines, the training evolution was a first-time experience in the fleet, such as Pfc. Valente Polanco, a 19-year-old artilleryman with Mike Battery.

"I like how time goes by fast when you're in the field," said Polanco, a McAllen, Texas, native. "It is very rough out here most of the time. We're always doing something – either work-



LANCE CPL. MICHAEL S. CIFUENTES

Cpl. Guillermo J. Alvear sits down with his section, Gun 5, to have a discussion on knowledge pertaining to the M777 Lightweight Howitzer during their downtime.

ing on the gun or talking with each other, and we talk about almost everything. We share a lot of personal stuff without holding back."

It's important the Marines relieve some stress when they're in the field, said Alvear. But aside from giving Marines a chance to connect with one another, downtime is also a time used to counsel Marines who are new to the unit, or need the advice.

"I try to break in the new Marines by counseling them," said Sgt. Michael E. Gilliland, a 23-year-old artilleryman with Mike Battery. "Downtime is a time to feed off other Marines and see what they're all about. We can't let Marines we work with section themselves off from the section. We try to bring them closer to us.

"Downtime can also be like a sit-down session at a psychologist's office," said the Chula Vista, Calif., native. "The NCO's are always willing to share their opinion or give advice

to any Marine who's in need of some."

There is no predominant conversation in the field during downtime. The conversations do not always have to do with counseling or knowledge, but range from personal stories to what's going on in the world today. The Marines talk about anything during their free time, said Cpl. Frank S. Cauthorn, a 21-year-old artilleryman with Mike Battery.

"Sometime we have conversations about the most random things," said Cauthorn, a Manteca, Calif., native. "We had a deep conversation in this section about gangs. Sgt. Gilliland was sharing what kind of tattoo he's going to get with Sgt. Stone. I was talking about how great our deployment to Thailand was. Some of the junior Marines ask about marriage and having kids. We help each other out with financial advice and about savings plans. There's never a normal conversation, especially when you've been in the field for about four weeks."

Everyone shared one common interest in the field – what they were going to do on their leave period and who they have waiting for them at home.

"Everyone knows who is married or who has girlfriends because Marines tend to think about them a lot in the field," said Alvear.

"I have a girlfriend at home who I am planning to see during this [liberty period]," said Polanco. "I think about her just about every day, when I'm not working. We like to exchange stories about our relationships as well."

Downtime is never wasted in an artillery battery. Most of the Marines and Sailors share the same interest, which lead to similar conversations. Some Marines catch up on learning the weapon system. In all, there is never a dull moment during downtime in the field.



LANCE CPL. MICHAEL S. CIFUENTES

Lance Cpl. Haze L. McClary shares stories with Pfc. Rudy J. Gonzales and Lance Cpl. Enrique Cruz during downtime in Niland, Calif.

Fresh artillerymen begin journey with Mike Battery as journey comes to end for their leaders

LANCE CPL. MICHAEL S. CIFUENTES

COMBAT CORRESPONDENT

After returning from their deployment to Iraq in October 2005, Mike Battery picked back up as an artillery battery as their training commenced again.

During that deployment, the battery served as a military police force in Operation Iraqi Freedom and conducted detainee operations. The battery was broken down into platoon-sized units and dispatched throughout the country.

They now are scheduled to deploy to Okinawa, Japan, in the near future as part of the Unit Deployment Program, thus, returning to their profession as "cannoncookers."

Recently, the battery welcomed 20 new Marines, fresh from their military occupational specialty school in Ft. Sill, Okla., said Capt. Kevin M. Stout, Mike Battery's commanding officer.

"It's very timely to have them join us," said Stout, a Martinsville, Ind., native during a recent field operation in Niland, Calif. "We were manning only three guns [M777 Lightweight Howitzers] before they arrived. Now we were able to have five for this field operation."

The 20 new artillerymen are also contributing to the battery by replacing the several noncommissioned officers who foresee an end to their journey in the Corps.

Most of the NCOs who are serving their last months in the Corps came to the battery at roughly the same time. For many of them, and for a few since the very beginning, it's been a long journey.

"My whole class out of Ft. Sill came to 3/11 in May of 2003," said Cpl. Frank S. Cauthorn, an artilleryman with Mike Battery. "About 90 percent of the class came to Mike Battery. And about 70 percent of them are still with this battery."

The battery had the reputation of being the best artillery battery in 3/11, added Cauthorn, a Manteca, Calif., native. This reputation still lasts, as the 20 new Marines who joined Mike Battery, are realizing.

"I think the reason why we have been so successful is due to the fact that we've been working alongside each other for a very long time," said Cauthorn. "I've seen my friends in the battery go from private to corporal or sergeant."

