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VOL. 52 NO. 24
June 16, 2006



OBSERVATION POST



BULK RATE
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Permit No. 8

THIS ISSUE

A5 - Bronze star

B1 - Bowling

B2 - Soccer

HOT TOPICS

RECRUITER SCREENING

The Headquarters Marine Corps Recruiters Screening Team will visit the Combat Center Thursday at the Protestant Chapel to screen pre-designated enlisted Marines for potential future assignment on recruiting duty. Corporals and above who are not on the pre-designated HRST list may volunteer for HRST screening. They must contact their unit Career Retention Specialist and complete the necessary paperwork ahead of time. All Marines who will be screened have to be at the Protestant Chapel at 7:45 a.m. For more information, contact The Base Career Retention Specialist, GySgt. Whitaker at 830-6171 or your unit CRS.

SECURITY GUARD SCREENING

The Headquarters Marine Corps Marine Security Guard screening team will visit the Combat Center on June 30 at the Catholic Chapel to screen enlisted Marines for potential future assignment on Marine Security Guard Duty. The MSG briefs will be provided to all interested Marines to explain pertinent information relating to their career when they are assigned a tour of duty as a Marine Security Guard. All Marines who will be screened have to be at the Catholic Chapel at 7:45 a.m. For more information, contact The Base Career Retention Specialist, GySgt. Whitaker at 830-6171 or your unit CRS.

RED CROSS CPR & FIRST AID CLASSES

The 29 Palms Red Cross is offering an Adult, Child and Infant CPR and First Aid Class June 24, 8 a.m. to 6 p.m. in the Village Center (Bldg 1551). Cost is \$48. For more information and to register for class, please call 830-6685.

COMING NEXT ISSUE

- Wounded Warrior Fund
- Bronze Star
- 3/11 Change of Command

THIS DAY IN MARINE CORPS HISTORY

June 16, 1944

Marines of 2nd and 4th Divisions move against heavy opposition in Saipan.



Gen. Michael W. Hagee, commandant of the Marine Corps, smiles as Combat Center I Marine Expeditionary Force members surround him in a school circle Monday on the commanding general's parade field.



Sgt. Maj. John L. Estrada, sergeant major of the Marine Corps, accompanied Gen. Michael W. Hagee, commandant of the Marine Corps, as they came to the Combat Center Monday to talk to all Combat Center Marines, Sailors and spouses regarding current issues in the Marine Corps and core values.

Commandant speaks his mind at Combat Center

LANCE CPL. MICHAEL S. CIFUENTES
COMBAT CORRESPONDENT

General Michael W. Hagee, commandant of the Marine Corps, and Sgt. Maj. John L. Estrada, sergeant major of the Marine Corps, visited the Combat Center Monday to give a brief to all Combat Center Marines, Sailors and their spouses.

The issues the commandant addressed were the progress on the war in Iraq, the Haditha and Hamdaniya incidents in Iraq, the 231-year-old Marine Corps legacy and the expectations of Marines in combat.

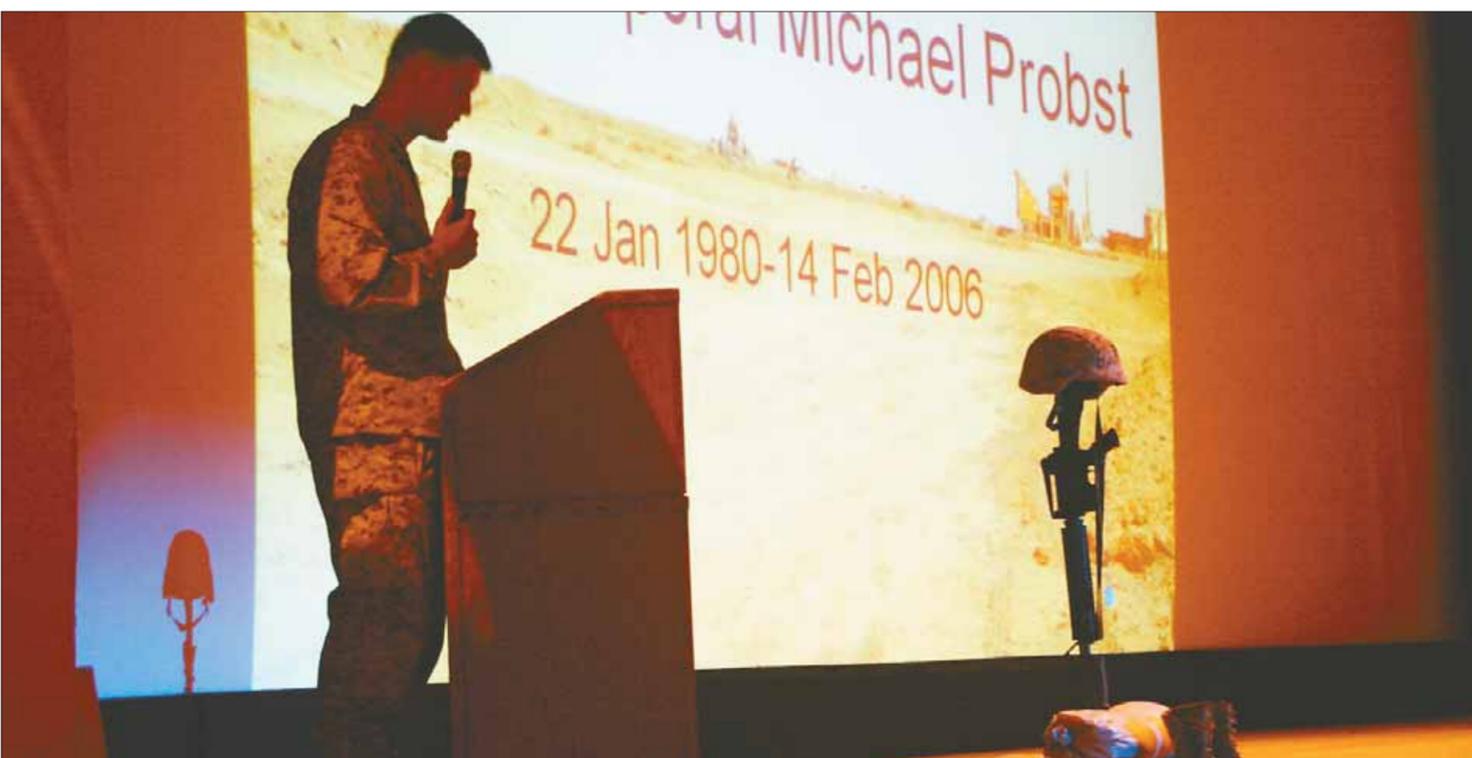
Two of the briefs were held on the commanding general's parade field for

the I Marine Expeditionary Forces and for Headquarters Battalion, the Marine Corps Communication-Electronics School and 2nd Battalion, 4th Marine Regiment who are currently aboard the Combat Center for Mojave Viper. There was also a brief for battalion commanding officers and sergeants major in the commanding general's conference room, and a brief in the Officers' Club for Marine and Sailor spouses.

The commandant began his brief to the I MEF units with his current feelings on Marine Corps efforts in Iraq.

"We're at war right now," Hagee said to the

See **COMMANDANT, A4**



Cpl. Brian Sears of 1st Tank Battalion begins the first reading during a memorial service for Lance Cpl. Michael Probst at the base theater.

1st Tanks remembers fallen brother

CPL. EVAN M. EAGAN
COMBAT CORRESPONDENT

The Marines, Sailors, family and friends of 1st Tank Battalion's Lance Cpl. Michael Probst gathered at the base theater Wednesday to remember the Marine who gave his life in support of Operation Iraqi Freedom earlier this year.

Probst, who was a member of Tow Platoon, Headquarters and Service Company, was killed by an improvised explosive device blast Feb. 14, while conducting combat operations in Iraq's Al Anbar province.

An Irvine, Calif. native, Probst enlisted in the

Marine Corps in November 2004 after attending college at California State University, Chico. Putting his college career on hold, Probst answered his call to serve.

"Michael Probst was a selfless man," said Lt. Col. Aaron T. Slaughter, 1st Tank Battalion commanding officer. "He was drawn to our Corps by a sense of duty, a duty which he faithfully and bravely performed until he was killed. Killed by an enemy who wants to kill hope."

Probst was killed on Valentine's Day with Wednesday's memorial service coming exactly four months later.

During the service, Probst was remembered by

many as a man of faith, loyalty, intelligence and honor.

"We were at war when he enlisted, the War on Terrorism, and he knew the risks," said Slaughter. "He knew the risks of losing his friends, he knew the risks of personal injury, and he knew the risk of death. He also knew his fellow Marines needed him, and he was always there for them. Michael knew the freedom this country had given him."

Friends who served with Probst spoke during the service.