Cauthorn is ending his career in January. He plans on attending California State

University, Chico.

"I remember the day we bunched up together when they were choosing who's going to which battery," said Gilliland, reflecting on the days shortly after he joined Mike Battery. "We were already familiar with each other so we wanted to stay with each other."

Over the past three years, the battery grew close together, said Gilliland, who is the father of 10-month-old, Michael Christopher. His close friend, and fellow artilleryman, Cpl. Nathaniel J. Chaney, is his son's Godfather.

"Looking back, I've seen Mike Battery go through some good times, fall into some very rough times, and we're back to good times, growing strong as an artillery unit," said Gilliland. "I've grown tremendously because of this unit. It was my leaders that made me the way I am. I know I have the same responsibility to the new Marines now."

"As a senior and a leader, I want these Marines to have the same cohesion we had these past three years," continued the Chula Vista, Calif., native. "Looking forward and into my future, I know I am going to miss this battery."

Gilliland looks forward to going into the remodeling business with his father and Chaney. Aside from business, he is also planning a marriage.

"There's no other place or job in this world that can compare to what we've done in this battery," said Cpl. Raul Cervantes, motor transportation driver with Mike Battery, who served alongside the artillerymen for the past three years. "We always know what's going on in each other's lives. We steer young Marines in the right direction. The section leaders really take care of their Marines. Sections go out with each other on the weekends."

"Everyone here talks about anything that's on their mind,

no matter what the issue is," continued the Los Angeles native. "You can't find that type of brotherhood anywhere else. It's hard to see people go their separate ways. But at the same time, I'm glad Mike Battery [received] some new good Marines."

As new artillerymen step foot into training and bonding with senior artillerymen, they become skeptical of what the battery was really about. They hear Mike Battery is the best artillery battery in 3/11 and are unsure what to expect. But most fit right in, Cauthorn said.

"It was tough getting to know how things were run here," said Pfc. Valente Polanco, a new artilleryman with the battery. "It's fast-paced learning. When it comes to the field, we [the new Marines] have to keep asking questions in order to learn how they use the howitzer. During our downtime, the NCOs ask us questions and get us to talk to one another."

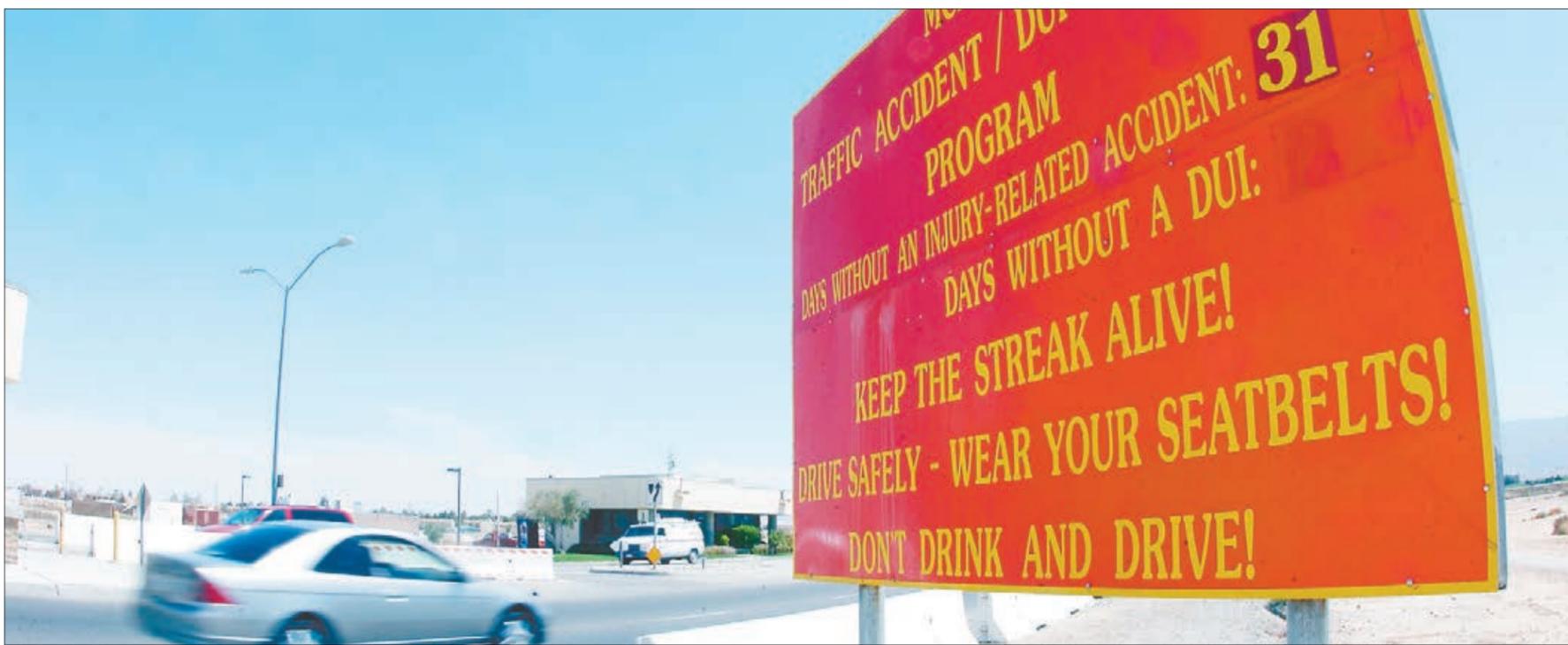
"They're good NCOs," added the McAllen, Texas, native. "They're really good leaders. I'm very glad to be a part of this. I don't want to be anywhere else but here with

these Marines in this battery."

It'll be a long run for the new Marines. It was for the 10 that came together August 2003, said Cauthorn.

"I see these Marines are mostly very young, but the Corps will teach them to mature a lot more," said Cauthorn. "I took it for what it's worth and that's what I want to pass on before I go."

As Cauthorn leaves the Corps, he'll take his memories with him, but, while he still has time, he hopes to leave his experience behind in the minds of the fresh Marines.



CPL. HEIDI E. LOREDO

The Marine Corps is close to losing as many Marines in vehicles as it has in Iraq. Force preservation is essential to mission accomplishment and has become a new challenge for Marine Corps commands.

Force preservation equals mission effectiveness

CPL. HEIDI E. LOREDO

COMBAT CORRESPONDENT

It's inevitable. All activities have risks. All risks can be managed, and mishaps can be prevented. Ultimately, all Marines are accountable.

Despite efforts to reduce mishaps, the Marine Corps failed to meet a challenge in 2003 presented by the secretary of defense to reduce mishaps by 50 percent within two years.

The new challenge for

Marine Corps commands is to reduce mishaps by 75 percent by the end of fiscal year 2008.

As a result, the Corps implemented their own crusade through the Warrior Preservation Campaign, an idea which refreshes the custom that Marines take care of their own, beginning at the small unit level.

Enhancing force preservation will prevent mishaps and reduce personnel loss. Force preservation concepts enhance combat readiness and reduce

the danger of all activities, on and off duty, while ensuring that individual judgment and unit responsibility preserve the Corps' most valuable assets. In the end, force preservation equals improved mission effectiveness.

Combat Center safety manager, William G. Huie, believes mentoring Marines beginning at the small unit level and clearly stating expectations both on and off duty, empowers leaders to affect a Marine's personal develop-

ment. Loss of life due to careless mishaps is unacceptable.

"In fiscal year 2005 more than two platoons of Marines died in personal motorized vehicles," said Huie. "If we lost two platoons in Iraq that would be a significant loss and it would affect the mission."

Huie said the Marine Corps took leadership lessons learned from Marines functioning in a combat environment and is attempting to create the same cohesion on the home front that exists on

the frontline.

"A fire team in battle is trained to instinctively know what their comrades are going to do," said Huie. "That's the same mentality we need to instill in Marines back here. We need to get all the Marines here to do what they do in battle — watch your buddy's back and keep him out of trouble."

During the 50 percent mishap reduction campaign there were 112 fatalities, equivalent to one Marine death every 78 hours accord-

ing to the Naval Safety Center. As of April 26, there have been 75 fatalities due to mishaps, mostly from motor vehicles.

"The Marine Corps is close to losing as many Marines in cars as we did in Iraq," said Huie.

A solution to the loss of life is to place more emphasis on the small unit leadership.

"Get to know your Marines," said Huie. "Know what they're doing and familiarize yourself with their behavior. The rules are there, make sure everybody knows them because it's not a matter of whether the Marine doesn't know the rules. Marines know the rules, sometimes they just choose to ignore them."

Operational risk management is critical to having a safety-conscious Marine Corps team able to sustain its lethality, meet operational commitments and always be ready to meet unexpected surge requirements, all while protecting the Corps' most valued asset, the Marines.

In combat Marines protect each other with watchful eyes. Huie said when Marines return they act as individuals and the unit cohesiveness disappears.