Lance Cpl. Angel Sanchez, a TOW gunner and

See **PROBST, A5**

Birth announcements

Sempertoons

By Gunnery Sgt. Charles Wolf



Jalynne Nichole Gill
Daughter of Lance Cpl. and Mrs. Jerred Gill
Born May 2, 2006
Weighing 7lbs 9oz and measuring 21 inches

Allison Paige Richards
Daughter of Lance Cpl. and Mrs. Robert Richards
Born May 3, 2006
Weighing 8lbs 1oz and measuring 21 inches

Alexandra Kay Petra
Daughter of Sgt. and Mrs. Jeff Petra
Born May 4, 2006
Weighing 8lbs 2oz and measuring 22 inches

Cecily Elizabeth de Sanclis
Daughter of Sgt. and Mrs. Christopher de Sanclis
Born May 5, 2006
Weighing 6lbs 4oz and measuring 19.7 inches

Kaleb Anthony Gonzalez
Son of Cpl. and Mrs. Charles Gonzalez
Born May 7, 2006
Weighing 8lbs 4oz and measuring 21.3 inches

Morgan Dawn Phillips
Daughter of Gunnery Sgt. and Mrs. Randy Phillips
Born May 8, 2006
Weighing 7lbs 8oz and measuring 20.9 inches

Simon Emmanuelle Wayne Kruppa
Son of Cpl. and Mrs. Hermann Kruppa
Born May 8, 2006
Weighing 8lbs 15oz and measuring 21.4 inches

Marcus Alexander Gutierrez
Son of Lance Cpl. and Mrs. Gutierrez
Born May 9, 2006
Weighing 5lbs 11oz and measuring 19.5 inches

Michael Troy Trejo, Jr.
Son of Michael Trejo and Maria Madrigal
Born May 11, 2006
Weighing 7lbs and measuring 20 inches

Justin Figueira
Son of Lance Cpl. Sherdell Figueira
Born May 12, 2006
Weighing 5lbs 7oz and measuring 19 inches

Jessalla Dawn Landers
Daughter of Lance Cpl. and Mrs. Matthew Landers
Born May 16, 2006
Weighing 6lbs 7oz and measuring 20.4 inches

Nicholas Nathaniel Sandoval
Son of Cpl. and Mrs. Jose Sandoval
Born May 16, 2006
Weighing 7lbs 1oz

Caleigh Lynn Goss
Daughter of Sgt. and Mrs. Jeremy Goss
Born May 17, 2006
Weighing 7lbs 10oz and measuring 20.2 inches

Elijah Michael Penney
Son of Lance Cpl. and Mrs. Michael Penney
Born May 19, 2006
Weighing 8lbs 9oz and measuring 21 inches

SemperToons SAFETY Presents:
"DON'T BE A Jet Ski KNUCKLE HEAD"

5TMRPTOONS.COM

- Your family and Corps depend on you -

C.O.P. Corner

Community Oriented Policing

The proactive voice of crime prevention



Presented by the Provost Marshal's Office Crime Prevention Section

Unattended Juveniles

As summer break begins, there will be more children left unattended due to the fact that one or more of their parents work. Some parents may feel that their child may be responsible enough to be left alone, however, make sure that you are in compliance with the Combat Center regulations.

Combat Center Order 1754.2 states:

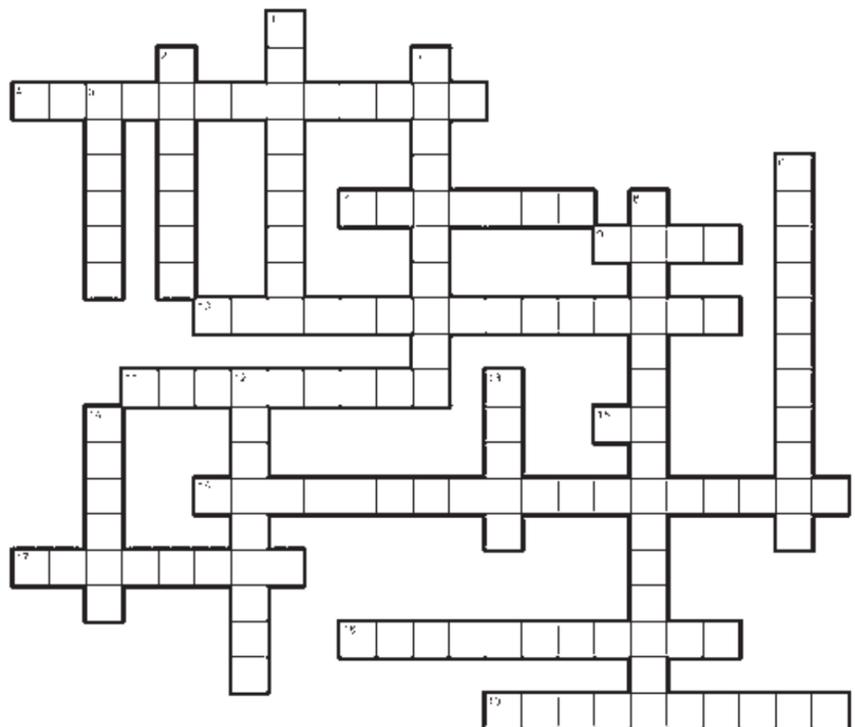
- Children 9 years and under may not be left unattended to include playgrounds, vehicles while shopping, and walking to school.
- Children 15 years and under may not be left unattended overnight.
- Children 12-15 years of age may babysit other children, but not overnight.
- Children 16 years or older may babysit other children overnight.

Contact the Child Development Center for enrollment or for a list of certified sitters.

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

NAME THAT MOVIE



ACROSS

- "We got no food, no jobs... our pet's heads are falling off!"
- "Here's Johnny!" -The _____
- "You're gonna need a bigger boat."
- "The dead know only one thing: it is better to be alive."
- "In Sicily, women are more dangerous than shotguns." -The _____
- "Beeeeeee... Gooood."
- "Yeah. The funny thing is — on the outside, I was an honest man, straight as an arrow. I had to come to prison to be a crook." -The _____
- "Who put this thing together? Me, that's who! Who do I trust? Me!"
- "Mama says they was magic shoes. They could take me anywhere."
- "...to come back here and tell our enemies that they may take our lives, but they'll never take... our freedom!"

DOWN

- "If you can dodge a wrench, you can dodge a ball."
- "I'm an excellent driver."
- "I'll be back." -The _____
- "I'm trying to free your mind, Neo. But I can only show you the door. You're the one that has to walk through it." -The _____
- "What ain't no country I ever heard of! They speak English in 'What?'"
- "Wait a minute, Doc. Ah... Are you telling me you built a time machine... out of a DeLorean?"
- "I want you to do me a favor." "Yea sure..." "I want you to hit me as hard as you can." "What in the face?" "Surprise me."
- "You're gonna eat lightning' and you're gonna crap thunder!"
- "Have you ever danced with the devil by the pale moon light?"

[Solutions on A7]

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

ARRIVE ALIVE
MARINE CORPS AIR GROUND COMBAT CENTER

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

Distinctions WE ALL MAKE A DIFFERENCE

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

Centerspeak

"Do you feel the death of Abu Musab al-Zarqawi will make Iraq more safe?"

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



PFC. STEVEN MITCHELL
H & S Co., 3/4

"Yes, it's taking their leader out so things should get better."



SEAMAN CHRIS HAWKINS
H & S Co., 2/7

"It may be the death of their leader but they may become that much more aggressive to show their new leader is untouchable."



CPL. ADEDAYO ADEMOYE
H & S Co., 1ST TANK BN.

"Yes, he was the head and hopefully the Iraqis will see it in a positive light."



SGT. CURTIS KELLING
SECURITY Co., CLB-7

"No, because someone will try to fill his spot."

What's on your mind?

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

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

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

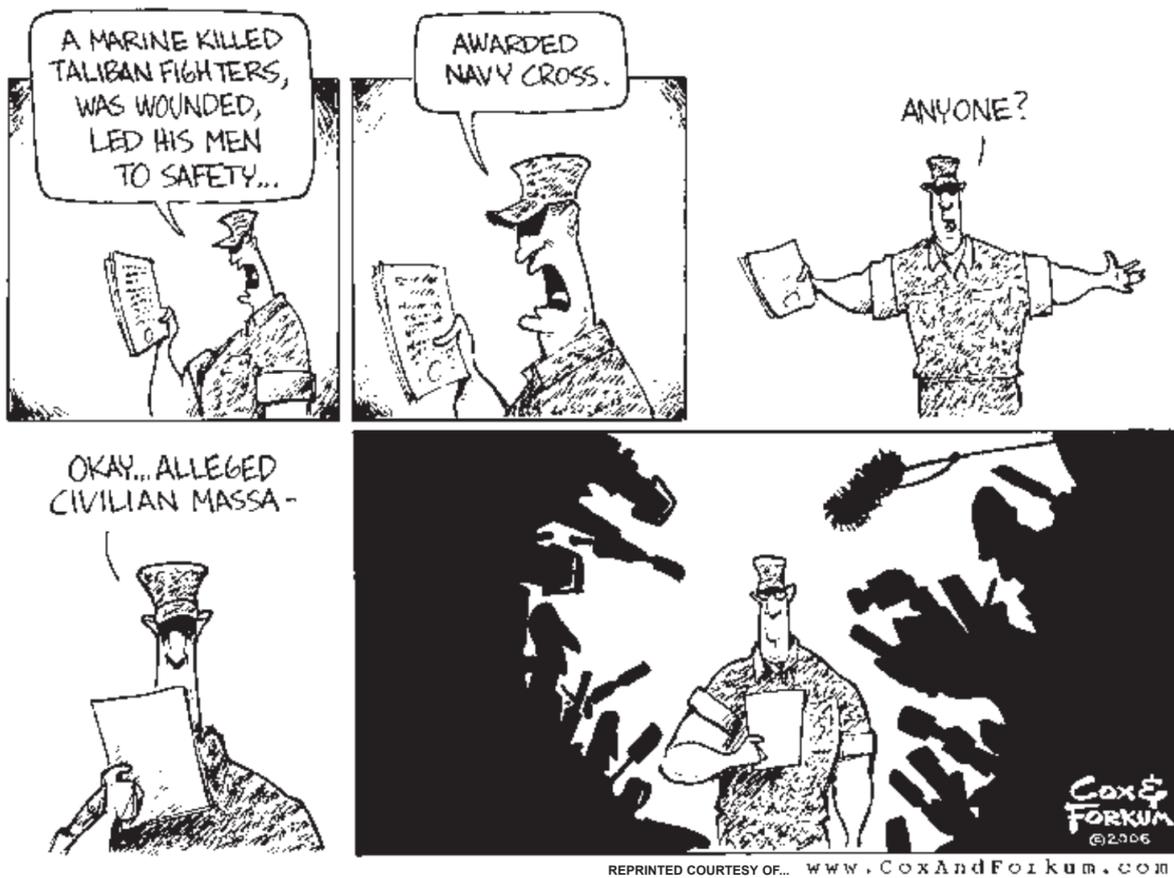
OBSERVATION POST

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Combat Correspondent

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Gunnery Sgt. Chris W. Cox
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
Lance Cpl. Katelyn A. Knauer

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'Art and Science Tuesdays' at Hi-Desert Nature Museum

PRESS RELEASE

YUCCA VALLEY, Calif.— Every Tuesday morning, from 10 a.m. to noon, July 11 through August 8, the Hi-Desert Nature Museum is hosting Art and Science sessions for kids ages 6 to 14. These hands-on, two-hour adventures will vary from art to science as well as age groups. The cost for each class and child will be \$5. Class size is limited to 12 children. Please sign up at the Hi-Desert Nature Museum.