"Get your Marines to watch each other and to take good care of each other walking down the street in Yucca Valley just as they would in Fallujah."

Road to progress: 3rd LAR Marines train Iraqi soldiers in urban military tactics

CPL. GRAHAM A. PAULSGROVE
REGIMENTAL COMBAT TEAM 7

JOINT BORDER COORDINATION CENTER RUTBAH, Iraq — After four days of patrolling the vast deserts of southern Al Anbar Province, the revolving patrols of Marines return to their base here for a day or two of rest before going back “outside the wire.”

That is, all except for two: Cpl. Jeremy D. Quackenbush and Cpl. Travis L. Cooter.

The two Marines, both assigned to 3rd Light Armored Reconnaissance Battalion, are charged with more than just patrolling Iraq’s dangerous roads and searching for insurgents in towns and cities.

The Twentynine Palms, Calif.-based battalion provides security in this remote city surrounded by desert. They also are charged with assisting Iraqi Security Forces in eventually relieving Coalition Forces in Al Anbar Province.

While other Marines use their time off to clean weapons, watch movies on DVDs, and converse about their lives back in the States, these two Marines are teaching critical counterinsurgency skills to about a dozen Iraqi soldiers here.

From urban combat patrolling to reacting to enemy contact and improvised explosive devices, these two Marines have spent several days conducting refresher training on such tactics, techniques and procedures deemed necessary for Iraqi soldiers to learn to effectively operate in this combat environment.

“[Cooter and Quackenbush] were chosen because these guys are good at what they do. They know their job and I knew they would do well with this assignment,” said Philadelphia native, 2nd Lt. James A. Brobyn, 27, the Marines’ platoon commander. “They have taught the info to

enough Marines, so teaching a few Iraqis shouldn’t be hard.”

The battalion took control of their area of operations, spanning from the Jordanian and Syrian borders to an area 120 miles east and has been working alongside Iraqi forces to maintain security and stability in the region, to include manning the checkpoints surrounding the main city in the region, Rutbah.

Working through an interpreter, the two Marines explained basic patrolling formations, how to react to sniper fire and improvised explosive devices, as well as reacting to a complex ambush, according to Cooter, a 20-year-old from Denver and platoon team leader.

“They were all quick learners — I was impressed,” said Cooter.

After a few hours of classes, the two Marines watched the Iraqi soldiers practice what they learned at the joint Coalition-Iraqi base here.

For the most part, the Iraqis learned the techniques quickly, and demonstrated they understood what they were taught, said Cooter.

“The majority of [the Iraqi Soldiers] are combat vets from Hit, Haditha and Baghdad, so they are pretty good,” said Cooter. “We’re going to be out there with them, so it is nice that we are not starting from scratch.”

While the practice patrols ran smoothly, it wasn’t completely free of problems. The two Marines said the Iraqis still need to work on communication techniques, but that will come with more practice. The language barrier between the Marines and the Iraqis also presented a unique challenge.

“The language barrier is a large obstacle, but we have a good interpreter,” said Cooter. “It was difficult to get all the commands passed, because we only had one interpreter



CPL. GRAHAM A. PAULSGROVE

From urban combat patrolling to reacting to enemy contact and improvised explosive devices, Iraqi soldiers operating in Rutbah, Iraq, are being taught refresher training on various military tactics and techniques by 3rd LAR.

and a lot of guys in the formation, so a few people didn’t know what was going on.”

Despite the cultural and language differences, a common bond was made between the Iraqi Soldiers and the Marines, according to both parties.

“These guys are just like me — they’re doing their part to help,” said Quackenbush, a 28-year-old from Pittsburgh. “The small unit training, such as refreshing a platoon of Iraqis on basic tactics, plays into a much larger role regarding the country’s future.”

By helping the Iraqis become more tactically proficient, the Marines’ efforts are helping the Iraqis progress toward operating independent of Coalition Forces’ assistance, according to Stafford, Va., native 1st Lt. Joseph R.

Shusko, 25, the executive officer for the battalion’s Company A. “By making sure these soldiers are up to our standards, the training will help get the Iraqis to complete missions with just

our supervision and make them the main effort.”

Currently, the Iraqi Soldiers working around Rutbah rotate to a different part of the country every three weeks, but the area is slated to

receive a fixed unit of Iraqi Security Forces some time in the near future, according to Brobyn.

“These guys are serious — they want to make Iraq better,” concluded Brobyn.

MCCES civilian employee of the year

Susan E. Fox, Marine Corps Communication-Electronics School supply, receives her plaque for being selected as the MCCES civilian employee of the year April 26 during a ceremony at the Officer's Club. Fox, who also received a 16-hour time off of work certificate, was selected out of 24 employees who were submitted for eight different award categories.

CPL. BRIAN A. TUTHILL



Base Tel defeats ESD, 7-5 in CG softball action

LANCE CPL. REGINA N. ORTIZ
COMBAT CORRESPONDENT

In the second week of the Combat Center Commanding General's Intramural Softball League, Communication and Data Directorate's softball team, Base Tel, defeated Exercise Support Division's team, 7-5, in a game Tuesday at Felix Field.

In the seventh inning Base Tel solidified their victory by stopping a potential comeback when left fielder, George Martinez, caught a fly ball hit by ESD's pitcher, Anthony McWilliams, making the third and final out of the game.

The first inning was eventful for Base Tel, who had scored five runs and prevented any scoring by ESD.

During the next four innings, no runs were scored by either team.

In the top of the fifth inning, Base Tel's left-center fielder, Steven Hadsell, hit the ball far enough to get to first base. Then, keeping him moving, the next batter, Martinez, sailed one away to get Hadsell to third base and himself to first.

One base away from scoring, Base Tel's right-center fielder, John Mechaley, was up to bat. Mechaley kept his eye on the ball, picked one good pitch and hit it far enough for Hadsell to walk across home base and put Martinez safe at second base.

Next up to bat was second baseman, Jamie Authement, who hit a fly ball in between the left out fielders, giving himself a double, pushing Mechaley to third and bringing Martinez home. Base Tel scored two more runs, making the score 7-0 at the bottom of the fifth.

At the bottom of the sixth, ESD needed to make some moves. McWilliams, stepped up to the plate and hit a low grounder past Base Tel's third baseman, Jerrold Ross, and made it to first. But when right center fielder, Mimi Cottrell, smacked a single out to left center, McWilliams was tagged out on his way to second base.

Then, Base Tel's pitcher, John Patton, walked shortstop, Austin Yu, sending Cottrell to second, as catcher, Humberto Rodriguez came to bat. Rodriguez hit the ball over the infield and between the right-out fielders, filling the bases.

Left-center fielder, Roberto Brown, was up to bat next with the bases loaded. He waited for the right pitch and then hit a groundball triple between the legs of Base Tel's first baseman, Larry Gulick. That left Base Tel's right fielder, Darryl Taber, scrambling over the ball while Cottrell ran home with Yu and Rodriguez trailing close behind, scoring three runs, with Brown safe at third. The fifth inning ended with the score at 7-3.

For the remainder of the game, Base Tel kept up a decent defense, but lost their offense, not scoring any runs. This gave ESD a slight chance of a comeback as they stepped up to bat in the seventh and final inning.

ESD's first baseman Dalton Black hit a line-drive single that bounced off the chest of Base Tel's third baseman, Ross.

Then with Black ready to run at first, ESD's left fielder, James Molloy, hit an in-the-park homerun, scoring two runs.

That would be the last two runs of the game, when the next three outs were made with all pop flies caught in the outfield.

The game ended with a Base Tel win, 7-5. Base Tel now has a 2-2 record so far for the season, and ESD went home with a 0-3 record.

For Base Tel, credit for their defensive play went to their pitcher, said Gulick.

"I think the significant player last night was our pitcher, John Patton, because of his ability to suck up any ball hit up

the middle," he explained the next day.

The rest of the team claims it's nice to win, but they play for the fun of the sport, said Adrian Samson, Base Tel's shortstop.

"The game went well," he said. "We were out here having a good time and as long as we play together, we usually win."

"Although ESD lost, they have hopes of seeing victory when the rest of their team comes back to finish the season, said ESD's Black.

"We're not as bad as our record shows," he explained. "We're missing half of our team so we don't have many options for our line up."

But right fielder, Jacob Smith, believes there's more to it than half the team missing, he said.

"We're not waiting for the best pitch," he said. "We go after the first one and it usually isn't the most effective one."

Games are scheduled to be played every Tuesday and Thursday evening and some Wednesday evenings at Felix Field.

Commanding General's Intramural Softball League Standings as of Tuesday

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

Final scores from Tuesday's games:

- Installation Personnel Administration Center beat Naval Hospital, 14-12.
- Staff Judge Advocate beat Headquarters Battalion, 15-4.
- 3rd Battalion, 11th Marine Regiment, beat HQBN 2, 15-1.
- 1st Tank Battalion beat Tactical Training Exercise Control Group, 12-0.
- Marine Corps Communication-Electronics School beat HQBN 2, 17-6.
- Tanks beat 2nd Battalion, 7th Marine Regiment, 16-14.