“Clay Creatures” is the first session scheduled for July 11. This session is for children 6 to 10 years. Dig your fingers into the clay and let your imagination go wild. Make your very own life-like or fantasy creatures. Classes are filling up fast, please register soon.

The Hi-Desert Nature Museum is located in the Yucca Valley Community Center Complex, 57116 Twentynine Palms Highway, and is open Tuesday through Sunday from 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. For more information, call the Hi-Desert Nature Museum at 369-7212.

Leave animals at home, not in vehicles

PRESS RELEASE

TWENTYNINE PALMS, Calif. — Summer has arrived, and with the heat, the City has begun receiving calls on dogs left in cars. Many of us love to take our dogs with us when we run errands, intending to only leave them in the car for a few minutes. In the summer, however, this is a dangerous practice. When temperatures approach 100 degrees, the interior of cars can exceed 140 degrees, even when the windows are rolled down a few inches.

Animals don't sweat like humans. They can only cool themselves by panting and sweating through their paws. Animals trapped inside a hot car can suffer brain damage or heatstroke in just 15 minutes. The animal's body temperature can climb from a

normal 102.5 degrees to deadly levels, then damage begins to occur to the nervous and cardiovascular systems, often leaving the animal comatose, dehydrated and at risk of permanent impairment or death.

Leaving the car running with the air conditioning on is not the answer either. When the car is idling, the air conditioner's effectiveness is greatly reduced. The air conditioner can also unexpectedly shut

off in the heat, allowing the animal to broil in front of air ducts blowing heated air. Leaving a bowl of water for the animal doesn't help the animal to reduce its core temperature.

When City Animal Control Officers find an animal locked in an overheated car, San Bernardino County Sheriff's Officers will be requested to assist. Every attempt will be made to unlock the doors, but failing in this, a window

may have to be broken out to allow access to the animal. Animals left in overheated vehicles are a violation of California Penal Code, and criminal charges may be filed.

Do your pets and yourself a favor, leave them at home when running your errands in the summer.

24/7 SAFETY IN THE WATER

alert. aware. able.
[OPERATION SUMMER FORCE PRESERVATION]

Picture yourself on a beautiful Pacific island: The sun is shining, the temperature is perfect, and the ocean water invites you to enter. Three Sailors had found their little spot of heaven on earth on one of those Pacific islands. The day was just what travel agencies advertise. Life just couldn't get any better. They then decided to go snorkeling. A reef was only about 100 feet from the shore, and it seemed like the ideal place to get a closer look at the undersea side of paradise.

Only one Sailor returned from the reef alive. Rescuers found one victim in the water, but their resuscitation efforts were unsuccessful. The second victim's body washed ashore a few days later. What went wrong? The victims were caught in a rip current that paralleled the shore and couldn't escape its force to reach the beach.

In another instance, a sergeant on terminal leave went on a hiking excursion with his younger brother and an uncle. Only the uncle returned. The trio was visiting an area they had frequented since childhood. Problems arose when the younger brother entered a swimming hole and was pulled under by strong currents. The sergeant jumped in to save him and also was pulled under. Park rangers recovered both victims' bodies.

Whether you're swimming in a lake, river, or ocean, following some basic rules will make the activity fun, not tragic.

Learn to swim:

- Whenever possible, swim at a lifeguard-protected area.
- Never swim alone.
- Stay away from piers and jetties.
- Make sure water is deep enough before diving head-first.
- Always keep an eye on children.

If caught in a rip current, follow these procedures:

- Remain calm.
- Never fight against the current.
- Think of it like a treadmill that cannot be turned off; you need to step to the side of it.
- Swim out of the current in a direction following the shoreline. When out of it, swim at an angle toward shore.
- If you can't escape the current, draw attention to yourself by waving your arms and yelling for help.

The American Red Cross has an excellent website covering a wide variety of water-safety tips. View their website at <http://www.redcross.org/services/hss/tips/healthtips/safetywater.html>.

For information on rip currents visit the National Weather Service's website at: <http://www.ripcurrents.noaa.gov/tips.shtml>.

Contact Master Sgt. Brenner or Sgt. Lang, 830-3779, at the Combat Center Safety Office for more information about what activities are taking place and how you can take care of yourself and your friends.



LANCE CPL. MICHAEL S. CIFUENTES

Gen. Michael W. Hagee, commandant of the Marine Corps, joined by Sgt. Maj. John L. Estrada, sergeant major of the Marine Corps, addresses Combat Center Marines and Sailors on the Combat Center commanding general's parade field regarding current issues in the Marine Corps and the Marine Corps legacy Monday.

COMMANDANT, A1

Marines who sat in a "school circle" in front of him. "I think the United States realizes that we are absolutely at war. I know the Marines realize that. And I've got to tell you... we're doing a magnificent job. Whether it's here in the United States or overseas, you make the difference. And you're making really good decisions on a very complex and very dangerous battlefield."

Hagee then spoke about the two controversial incidents in Iraq and the killing of non-combatants. On June 7, Hagee commented publicly on the allegations concerning civilian deaths in Haditha and Hamdaniya, Iraq, on the Pentagon Channel. He told reporters that he could not comment on the situation until the investigation on the incident was complete. He told Combat Center service members the same.

"I think there's a lot of hyperbole in the papers right now," said Hagee, referring to recent headlines in newspapers regarding the incidents. "I'm not going to talk about that because we have investigations going on right now, and we're going to find out what happened. And if there are individuals out there who did something against the rules, regulations and our principals, they will be held accountable."

The commandant went on to mention to the Marines that they set a high standard for other military services in the United States and around the world.

"You all set the standard on and off the battlefield," said Hagee. "You set the standards on how you accomplish the mission. You are the gold standard. We should be very proud of that. I know I am. It is because of what every single one of you do every single day. You are the gold standard as far as performance in a military uniform."

"I've often wondered why we have a Marine Corps," continued the commandant. "We have the best Army; we have the best Navy; and the Air Force is the best air force in the world. So, why do we have a Marine Corps? I've come to a conclusion that we have the Marine Corps for one reason. It is because the American people want it. They want an elite organization that they can be unbelievably proud of. They want an organization that has the discipline, that has the ethos, and that has the ability to make the right decision under very, very difficult conditions. I heard more than once, when the Marine Corps goes to play, the American people say 'Aha! Now we're serious.'"

Hagee left an impression on the Marines and Sailors who joined at the parade field for his brief. For most, the brief was very motivating, said Gunnery Sgt. Jeremy A. Staton, India Company gunnery sergeant, 3rd Battalion, 7th Marine Regiment.

"When the Marines asked him questions, his straight-forward answers were extremely appreciated," said Staton. "He gave us the non-political side of answers. The Marines who heard him speak probably left a lot more motivated and proud of being Marines. The history of our Corps was even better to hear coming from the commandant of the Marine Corps."

The commandant's message of the two incidents in Iraq was also very understood, said Maj. Michael P. Hubbard, 3rd Battalion, 4th Marine's executive officer.

"I believe the point he wanted to make, that we will all remember, is the [Haditha] situation is currently under investigation," Hubbard said. Additionally, he said, we must allow the investigation to run its course. However, one message came through as unmistakable for the Marines and Sailors in attendance, "The commandant was very clear when he said if wrongs were made, those individuals will be held accountable — in Iraq or at home."

Marine receives bronze star, mourns friend

SGT. ROBERT L. FISHER III
COMBAT CORRESPONDENT

Cpl. Ryan Osbrink received a Bronze Star Medal with combat distinguishing device June 8 for "courageous actions" in Iraq Dec. 4 and 7 while serving as a vehicle commander with Lima Company, 3rd Battalion, 7th Marine Regiment.

Osbrink said the award, while an honor, brings painful memories. The only Marine killed Dec. 7 during the event was Osbrink's friend, 22-year-old Cpl. Joseph P. Bier, machine gunner, 3/7. Osbrink and Bier became friends while serving together on Marine Corps Security Forces in Bangor, Wash.

Clayton and Carol Bier, the parents of the deceased Marine, came from Centralia, Wash., to the award ceremony and met Osbrink. The loss of a good friend was hard for him and made the weight of the medal that much heavier, he said.

"It never really feels good to wear it, it makes me think of that night," said Osbrink. "It's still hard for me, but I guess that's normal."

According to the award citation Osbrink dismounted from his vehicle Dec. 4 while under fire and moved into a building to assist an injured Iraqi soldier until the casualty evacuation unit arrived. He then positioned his Marines to provide security as the Iraqi soldier was loaded into the evacuation vehicle.

On the evening of Dec. 7, Osbrink's section responded as the company's Quick Reaction Force to assist a seven-ton truck disabled by an improvised explosive device. Upon arriving at the scene, a second IED exploded, engulfing the truck in flames. Osbrink described the scene as a, "Flash of light, big explosion, lots of fire."

"By the time I looked at



Maj. Rory Quinn, former commanding officer for Lima Company, 3rd Battalion, 7th Marine Regiment, pins the Bronze Star Medal with combat distinguishing device on Cpl. Ryan Osbrink June 9 at Victory Field.

SGT. ROBERT L. FISHER III

them [the Marines in the truck,] boom. I opened the door and was on my way," he said. "It's hard. I want to believe that I thought of something, but I can't... I didn't have time to think."

A fellow Marine, 2nd Lt. Muaro Mujica, platoon commander for Weapons Platoon, Lima Company, 3/7, said Osbrink was focused only on helping others that night.

"It takes some people a second to figure out exactly what they are going to do, Corporal Osbrink dismounts his truck, and he goes directly into the fire," said Mujica. "There wasn't anything going through his eyes but trying to save his fellow Marines."