LANCE CPL. REGINA N. ORTIZ
Exercise Support Division's pitcher, Anthony McWilliams, pitches the ball to Base Tel's batters.



LANCE CPL. REGINA N. ORTIZ
Base Tel's coach and first baseman, Larry Gulick, is ready to swing at a pitch from ESD's pitcher, Anthony McWilliams.

Combat Center volunteers save \$1.5 million

CPL. BRIAN A. TUTHILL
COMBAT CORRESPONDENT

Volunteers from around the Combat Center were recognized for their dedication and service throughout 2005 in a ceremony April 26 at the Community Center.

More than 125 people turned out as 12 volunteer programs were recognized, representing more than 700 volunteers who saved \$1,586,063.63 for their 95,546 hours of work.

The amount of hours volunteered and money saved was an increase from last year's \$1.3 million.

Recognized at the event were the coordinators of the Key Volunteer Network, Religious Ministries, Navy-Marine Corps Relief Society, American Red Cross, Armed Services YMCA, Toys for Tots, Single Marine Program, retired affairs, youth programs, Lifestyle Insights, Networking and Skills spousal education program and the Official Huggers.

Christina Curtin, coordinator for volunteer programs aboard the base, presented Brig. Gen. Douglas M. Stone, Combat Center commanding general, with a check representing the money saved by volunteers according to the national hourly volunteer worth.

"I thank you for donating your time and energy and for the inspiration you give us," Stone said to the crowd. "There are hundreds of thousands of people out there who have been the

recipients of your kindness; people who you have touched.

"I stand here today, not as a guest speaker, but as a representative for all of those people to be able to say, 'Thank you,'" Stone said.

In addition to recognizing programs, attendees also participated in a door prize raffle for gifts donated by Marine Corps Community Services.

"Without our volunteers, what we do would not be possible," said Navy Capt. David A. Starkey, director of Religious Ministries. "I want to thank you all from the bottom of my heart. Your reward is far greater than a piece of paper."

One volunteer with the Official Huggers program was singled out by Larry Stratton, head of MCCS Family Teambuilding, as he spoke about the program.

"There is one lady who has been the pillar of the Official

Huggers program," Stratton said. "She's been out there through the cold and in the middle of the night. She moved me to tears once when she hugged a Marine leaving for Iraq and told him, 'This is for your momma.' I cried, she cried, the Marine cried and he said, 'Thank you, mom.' Then he left. That special lady is Jany Wasdin."

Wasdin received a standing ovation from the room as Stone and Sgt. Maj. William Johnson, Combat Center sergeant major, both walked over and gave her a hug to thank her for her outstanding dedication.

Curtin then again took the podium to convey her final thoughts as the ceremony closed.

"It's a privilege to recognize all of you today," she said. "So for your skills and your talents and your sacrifices to our military families aboard this base, thank you."



CPL. BRIAN A. TUTHILL
Jany Wasdin, a MCCS Official Hugger, receives a hug from Brig. Gen. Douglas M. Stone, Combat Center commanding general and Sgt. Maj. William Johnson.



CPL. BRIAN A. TUTHILL
Christina Curtin, a coordinator for volunteer programs aboard the Combat Center, presents Brig. Gen. Douglas M. Stone, Combat Center commanding general, with a check for \$1.5 million in money saved by base volunteer efforts.

American Red Cross gives lifesaving tools in CPR, conducts first aid class



Lance Cpl. Phillip Bernocco, 1st Tank Battalion, practices applying a splint to his wife, Amy, during an American Red Cross CPR and first aid class at the Village Center Saturday.

LANCE CPL. REGINA N. ORTIZ
COMBAT CORRESPONDENT

With more than 75 to 80 percent of all out-of-hospital cardiac arrests happening at home, and 7 to 10 percent of a victim's survival chances dropping every minute cardiopulmonary resuscitation is delayed, having the skills to provide CPR can help save the life of a family member or friend.

The American Red Cross held a first aid and CPR class to give those tools to Combat Center community members at the Village Center Saturday.

People who completed the class were given certification of the acquired skills from the eight-hour class.

First aid and CPR certification opens many doors for employment and life opportunities, said Navy Lt. Nicole Panos, volunteer instructor, ARC.

"There are a lot of jobs that have the CPR and first aid certification as a prerequisite," she explained. "Jobs such as an EMT (emergency medical technician) or a childcare provider. People in those professions need to keep their certification up to date."

The CPR certification is valid for a year and the first aid certification expires after three years, said Panos.

For Lance Cpl. Phillip Bernocco and his wife, Amy, both 22, completing the course will mean they will be able to foster a child.

If having their 5-month old daughter, Lucy, isn't enough, they want to help the community and provide a good home to a child in need, said Amy.

"I love kids," she said. "I want to help people as much as I can."

Not only for the sake of their children, but the Bernoccos are taking this course for the sake of helping anyone in need, they said.

"You never know when you're going to be in a situation where you can save someone's life," said Amy. "I want to be able to know what to do when something happens to one of my children, or to anyone for that matter."

As a Marine, reacting to emergency situations and knowing how to react is part of the training, said Bernocco.

"These are skills we are taught in basic training, but are important to continue learning throughout your life," explained Bernocco. "Especially being in the combat zone, it could be a matter of life or death."

The course is taught through a series of workbook exercises, lectures, videos and tests. There are three different types of CPR taught: adult, infant and child. Then, basic first aid procedures are covered. This includes the Heimlich maneuver, how to apply splints, and sudden illness response.

"The main idea is to give people the tools to be able to stabilize a medical emergency until professional medical assistance is available," said Panos. "We want people to feel confident that even though they are not a doctor or a medical expert, they can make a difference in an emergency situation."

The CPR and first aid class is held every month at the Combat Center. There are classes given more frequently at the Morongo Basin American Red Cross Chapter in Joshua Tree, Calif., about 20 miles from the Combat Center. There is a \$50 fee that goes toward class supplies and certification cards. For more information on the next ARC CPR and first aid class, call 760-366-5330.

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, at Hashmarks Staff NCO Club from 9 p.m. to 1 a.m. Enjoy prize giveaways, food, and music. Cost is \$5 for singles and \$8 for couples. 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," Saturday 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 vender 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 and 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?

In one day, an average person will take 18,000 steps.

2005 Marine Corps Athletes of the Year announced

PRESS RELEASE

MCB QUANTICO, VA — Sgt. Jeremy Brown and Sgt. Kristin Taft have been selected as the U.S. Marine Corps Male and Female Athletes of the Year for 2005.

The pair will be honored at the Marine Corps Sports Hall of Fame Induction Luncheon Ceremony at the Clubs at Quantico in Quantico, VA. The ceremony is scheduled for 28 July 2006.

Brown, the head of the Separations Section of the Consolidated Administration center at Marine Corps Air Station Miramar, Calif., was a member of multiple All-Marine teams and the first Marine to cross the finish line at the 2005 Marine Corps Marathon. During 2005, Brown won the Silver Strand Half Marathon, Pacific Beach 8K, and several other events in Southern California. In addition, Brown was the top finisher of multiple 5k races at Marine Corps Recruit Depot San Diego and MCAS Miramar. Brown finished the year winning the MCAS Miramar Cross Country Championship and captured his second consecutive title as All-Marine Cross Country Champion. For his accomplishments, MCAS Miramar named Sergeant Brown the Base Athlete of the Year.

Taft, a supply sergeant assigned to Headquarters and Services Battalion at Marine Corps Base Hawaii, was the starting pitcher for the All-Marine Women's Softball Team and the MCB Hawaii Female Athlete of the Year. During 2005, Taft was a member of numerous local Hawaiian softball teams, leading the base Women's Team to an undefeated season. Selected to the All-Marine Women's Softball team for a fourth time, Taft led the team to a second place finish at the National Softball Association State Championship in Phoenix. In addition, Taft was also a member of MCB Hawaii's Women's Basketball team.

For more information about the Athlete's of the Year program or the Marine Corps Sports Hall of Fame, please contact Steven Dinote, HQMC Semper Fit, (703) 784-9542 or E-mail: steven.dinote@usmc.mil.

HEAT CONDITIONS FLAG COLORS

GREEN
80° – 84.9°*

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

YELLOW
85° – 87.9°*

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

RED
88° – 89.9°*

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

BLACK
90°* – ABOVE

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

All unit PT must have water available

For current Heat Conditions Flag status, call 830-2190.

*According to the Wet Bulb Globe Temperature index



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SMP Marines give back to community

CPL. BRIAN A. TUTHILL

COMBAT CORRESPONDENT

TWENTYNINE PALMS, Calif. — Combat Center Marines with the Single Marine Program volunteered their time Saturday to help out their local community at Luckie Park.

Nine Marines from various battalions around base donated their time and efforts to support the Twentynine Palms High School-hosted swim meet which included seven regional high schools, and more than 100 swimmers and spectators in attendance.

Single Marines from 3rd Battalion, 11th Marine Regiment; 2nd Battalion, 7th Marine Regiment; 3rd Battalion, 4th Marine Regiment; and the Marine Corps Communication-Electronics School donated their time to help set up, tear down, keep time and work concessions stands, said Irene Beard, meet manager.