As Osbrink pulled the downed Marines to safety, the

truck exploded a third time knocking everyone to the ground. Osbrink returned to his feet and ran back into the fire to help more Marines. He provided first aid, applied tourniquets and pulled them into his humvee.

When it was full, Osbrink got in the back and pulled another Marine into the humvee on top of himself to return as many Marines as possible. He talked to them, held their hands and reassured them through the whole ride.

"The whole way back I was just, 'Come on, you're going to make it,'" he said. "Holding their hands, I wanted them to talk to me, which was the most important thing to me, just to know that

they're still there."

Mujica said he was proud to have served with Osbrink.

"He truly acted beyond the call of duty that day and every day he was in country," said Mujica. "When bad things happen, you get to see Marines do incredible things. It was an honor and privilege to watch Osbrink that day."

The award comes with the memory that every Marine there on Dec. 7 tried to help. Even the Marines who were hurt in the third explosion still tried to help those who were injured before them, said Osbrink.

"It's not just about me, it's about every Marine who was there," he said. "I don't want you to think I'm a man

amongst men or a hero. Everybody was. Every Marine there that night was a hero."

The Portland, Ore., native joined the Marine Corps for the training he would receive before becoming a police officer. Since he was a teenager attending Wilson High School he wanted to join a Special Weapons and Tactics unit. With the skills he would learn from the Marine Corps he hoped to achieve that dream.

Osbrink is now looking toward the future. He plans to return home with his wife, Kimberly, after leaving the Marines Corps and become a police officer in Vancouver, Wash. There he hopes to fulfill his dream of becoming a member of SWAT.



CPL. EVAN M. EAGAN

A Marine with 1st Tank Battalion bows his head and sings "Amazing Grace" during a memorial service held for Lance Cpl. Michael Probst at the base theater.

PROBST, A1

close friend, drove the humvee Probst was assigned to and was also his roommate in Iraq.

"He taught me a lot," said Sanchez. "He taught me how to be a man. He was 26 years old, six years older than I was. I learned a lot from him. I'm proud I had the privilege to be with Michael Probst...and we will never forget him."

Lance Cpl. Brian Ballasch, a TOW gunner and close friend, spoke about his respect for Probst.

"Michael Probst was my closest friend in the Marine Corps," said Ballasch, adding later, "I remember him for his friendship and the sound advice he gave. He was one of the most intelligent and honorable men I've ever met. The Marines of TOW Platoon will never forget him."

The service concluded with 1st Sgt. William Harvey, H & S Company first sergeant, conducting a final roll call, followed by the playing of Taps.

Corps' top leader discusses war fighting concept, Core Values with Iraq-deployed Marines, Sailors



STAFF SGT. JIM GOODWIN

Following a town hall-style meeting with hundreds of Marines and Sailors from the Twentynine Palms, Calif.-based Regimental Combat Team 7, Gen. Michael W. Hagee, commandant of the Marine Corps, greets Marines with hand shakes and Marine Corps coins May 30, 2006, at Al Asad, Iraq.

“Honor is more than just telling the truth. It’s also believing in and upholding the three basic values our country was founded on — respect for human life and dignity, respect for telling the truth, and respect for other people’s property.”

—Gen. Michael W. Hagee

STAFF SGT. JIM GOODWIN
REGIMENTAL COMBAT TEAM 7

CAMP AL ASAD, Iraq — The Corps’ top officer recently stated that the Marine Corps is headed in the right direction in the future of war fighting, and will stand up its first, fully operational distributed operations-capable battalion by next year.

Gen. Michael W. Hagee, commandant of the Marine Corps, said the Corps recently completed a year-long test of the new concept to “make sure we have the right education and the right off-the-shelf equipment.”

Distributed Operations is a concept designed to put more tactical-level decision making authority, equipment and education to Marine small-unit leaders, thus enhancing and expanding combat capabilities of smaller-sized Marine units.

Under the concept, squads will be able to perform tactical functions normally performed by platoons, platoons can perform functions of a company, and so on.

The concept gives more than just expanded decision-making authority to small-unit leaders, it also provides them with the education and equipment to get the job done, according to Hagee.

“I can tell you the future of Distributed Operations is bright,” said Hagee to hundreds of Marines and Sailors of Regimental Combat Team 7 in an air hangar at this sprawling U.S. military airbase in Iraq’s Al Anbar province May 30.

“We have squad leaders, sergeants, in the United States Marine Corps who can control air [assets], and they are doing a great job,” he said. “They [squad leaders] can also coordinate fires.”

The test bed Hagee spoke of involved a Marine rifle platoon, which received six months of advanced training and equipment on the new war fighting concept before spending another half-year operating as a D.O. platoon in Afghanistan.

“When I visited the Army general, he told me that platoon was equivalent to a rifle company, because of how they could coordinate fires and the [physical] effects that they could have because of the training and equipment that they had,” said Hagee.

Under the concept, “Maneuver units will operate in desegregated fashion with companies, platoons and even squads dispersed beyond the normal range of mutually supporting organic direct fires but linked through a command and control network,” according to ‘A Concept for Distributed Operations,’ the Marines’ initial document on the concept, published last year.

Bottom line — under the Distributed Operations concept, smaller units, such as platoons and squads, will be less dependent upon and able to operate further from headquarters elements. D.O. units will also be able to strike enemy forces more quickly by making tactical decisions normally made by higher headquarters, such as calling for fire and coordinating air strikes.

“The ultimate goal is to have every battalion in the Marine Corps D.O. capable,” said Hagee. “We believe we’ve got the education right. We believe we’ve identified the right equipment. We’ve given them more lethal equipment.”

The commandant’s visit was part of a tour of Marine bases late last month in western Al Anbar province, Iraq, and came on the heels of several allegations of Marines killing civilians in Al Anbar province. Hagee, and the Corps’ top enlisted adviser, Sgt. Maj. John Estrada, also visited Marine bases in the U.S. to reinforce the Corps’ core values — honor, courage and commitment.

In an earlier statement, Hagee said the allegations were concerning and should also concern all Marines.

In a Pentagon press briefing with reporters, he stated, “As commandant, I am gravely concerned about the serious allegations concerning actions of some Marines at Haditha and Hamdaniya. I can assure you that the Marine Corps takes them seriously.”

During the visit here, Hagee spoke at length about the hardships of combat, and the importance of upholding honor on and off the battlefield.

“Honor is more than just telling the truth,” he said to Marines and Sailors, who wore the signature tan, digital-patterned camouflage uniforms. “It’s also believing in and upholding the three basic values our country was founded on — respect for human life and dignity, respect for telling the truth, and respect for other people’s property.”

Hagee shared experiences he had as a platoon and company commander in Vietnam, where he, too, experienced indirect fire, death and booby traps. He encouraged Marines to talk about combat-related stressful situations before they happen, to avoid making decisions based on emotion.

“The first time you should consider what you should do in that kind of a situation should not be on the battlefield in that situation,” he said. “You need to talk about it before hand. Talk about it in a setting like this, but in a much smaller setting, led by corporals and sergeants, staff NCOs [staff noncommissioned officers] and lieutenants.”

The large majority of Marines and Sailors serving in Iraq and elsewhere are performing superbly and making the right decisions every day, the general said. He also stated that America has a Marine Corps because the American people want a Marine Corps — an “organization that stands for something. They want an organization that has high values.”

“The most important thing is we do the right thing — which, as I’ve said, and I think its fair saying again — 99.9 percent of the Marines do every day, then I think we’re going to be O.K.,” said Hagee.

3rd LAR patrols the streets of Habbaniyah

CPL. GRAHAM A. PAULSGROVE
1ST MARINE DIVISION

CAMP HANBBANIYAH, Iraq — Marines from 3rd Light Armored Reconnaissance Battalion wouldn't consider themselves good neighbors unless they lent a hand combating snipers, small-arms fire and roadside bombs in 120 degree heat.

For two weeks, D Company, 3rd LAR, assisted 3rd Battalion, 5th Marine Regiment take over a new area of operations in the city here, located between Ar Ramadi and Al Fallujah. They patrolled the region, conducting counterinsurgency operations and keeping the routes clear of improvised explosive devices. In addition they assisted in several humanitarian efforts.

"We kept the area secure while 3/5 got a more solid stance in the area," said Pfc. Gary D. Cassen, 18, a scout with the company from Colfax, Calif.

For the two weeks the company operated in the area and both platoons had a continuous presence in their portions of the town. They didn't sit back and wait for the action. They leaned forward and took the fight to the insurgents.

"We have been really busy," said Lance Cpl. Albert D. Garcia Jr., 21, a scout from Corpus Christi, Texas. "It's been pretty hot. There has been a lot of activity, and there are a lot of insurgents out here."

The Marine's work paid off immediately. They disrupted the flow of the insurgents in the area.

"This is the busiest time we have had since we have been in Iraq," said Sgt. Alexander C. Herbert, a 23-year-old squad leader, from Alexandria, La. "We did a lot of dismounted patrols and security sweeps through the city looking for insurgents. We put a lot more pressure on the insurgents by going through their back yard."

He added the insurgents know they are up against a formidable force.

"They now know that if they try to blow us up, we are going to patrol in, find them and mess them up," Herbert said.

The unit was busy in their area up until the time they were replaced. On their last day of operations, they found five IEDs.



Pfc. Isacc Gallegos, 22, a scout from Pico Rivera, Calif., patrols while children play in the street near Camp Hanbbabiyah, Iraq. REGIMENTAL COMBAT TEAM 5

"While one platoon would operate in the village, the other was waiting nearby as a quick reaction force, so if anything did go wrong, one platoon is ready to go if the other platoon needs back up," Garcia said.

The backup force didn't sit idly by though. They were called into the mix when firefights broke out. The overwhelming force killed attacking insurgents and sent survivors on the run.

"We're driving them out, making this a safer zone and eventually we will shove them out of the whole country," Herbert said.

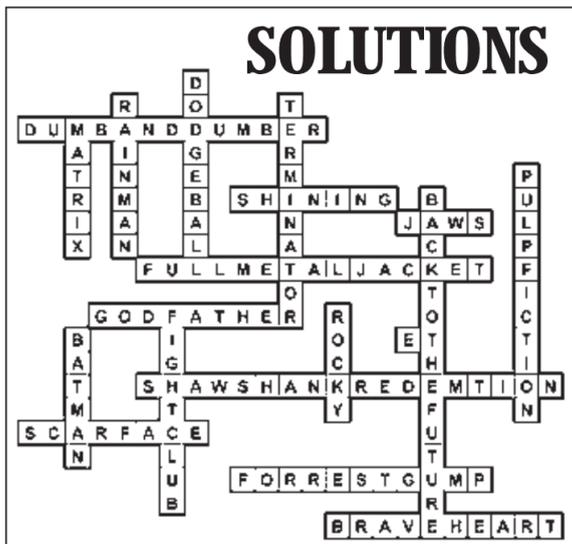
It wasn't all trading shots with insurgents, though. Marines spent time off the light armored vehicles to help out local Iraqis. They passed out food and gift items, including soccer

balls, to area residents, Ward explained.

"We're cutting down the insurgency and bringing the power back to the Iraqi people," Garcia said. "There is a lot of work that still needs to be done, but we are making steps forward."



CPL. GRAHAM A. PAULSGROVE
Pfc. Gary M. Cassen, 18, a scout from Colfax, Calif., keeps an eye on the road for any insurgent activity while riding in the back of a light armored vehicle. Marines of D Company, 3rd Light Armored Reconnaissance Battalion, ran security and stability operations in Habbaniyah, Iraq, in support of 3rd Battalion, 5th Marine Regiment.





1ST LT. NATHAN BRADEN

Petty Officer 3rd Class John W. Harper, 22, from Dublin, Calif., displays the Fleet Marine Force Pin he was presented moments after a pinning ceremony June 12.



1ST LT. NATHAN BRADEN

Petty Officer 1st Class Juan H. Rodriguez, 33, from Kerman, Calif., pins the Fleet Marine Force Pin onto the blouse of Petty Officer 3rd Class Orlando A. Soriano, 23, from Martinez, Calif., during a pinning ceremony June 12 at Camp Fallujah, Iraq.

Steely-eyed Sailors prove their mettle

1ST LT. NATHAN BRADEN
1ST MARINE DIVISION

CAMP FALLUJAH, Iraq — Many months of preparation, including hours upon hours of diligent study and practical application rehearsals, and a grueling four-hour oral examination were finally rewarded here Monday.

Four Navy corpsmen assigned to Regimental Combat Team 5's Regimental Aid Station were awarded the Fleet Marine Force Warfare Specialist designation. Even better, they were pinned by RCT 5's Commanding Officer Col. Larry D. Nicholson.

The awardees were Petty Officers 3rd Class Orlando A. Soriano, John W. Harper, Andrew W. Tuohy and Seaman Bounmy Meunsky.

The designation authorizes the Sailors to wear the FMF insignia, commonly referred to as the 'FMF Pin.' It signifies they achieved a level of proficiency in Marine Corps war fighting.

"The FMF pin gives the corpsmen instant street credibility with the Marines, and that's pretty important," Nicholson said.

Any Navy personnel serving in the Marine Expeditionary Forces can earn this pin. The four corpsmen mastered 20 different subjects — from Marine history and organization to communication procedures and infantry weapons.

A two-part written test —

one for basic topics and a second that's specific to their command — was part of their test. In their case, the RCT-5 corpsmen focused on ground combat.

The Sailors passed both portions before going before an oral examination board.

The end result, though, was wearing their pride on their chest.

"It's a symbol of knowledge and dedication to the hospital corps and the Marine Corps," said Harper, 22, from Dublin, Calif. Harper started working toward his pin while stationed with the 31st Marine Expeditionary Unit in Okinawa, Japan, last year.

"We have the experience and skill sets to operate compatibly with the Marines," he said.

"The guy we think about the most and always want by

our side is the corpsman," Nicholson said. "It is my great honor today to recognize their great skill and dedication."

"It's a rite of passage," explained Soriano, 23, from Martinez, Calif. "People look at you differently."

The Regimental Aid Station here is making strides to provide all their Sailors the opportunity to earn the designation.

"We are pushing our corpsmen to get it while we are out here because there is more of a prestige to earn the pin in combat," said Senior Chief Petty Officer Pete D. Villanueva, RCT 5's senior medical department representative, 47, from Manila, Philippines. "It's also harder because of the high operational tempo here."

"Getting the pin in Iraq is an added bonus. I guess it's added bragging rights," Harper said. "Not everyone is able to get their pin in Iraq because everyone is so busy. It takes a lot of dedication by the corpsmen to put down their Playstation and pick up the books for an hour at the end of the day."

The Sailors said their greatest obstacle was the oral review board.

"The board was the toughest part," Harper said. "They can ask you anything from the 20-something chapters of material."

The Sailors' board started at 9:30 p.m. and lasted until 1:30 a.m.

"I kid them and say that they are the first Sailors in the

Navy to have a two-day long board," Villanueva said.

The close-knit Sailors of the RAS spend hours in group training sessions, studying and conducting practical application.

"We make it hard because we wanted them to feel they earned it, and they did," Villanueva said.

The FMF insignia consists of the Marine Corps emblem of an Eagle, Globe and Anchor, above crossed rifles, in front of a wave, with the words "Fleet Marine Force" written across a banner along the bottom edge.

"We try to get as much knowledge as possible about the Marines since we are one team. We are not outsiders," Soriano said. "I feel more

comfortable operating with the Marines. If I had to, I could use 'land nav' [land navigation techniques] or get behind a weapons system. It was well worth the effort."

The significance of the designation represents more than just a grade on a test or a piece of metal to hang on their uniform. It represents corpsmen who came before and set the standard of service.

"Corpsmen have a very long, honorable and distinguished history serving with the Marines," Harper said. "This pin represents some of that, and we don't take that lightly."

"Earning this is testimony to your great devotion to your profession, even if it's for a short period," Nicholson said.

'Rocket Man' rocks Ramadi insurgents

CPL. JOSEPH DIGIROLAMO
MARINE EXPEDITIONARY FORCE

RAMADI, Iraq — The crack of insurgents firing rounds overhead sends him into action to find his target and

neutralize it — fast. The Marine assesses multiple enemy targets approximately 400 meters away. He sights in. His finger steadily squeezes the trigger as a single shot jets from his rocket

launcher. The explosion rocks the earth as the perfect hit is rewarded by the now silenced enemy — courtesy of the "Rocket man."

"They are calling me 'Rocket man' because of all the rockets I've fired since we have been here," said Lance Cpl. Richard M. Mason II, of Medina, Ohio. "It's an adrenaline rush to be the guy firing the rocket during a firefight."

Mason has accurately fired 24 rockets in combat and his teammates have dubbed him appropriately.

The 21-year-old assaultman with Company K, 3rd Battalion, 8th Marine Regiment has become a vital asset in the ongoing battle against the insurgency in the capital of Al Anbar province.

"During almost every engagement he has stopped enemy fire by destroying insurgents held up in a building," said 1st Lt. Carlos M. Goetz, 2nd platoon commander. "Without hesitation he has exposed himself to enemy fire numerous times in order to execute my intent and help his fellow Marines."

"Twenty-four is an awesome feat. He has become very proficient at his job," said Goetz, 29, from Miami, Fla.

Mason decided to follow his grandfather's footsteps by joining the Marine Corps in October of 2003. So far during his enlistment, he traveled with 3rd Bn., 8th Marines to the Caribbean in 2004 and participated in Operation Secure Tomorrow in Haiti. He



Lance Cpl. Richard M. Mason II serves as an assaultman for 2nd Platoon, Company K, 3rd Battalion, 8th Marine Regiment.

battled the insurgency in Fal-lujah in 2005 and now, on his second tour to Iraq, he is helping to improve the security conditions in Ramadi.

His weapon is a portable anti-armor rocket launcher known as the shoulder-launched multi-purpose assault weapon or SMAW. When fully loaded, this 30-pound weapon can destroy bunkers and other fortifications during assault operations. It even has the capability to bring down battle tanks.

In 2004, Mason attended the School of Infantry after graduating boot camp. This is where he learned to become efficient with his favorite weapon system. The mixture of class room instruction and live fire proved to be the perfect recipe for Mason's growing skill.

"My instructor had the same last name as me and he was always pushing me to be better," said Mason. "On SMAW ranges I took everything very serious as if I were

in combat."

While the SMAW system is effectively equipped with a technologically-advanced optical device and 9 mm spotting rifle, Mason prefers the old-school method when aiming in on his targets, even in the dark.

"I prefer the iron sights. I don't use a scope or the spotter," said Mason. "In this type of environment you don't always have time to use those things."

One night during an attack on the Government Center, mortar teams launched illumination rounds to give Mason enough light to see his target. However, the objective was not the only thing the flare illuminated; it also exposed Mason's position on the roof. Insurgents spotted him and rounds came flying his way. That night he fired four rockets in heavy contact to repel the attack.

"It's not difficult to fire. It's the loud explosion going

off right next to you that's hard to deal with," he said. "People anticipate the recoil but there is none and as far as the explosion you just have to learn to deal with it."

In another situation, Company K Marines at the Government Center began exchanging machinegun fire with insurgents May 2. The insurgents managed to burrow themselves inside a well fortified building which made it harder for the Marines to eliminate the threat. Mason was ordered to fire a rocket at the building from the rooftop. He scrambled to the rooftop again exposing himself to incoming fire, his teammates laid down suppressive fire and he launched a rocket at the building.

"His quick reactions possibly saved the lives of his fellow Marines. You only get one opportunity to shoot it," said Goetz. "It leaves a big signature, so you need to be on target."

Cpl. Jeremiah A. Hendricks, an operations clerk for the battalion, met Mason during their deployment in Haiti.