“You have to have the volunteers in order to run this meet, if you don’t have them, we could not do it,” Beard said. “We loved having the Marines out here today, they were great. We’ve invited them back for our next meet here June 3, and hopefully any other swim meets we have in the future, too.”

Lance Cpl. Jeffery A. Rocha, rifleman, Echo Company, 2/7, said he enjoys volunteering in the community because he feels he gets something more in return.

“I really like helping, it’s my heart’s desire, helping and trying to encourage others,” said Rocha, a 21-year-old Saipan native. “I want to

have more time to myself and have some time to breathe away from base. This gives me the opportunity to make new friends and just help out in the community for the love of it. It also helps put out a positive image about the Marine Corps.

“I’ve had a good time out here today and I’ll [volunteer] again,” Rocha added.

As the day heated up, Marines cooled off by staying in the shade, drinking plenty of water or staying poolside and hoping for a high-flying splash to come their way as Heather Fiske, SMP coordinator did.

“A lot of organizations have put SMP on their calendars to help out, and new ones are asking for us more and more,” said Fiske, who has seen a boom in SMP community volunteer events in recent months. “The guys have a great time — I mean they truly had a blast. They don’t care if it’s a recreation trip or of it’s community involvement, they are mostly just looking for something to do on the weekend.

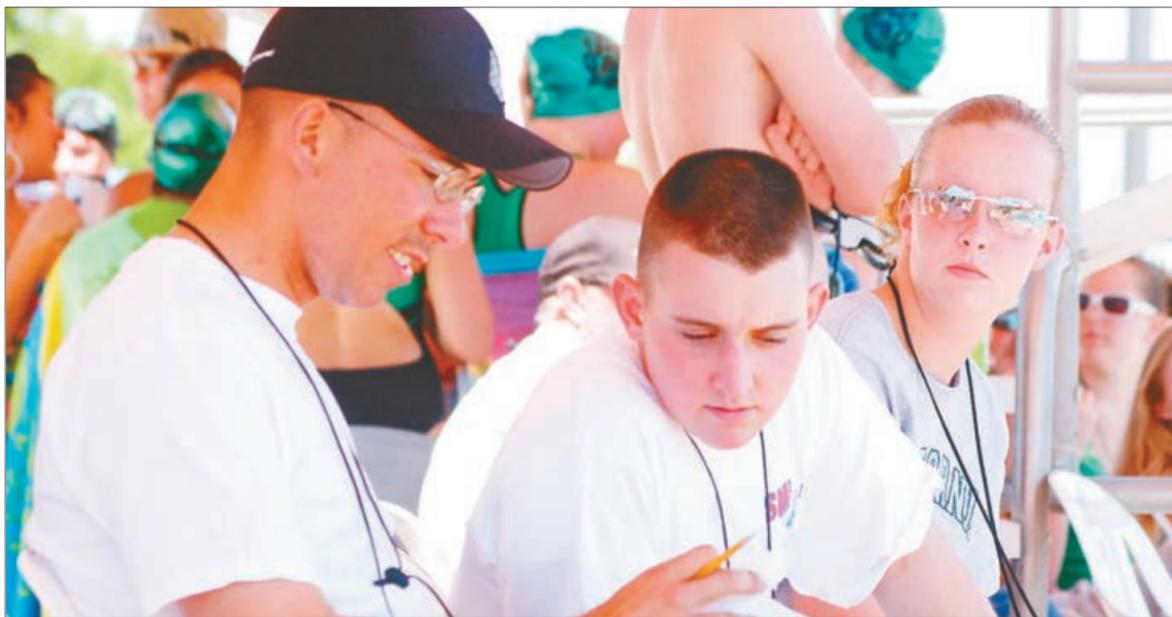
“The community support is just as much fun as a trip because most find that they really enjoy helping out and working with the local youths,” continued Fiske, who has also scheduled SMP to help out with the upcoming soapbox derby, Special Olympics, swim meets and the Marine Corps Community Services “We Salute You” concert.

“We’re starting to get more and more attention in the community,” said Fiske. “Word is getting out about SMP.”



CPL. BRIAN A. TUTHILL

Swimmers warm up in the Luckie Park pool prior to a swim meet Saturday where nine Combat Center Marines assisted with the event.



CPL. BRIAN A. TUTHILL

Volunteer timers Lance Cpl. Steven Kidder, Weapons Company, 3/4, and Pvt. Ryan Bennett, MCCES, time swimmers during a swim meet Saturday at Luckie Park.