"I'm impressed by what he's done. It motivates me to know his skills are being used well in battle," said Hendricks, 23, from Atlanta. "It takes a lot of courage to be exposed to enemy fire so many times."

Hendricks is one of many of Mason's fellow comrades who say he is an outstanding Marine and asset to the platoon.

"He displays a lot of maturity and is always willing to do the job," said Goetz. "He's an advantage to our platoon and the Marine Corps benefits from having him in their ranks."

"It makes me feel good when they specifically call for my name over the radio when they need to send a rocket down range," said Mason. "I feel like a real asset."



CPL. JOSEPH DIGIROLAMO

Nicknamed the 'Rocket Man,' the 20-year-old from Medina, Ohio, has effectively fired 24 rockets using the Shoulder-Launched Multi-Purpose Assault Weapon or SMAW during combat operations in Ar Ramadi.

Marines get a little taste of home

CPL. WILLIAM SKELTON
1ST MARINE DIVISION

GHARMAH, Iraq — Every day Cpl. Tommy T. Nguyen prepares hot meals for the Marines of Company A, 1st Battalion, 1st Marine Regiment.

Bringing a little taste of home is a welcome treat for Marines working in the villages and rural expanses of the Iraqi desert. Sometimes, the simplest creature comfort makes the biggest difference.

“Getting a hot meal is probably the greatest thing that happens to us out here,” said Lance Cpl. Jonathan D. Anderson, a 19-year-old machine gunner from Paris, Ark. “Second only to getting air conditioning.”

The Marines perform constant patrols from forward operating bases, spread out across small towns north of Fallujah. Living where they do, the Marines don’t have the opportunity to dine at Camp Fallujah’s chow halls.

“We are usually out for weeks at a time,” said Cpl. Travis R. Caskey, a 27-year-old assaultman from Fort Mill, S.C. “We hardly ever get to eat on base with everyone else.”

It’s the small pleasures that keep the Marines motivated. The combat cooks are the ones who brighten the day when coming back from a long day of patrolling, Caskey said.

“I don’t know if they know it, but coming off a patrol and knowing that you are going to have a hot meal and a cold drink — that’s something special,” Caskey added.

Occasionally, the Marines get the special treat of having a barbecue. Recently, Nguyen grilled hamburgers, hotdogs and steaks for the Marines working with Company A. It was a taste of America right inside their reinforced compound in western Iraq.

“Every two weeks or so we get some real food to cook for these guys out here,” said Nguyen, a 22-year-old combat cook from San Jose, Calif. “Today is one of those days.”

The smell of the steaks sizzling on the grill brought back fond memories of summer cookouts and days relaxing in the summer sun for some Marines. They eagerly sat by waiting for the dinner bell to ring.

“The barbecue reminds me of home,”

Anderson said. “My step dad is a chef when it comes to the grill. This reminds me of grilling out with him and the rest of my family.”

On the average day Nguyen prepares UGRs, or unit group rations. They are based on the principle of MREs, meals ready-to-eat, but they are prepared in a large steamer and are served buffet style.

He doesn’t get to sear steaks or serve up ice-cold drinks. This is a combat zone and Marines learn to do without. Still, fresh food perks up nearly every Marine living in the spartan conditions.

“It’s a matter of needs verses wants,” Nguyen said, “They don’t need me out here doing this, but it’s a morale booster and I am proud to do it.”

Nguyen joined the Marine Corps wanting to be a military police officer. Instead, he found himself manning cooking stations instead of guarding gates. After seeing the difference he makes in the lives of these Marines, he is glad to have the skills he has to make their days a little more bearable.

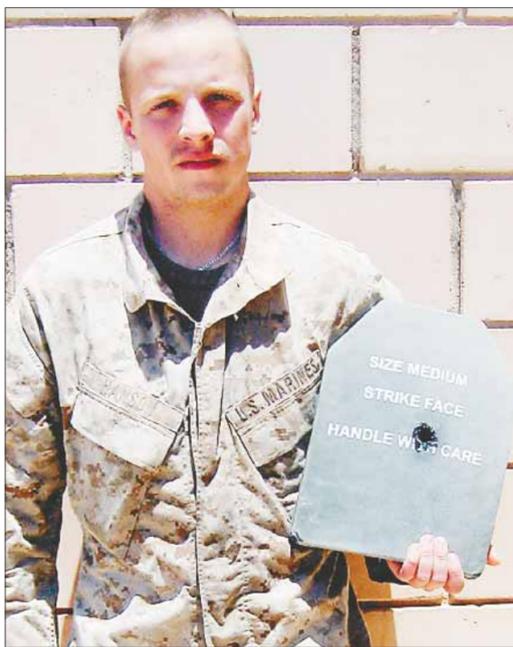
“Not all of them say it, but I know they appreciate what we are out here doing,” Nguyen said. “That’s enough for me.”



CPL. WILLIAM SKELTON

Cpl. Tommy T. Nguyen, a combat cook, prepares burgers, hot dogs and steaks for Marines from Company A, 1st Battalion, 1st Marine Regiment.

Body armor keeps 3rd LAR Marines safe



CPL. GRAHAM A. PAULSGROVE

Pfc. Joshua Hanson, from Forks, Wash., a scout with Company D, 3rd Light Armored Reconnaissance Battalion, was shot in the chest by a sniper while on patrol in Habbaniya, but the small-arms protective insert prevented the round from seriously injuring him.

CPL. GRAHAM A. PAULSGROVE
1ST MARINE DIVISION

HABBANIYAH, Iraq — The enemy snipers hit their targets — but it yielded them no results.

In less than a week's time, Sgt. Joshua S. Adams and Pfc. Jason Hanson, of Company D, 3rd Light Armored Reconnaissance Battalion were hit by sniper shots. But the enemy had little effect because both were left with only minor injuries thanks to their small-arms protective inserts, or SAPI, plates.

"I was checking my side and when I looked forward, I got shot — it knocked me down," said Hanson, 21, a scout from Forks, Wash.

"I saw him on the ground, ran up to him and rolled him over," said the on-scene corpsman Seaman Chad T. Kenyon, 20, from Tucson, Ariz. "I saw that the round had gone through the front of his flak, so I opened up his flak and saw no bleeding. Then he looked up at me and said 'I'm fine, Doc.'"

The 7.62 mm bullet went through Hanson's rifle but was stopped by the Marine's SAPI plate, leaving him with some bruising on his chest.

But it could have been a lot worse.

A few days later, Adams, a vehicle commander from Bowling Green, Mo., was shot while cordoning off an area after discovering an improvised explosive device.

"We were blocking off a road and one car pulled up from a side street, and the guy in the back of vehicle started moving around to face us," said Lance Cpl. Kyle V. Lyons, a 25-year-old LAV gunner from Houston. "I was telling Sgt. Adams, he got hit. He dropped down and then said he was fine."

"My gunner took over while I assessed my wounds and pulled some shrapnel out of my arm—then we chased down the car," said Adams, 21. "The round went into my SAPI but when it hit, the round shattered and some of it went into my wrist."

The vehicle was chased down and two men were detained.

Bulky, heavy and hot in the already soaring temperatures, Hanson said he's got a different perspective on the ceramic plates he's toting around his body.

"I'm happy to carry the extra weight," Hanson said.



CPL. GRAHAM A. PAULSGROVE

Sgt. Joshua S. Adams, a vehicle commander from Bowling Green, Mo., with Company D, 3rd Light Armored Reconnaissance Battalion, was shot in the chest by a sniper while operating in Habbaniya, but the small-arms protective insert prevented the round from seriously injuring him.

SPORT SHORTS

FATHER'S DAY GOLF
Desert Winds Golf Course will host a Fathers' Day Tournament Sunday at 9 a.m. The format will be a two-person scramble. The cost is \$60 per team and includes greens fee, golf cart, range balls, food and prizes. Call 830-6132 to sign-up.

LEARN TO SWIM
MCCS Pools will begin registration from the first and second sessions of the Learn to Swim Program. Session One begins June 26 and continues through July 6 and Session Two is from July 10 to July 20. Registration is from June 12- June 14, 10 a.m. to 1 p.m. at the Family Pool. The program fee is only \$25 per student or \$22 per student if 2 or more family members are enrolled. For details please call 830-6212.

TWILIGHT GOLF
Desert Winds Golf Course is hosting Twilight Golf every Tuesday at 4:30 p.m. The cost is \$5, which does not include golf cart or club rental or entry fee. The game consists of four players to a team and is played in best ball format. Please contact Al Ybarra at 830-7945 or Mark Carrington at 830-6172 / 6953 for any questions or details.

LEISURE

MONTHLY RETIREES BREAKFAST

Phelps Hall (Messhall 1460) and Littleton Hall (Messhall 1660) will host the Military Retirees Breakfast for retirees of all branches of service and their spouses June 21. The price of the meal will be \$1.95 and the doors will open at 5:30 a.m. All patrons must present proper I.D. to the cashier at the door. Call CWO2 Chad Tidwell at 830-7017 or Mr. Manny Rocha at 830-8023.

BLOOD DRIVE AT NAVAL HOSPITAL
The next base blood drive is scheduled for Saturday, July 8, from 10 a.m. to 2 p.m., in Classroom 4 of the Naval Hospital.

PALM SPRINGS AERIAL TRAM JULY MILITARY APPRECIATION DAYS
All military personnel receive free Tram admission with Military ID. Their Guests (limit 6) receive 25 percent off regular admission. For more information call (888) 515-TRAM. Offer valid July 1-31.

CASINO NIGHT
Hashmarks SNCO Club will host another Casino Night tonight. The night will include free food, prizes, blackjack, roulette and craps. Doors open at 4:30 p.m. and play begins at 6 p.m. The evening is open to NCOs, SNCOs and Officers. To make a reservation or for more information please call 830-6610.

FREE BOWLING
Sandy Hill Lanes Bowling Center is offering free lunch time bowling every Monday from 11 a.m. to 1 p.m. Shoe rental is additional.

Did You Know?

394 feature films and TV movies based on the writings of William Shakespeare have been made, more than any other author.



Thomas Ferris of MCCES Supply launches a ball down the lane Wednesday.

CPL. BRIAN A. TUTHILL
COMBAT CORRESPONDENT

With 14 pounds of fury in his hand, Thomas Ferris stepped to the first set of dotted lines. The 10 white pins sneered back at him from 60 feet away like defending sentries.

With carefully calculated steps, he moved forward and hurled his ball down the lane, curving dangerously to the edge of the oiled wood before it spun back to center.

With a thunderous impact and a blur of white, he calmly stepped back from the lane as the monitor above him flashed an "X".

Ferris, a bowler on the Marine Corps Communication-Electronics School Supply team, was one of 94 bowlers in 16 teams in the Commanding General's Intramural Bowling League at the Sandy Hill Lanes Bowling Center Wednesday.

The league, which is open to all Department of Defense personnel, began its regular season March

15, and the competition has been fierce from the start, said Ken West, who manages the league's statistics.

"It's been very close all year so far," said West, who said he was happy to see such a big turn out of players this year despite the number of units deployed from the Combat Center.

West also said he was looking forward to the finals, which he predicts will be fought point-for-point to the end.

"The finals are going to be extremely tight the way it's been going because teams have been within a few points of each other the whole season," he said.

For Ferris, a 25-year-old Detroit native who said he has been bowling since he was a teenager, the finals coming up on June 28 will be a challenge for his team, who stood in sixth place before Wednesday's match against the Provost Marshal's Office's "5-0" team.

"The finals are going to be very tough for us," Ferris said. "We have a couple of weeks left and I'm hopeful we can finish in the top three or four."

CG's Bowling League still strong, keeps competition tough

Only weeks from finals

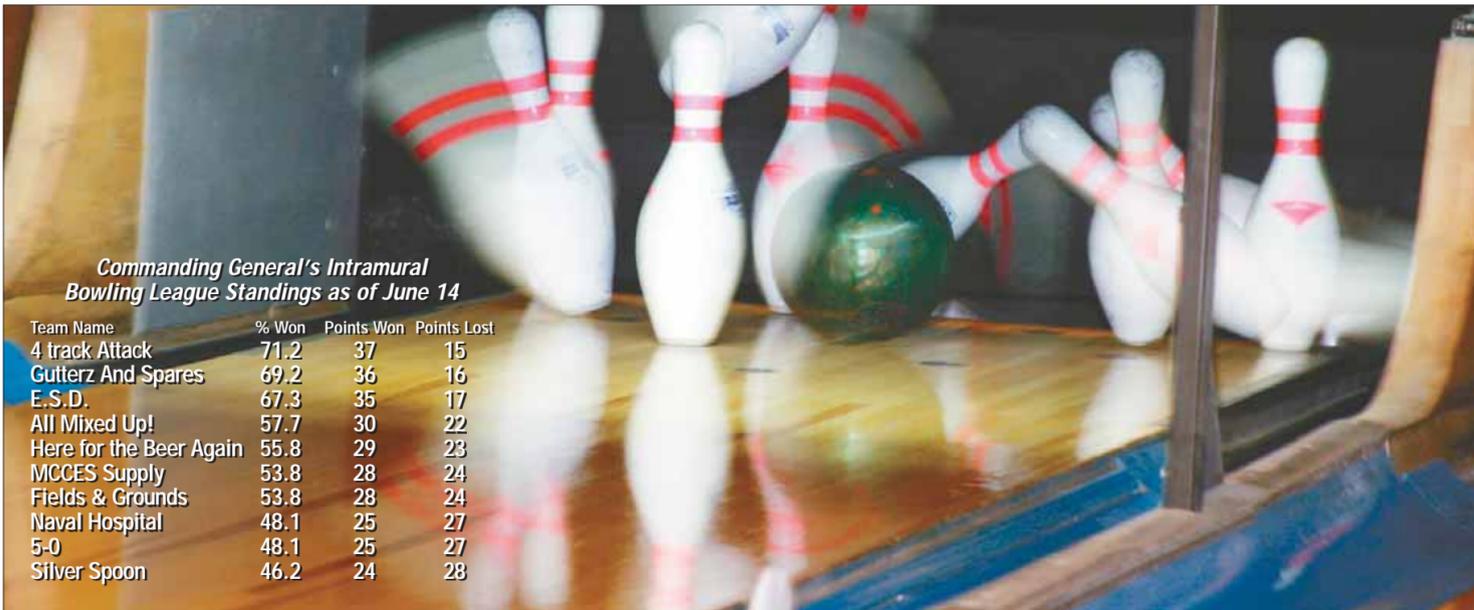
"The league is going great, everyone is having fun but keeping it very competitive," he continued. "It's within single points for the top spot this season, so it's going to be tough to break in to that, but we're still hopeful."

The Marines of 5-0 watched time and again as Ferris barraged the lane to pick up strikes and spares throughout the game.

"He's sure got an arm on him," commented Michael Stahl of 5-0, whose team trailed MCCES Supply in ninth place. "I'm just out here to have fun. This is the first time I've bowled in this league and we're hanging in there and doing OK. I think we're all having a blast."

"Bowling is great because you get to come out, have a good time with your unit and get to know your coworkers," the 35-year-old from Santa Clarita, Calif., continued. "Some of the teams have been really tough this year. Next year, I'll be in Okinawa, but I'm going to try to get on a team over there."

For more information on league bowling, call 830-6422 or visit the bowling alley. The league plays Wednesday afternoons at 3 p.m. at Sandy Hill Lanes.



Pins fly during Wednesday's league game at the Sandy Hill Lanes Bowling Center.

Commanding General's Intramural Bowling League Standings as of June 14

Team Name	% Won	Points Won	Points Lost
4 track Attack	71.2	37	15
Gutterz And Spares	69.2	36	16
E.S.D.	67.3	35	17
All Mixed Up!	57.7	30	22
Here for the Beer Again	55.8	29	23
MCCES Supply	53.8	28	24
Fields & Grounds	53.8	28	24
Naval Hospital	48.1	25	27
5-0	48.1	25	27
Silver Spoon	46.2	24	28

MCCES dominates CG's Softball

SGT. ROBERT L. FISHER III
COMBAT CORRESPONDENT

Marine Corps Communication-Electronics School's softball team defeated AAV's 1 in a 22 to 12 game in the Commanding General's Intramural Softball League Tuesday.

Henry Kelcinski, MCCES team, hit one home run in the fifth inning, which was the only home run in the game.

AAV started the game with five runs at the top of the first inning. MCCES stayed close behind with fourth runs in the bottom of first.

AAV continued to drive forward in the second inning scoring four more runs. They shut MCCES down when the pitcher caught a drive from the mound followed by a double play to wrap up the bottom of the second leaving MCCES with only two runs.

In the third inning, MCCES shut down AAV with three quick outs and then took off in the bottom of the third with six runs.

One run slipped by MCCES before stopping AAV in top of the fourth. AAV then brought a swift end to the inning with three consecutive



Cesar Vela, Marine Corps Communication-Electronics School Team, leaps to catch a ball thrown from centerfield to third base for an out.



SGT. ROBERT L. FISHER III
Kevin Choate, 3rd Assault Amphibian Battalion Team 1 pitcher, pitches to an MCCES Team batter.

Commanding General's Intramural Softball League Standings as of June 14

Team	W	L
MCCES	9	0
3/11	9	1
VMU	10	3
TANKS	9	3
CLB-7	9	3
AAV's 1	9	3
PMO	8	4
SJA	8	4
HQBN (BP)	7	7
TANKS (Comm)	5	4
HQBN 2	4	7
HQBN	4	7
ESD	4	8
IPAC	4	8
AAV's 2	3	8
2/7	3	9
HOSPITAL	0	12
TTECG	0	13

10, we would've score 10 right behind them."

There's still plenty of time left in the season for his team to play, and he said his team is already looking forward to the next game. If they win it they will be back in second place, he said.

Patrick S. Miller, MCCES coach, said he thought the outcome of the game was, "pretty scary." He expected an intense game and was surprised by the outcome at the end of the fifth inning. Miller also expects big things out of the season and is preparing his team for the next game.

"We're confident, but have a lot of things we need to work on," said Miller. "We're only halfway through the season so we're not done yet."

Softball games are played Tuesday and Thursday nights each week. Stayed turned to the Observation Post for continuing coverage of the season.

outs. With the score 12-10, and AAV down by two runs, taunts rang out from both dugouts.

"They're going to fall apart here, they can't sustain," yelled Randy Anderson from the MCCES dugout in the bottom of the fifth.

AAV had a rough start in the fifth inning but managed to get two more runs before their third out. MCCES took off with a slew of runs, in the bottom of the fifth along with the rest of the game. They brought in 10 runs with only one out before the game was cut short by a mercy rule.

The mercy rule states that the game ends if a team is ahead by 10 runs by the end of the fifth inning.

Christopher W. Shotwell, AAV coach, attributed the loss of the game to a, "lack of time."

"It's an unfortunate rule, but it's stated at the beginning of the season," said Shotwell. "They scored



LANCE CPL. MICHAEL S. CIFUENTES

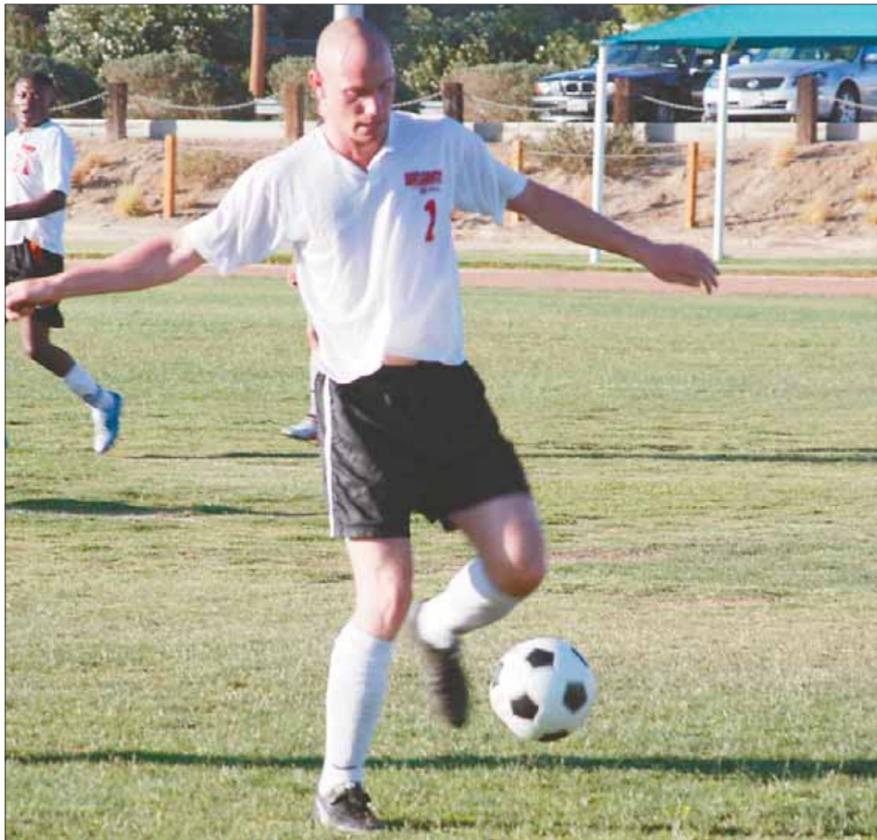
Sean Campbell of 3rd Battalion, 11th Marine Regiment, battles for the ball with Michael Lanpolsaen of 3rd Battalion, 7th Marine Regiment, in a soccer game on Felix Field Wednesday.



LANCE CPL. MICHAEL S. CIFUENTES

Marcos Garcia Lopez of 3rd Battalion, 7th Marine Regiment, fires a ball in an attempt to score a goal against 3rd Battalion, 11th Marine Regiment, Wednesday on Felix Field.

3/7 triumphant against 3/11



LANCE CPL. MICHAEL S. CIFUENTES

Michael McAlister of 3rd Battalion, 11th Marine Regiment, attempts to keep the ball away from 3rd Battalion, 7th Marine Regiment's defensemen in a soccer game Wednesday.

LANCE CPL. MICHAEL S. CIFUENTES

COMBAT CORRESPONDENT

Undefeated 3rd Battalion, 7th Marine Regiment, broke 3rd Battalion, 11th Marine Regiment's winning streak Wednesday afternoon in a 3-2 soccer game on Felix Field.

For the first forty-minute half, 3/7 was able to bury two goals and defend their net to a 2-0 lead. With roughly 17 minutes left in the first half, 3/7's Marcos Garcia Lopez scored their first goal, assisted by Michael Lanpolsaen. Thirteen minutes later, with roughly four minutes left in the half, Garcia Lopez returned the assist to Lanpolsaen, who fired in their second goal of the game.

The match came to a halt for a half-time break, and both teams congregated to share feedback of the game.

"In the second half we've got to shoot," said Khanh Nguyen, 3/11's coach and player, addressing his team. "When we're in front of their box, just take the rip."

"Defense has to play a bit more aggressive," continued Nguyen. "The 'D' needs to use their body to force and push them toward the outside. I know we can do this. We all know we're better than this."

The star forward from 3/11 also shared helpful comments to his team.

"Guys, we are losing every 50/50 ball," said Michael McAlinden, forward, referring to lost balls with an equal chance of any team gaining the possession. "The bottom line is that we haven't been playing our hearts out. The second half is what it will come down to. It's all desire from here on out."

With a high morale, 3/7's game plan was to keep the aggression going and keep communicating, said Lanpolsaen, forward.

"So far we've been playing very well," he said during the half-time break. "We've been at the right place at the right times. We made a few mistakes here and there that could've been devastating. But, we scored two and I'm happy. We're just going to keep working the ball, take advantage of their defense's breaks, control the tempo of the game and make no more mistakes."

The match began with a battle during the second half. More bodies collided as both teams charged for the ball; aggression was high. After 15 minutes in to the second half, 3/11's McAlinden broke through 3/7's midfielders and defenders to score his team's first goal, unassisted. The fight for a shutout from 3/7's goal keeper, Jaime Martinez, came to an end.

Roughly four minutes later, McAlinden returned to 3/7's side of the field to follow up with another goal with the assist from Nguyen.

The game's aggressive and fast-paced tempo continued until 3/7 diminished the tied score. Andrew Yellope, 3/7's forward, nailed the game winning goal with nine minutes left in the game. Nonetheless, both teams showed tremendous effort until the blow of the whistle, which sounded the end of the game.

Both teams respectfully shook hands and congregated once more for an after-game debrief.

"This was a tough loss," said Moises Dominguez, 3/11's midfielder. "We just got back from the field, and we just seemed to be rusty. Their team is good and this is what happens. We now know how strong they are, and if we ever play against them again, I know we will be more prepared."

The mission of victory was accomplished by 3/7, their undefeated record continues, and it wasn't an individual effort, said Yellope.

"The players on the field work hard as a team," he said. "It seems like we've been growing stronger together over the past several games. A lot of the guys playing have been hurting, but they sucked it up. The other team was solid but their defense was flat. We just put the ball in the net and we came up on top."



STAFF SGT. ROBERT S. PARKER

Master Gunnery Sgt. Roger Werthmann shakes the hand of his newly promoted son, Sgt. Greg Werthmann, May 1 at the Al Hatra ruins. (Inset) Master Gunnery Sgt. Roger Werthmann and Sgt. Greg Werthmann sit in the back of a vehicle May 1 in Qayyarah West Airbase, Iraq.

Father travels great lengths to promote son

CAPT. PATRICK SHEPHERD
3RD MARINE AIRCRAFT WING

QAYYARAH WEST AIR BASE, Iraq — When a family is separated from their military children during a time of war, it usually takes months, or possibly years, for a father to see his son again. This holds true even throughout Iraq, where fathers and sons serve in the U.S. Armed Forces fighting the War on Terrorism during Operation Iraqi Freedom.

However, in rare cases, there are circumstances that afford military family members the opportunity to reunite with one another and spend quality time together. This rarity occurred when Marine and father, Master Gunnery Sgt. Roger Werthmann, aviation ordnance chief, Marine Aviation Logistics Squadron 16 [Reinforced], 3rd Marine Aircraft Wing, made the trek through parts of Iraq to participate in the promotion of his son, Army Spc. Greg Werthmann, Stryker driver and forward observer, Alpha Company 52nd Infantry, 172nd Stryker Brigade, to a sergeant.

The coordination between the Marine Corps and Army units was successful in getting the father and son reunited for Greg's promotion — the first step to him becoming a leader in the noncommissioned officer ranks. Through the diligent efforts of both commands in Iraq, arrangements were made to allow Roger to fly from Al Asad to Qayyarah West Airbase.

Although the travel time seemed long and complicated, the reward at the end of

the trip was well worth it.

Emerging from a "Sherpa," a small cargo plane, Roger, a 26-year veteran and Davenport, Iowa, native, began his journey with his arrival at Qayyarah West Airbase in the early morning hours April 29.

Welcomed by his son at the military airport, they spent the remainder of the day getting reacquainted followed by a tour of the base.

The following day, as part of Greg's ongoing mission in Iraq, the two went out on an eight-hour patrol donned in full combat gear in Alpha Company's area of responsibility to perform civil military operations.

Greg is a vital member of the Fire Support Team, which is responsible for all civil affairs projects in the area. The team has been able to establish several schools, wells and electrical systems, providing the people of the Tigris River Valley with basic living needs.

During this patrol, the team, along with the second platoon from Alpha Company, traveled into the desert to search for outlying towns in order to gather as much information as possible about the area. This information allows company and battalion leaders to make an accurate assessment of the current water, power and education levels at each location.

As the mission dragged into its eighth hour, father and son discussed everything from their future in the military to families and friends back home.

Upon arrival at their base of operations, Roger told tales

of his son, a younger more defiant soldier, as a small group of listeners gathered outside the living quarters.

The next day was the central reason for Roger's trip — his son's promotion to the rank of sergeant. For the rare occasion, Lt. Col. Scott Wuestner, task force commander, 4th Battalion, 11th Field Artillery, joined the remainder of the company at the Al Hatra Ruins located within the Task Force's area of responsibility.

Roger, proud of welcoming his son to the ranks of the non-commissioned officer corps, stood stiffly at attention along with his son as Wuestner spoke, "It's a rare occurrence in a time of war that a father is able to promote his son."

As the orders were read aloud, everyone stood in silence. The only sounds were the wind blowing through the Al Hatra Ruins and digital cameras snapping photographs. Roger stood in front of his son, removed the Velcro specialist rank from Greg's chest and proudly attached his son's new rank of sergeant.

After the promotion, Greg, his father and the rest of the group toured the ancient ruins of Al Hatra.

Following the tour and several other photo opportu-

nities, the fire support team and Roger set out once again on another civil affairs mission. This time to verify the start of construction on a well in the area, as well as pass out school supplies and candy to a town that has had little contact with multi-national forces since 2003. During the patrol, the men were greeted happily by Iraqi children as they handed out candy, clothing, shoes, MRE's and water.

On the final night of Roger's visit to Qayyarah

West Airbase, once again, father and son sat outside, talking, laughing and telling tales. The same group encircled the pair once again, listening to all the stories told by father and son. After trading as many photos as possible, all parties left father and son to enjoy their last night together to relive the past few days.

In the early hours May 2, the newly promoted sergeant drove his father back to the terminal where they said their

good-byes. Both Werthmanns were humbly aware of the rarity of the occasion that afforded them the opportunity to see each other. For Roger, it was days filled with pride in his son. He saw his son as a true responsible adult, he saw the work his son had accomplished so skillfully in a war zone and got to know his son's fellow soldiers. The cooperation between the Marine Corps and the Army had given him a memory he will cherish forever.



