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VOL. 52 NO. 26
June, 30 2006



POWERLIFTING, B1

OBSERVATION POST



HUMVEE TRAINING, A8

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THIS ISSUE

A5 - VMU-1

A6 - Bronze Star

B1 - Tattoos

HOT TOPICS

4TH OF JULY

CELEBRATION!

MCCS hosts a 4th of July Celebration on Victory Field from 5:00 p.m. to 9:30 p.m. The Main and Ocotillo gates will open at 4 p.m. to the general public. Enjoy live entertainment from Mylin, Debra Arlyn and the Combat Center Band and the largest fireworks display in the Morongo Basin. No outside alcohol or pets allowed. Bring your own lawn chairs. For more information call 830-5086.

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.

ITT BUS TOURS

ITT is offering Summer Family Trips. The next trip will be on July 8 to Sea World San Diego. The cost is \$25 per person for the transportation to and from the park. There is a sign-up minimum of 25 people for the trip to take place. The previous trip to Disneyland was cancelled due to insufficient participation, so sign-up today! Full payment must be made during time of reservation. To reserve your seat please call 830-6132x253 or visit ITT in the MCX.

CREDO MARINE CORPS WEST RETREATS

CREDO Marine Corps West will be hosting a personal Growth Retreat, July 28-30, 2006, located at Luther Glen Conference Center, Cherry Valley, Calif., and a Marriage Enrichment Retreat, August 11-13, at Highland Hot Springs Resort, located in Beaumont, Calif. For more information on Highland Hot Springs, visit: <http://www.highland-springsresort.com>. We have 30 slots available for the PGR and only 20 slots available for the MER. Registration will be on a first come first serve basis. For more information call 830-4489.

COMING NEXT ISSUE

- July 4th Celebration
- Vacation Bible School
- OEF Volleyball

THIS DAY IN MARINE CORPS HISTORY

June 30, 1919

Although 305 women served in the Marine Corps Reserve during World War I, all were separated from service by this day.

Sun sets on 12 'Cutting Edge' Marines

CPL. HEIDI E. LOREDO
COMBAT CORRESPONDENT

With a slow sunset a sorrowful backdrop, the families and friends of Marines killed during their last deployment gathered June 22 for a memorial service filled with prayer and tribute.

Third Battalion, 7th Marine Regiment deployed to Iraq early September 2005 and returned late March after spending seven months in the Al Anbar province. But the battalion did not return home complete. Twelve Marines died during the battalion's third deployment to Iraq.

Remembered during the ceremony were:

Lance Cpl. Andrew D. Bedard, 19, of Missoula, Mont.

Cpl. Joseph P. Bier, 22, of Centralia, Wash.

Cpl. Matthew D. Conley, 21, of Killen, Ala.

Lance Cpl. Sergio H. Escobar, 18, of Pasadena, Calif.

Lance Cpl. Kristen K. Figueroa, 20, of Honolulu, Hawaii

2nd Lt. Almar L. Fitzgerald, 23, of Lexington, S.C.

Lance Cpl. Jonathon R. Spears, 21, of Molino, Fla.

Lance Cpl. Shane C. Swanberg, 24, of Kirkland, Wash.

Lance Cpl. Samuel Tapia, 20, of San Benito, Texas

Lance Cpl. John J. Thornton, 22, of Phoenix, Ariz.

Lance Cpl. Adam J. Van Alstine, 21, of Superior, Wis.

Cpl. Adam O. Zanutto, 26, of Caliente, Calif.

Lieutenant Col. Roger B. Turner, commanding officer, 3/7, said in order to truly memorialize the fallen men, the battalion's accomplishments must be well known. Prior to their deployment Turner and his men decided they were going to perform their duties tactfully and tactically and did so in a couple of different ways.

Aside from the large number of terrorists which plagued Ramadi and the hard violence 3/7 encountered, the battalion treated the citizens with dignity and respect and demanded respect when it was called for.

"And what that did during the November time frame was that it separated the terrorists from the locals," said Turner. "Then the locals came to us and said that they wanted to vote in the December elections. We would make that happen. We watched in awe in December when 50,000 people voted in Ramadi."

Another significant factor that contributed to the battalion's legacy was their assistance with the Iraqi Army. "If someone would've told me that an Iraqi Army battalion would own battle spaces in Ramadi I



CPL. HEIDI E. LOREDO

Combat Center Band Staff Sgt. Joel M. Daniel plays "Amazing Grace" during the memorial service held for 12 fallen Marines from 3rd Battalion, 7th Marine Regiment on June 22.

would've laughed aloud," said Turner. "Once we got over there we saw that there was some progress that was made, but they were still pretty rough. Through blood, sweat and tears and because of these Marines, we accomplished enough to transfer battle spaces with the Iraqi Army."

Turner added, "Every one of them joined the Corps after 11 September 2001. After they joined, half of them realized this was going to be a long war

on terrorism. It was going to be a tough fight."

The battalion, glad to have known the fallen men, even if it was for a little while, feel they are better men for walking in their footsteps. Their fighting will always be remembered.

"Ladies and gentlemen, these men are true heroes, and it was an honor to serve with them," concluded Turner. "Rest in peace warriors. Semper Fidelis."

Slaughter leaves 1st Tanks, Corps as Stopa takes command of tankers

LANCE CPL. MICHAEL S. CIFUENTES
COMBAT CORRESPONDENT

Commanding officer of 1st Tank Battalion, Lt. Col. Aaron T. Slaughter, retired from the Marine Corps and relinquished his command to Lt. Col. James B. Stopa in a change of command ceremony June 22 on the commanding general's parade field.

Slaughter had been a part of 1st Tank Battalion since 2001 as the battalion executive officer; he became deputy director of Tactical Training Exercise Control Group in 2002. In June 2004 he rejoined 1st Tank Battalion as the battalion commander.

Slaughter began his tour in the Marine Corps when he was commissioned in 1986 through the Naval Reserve Officers' Training Course. His first assignment was with 2nd Tank Battalion where he served as a platoon commander in 1987. During this period, he deployed to Camp Fuji, Japan, and later to Okinawa and Korea, serving as a tank platoon commander and a fire support coordinator.

From 1989 to 1992, Slaughter served as the operations officer at Recruiting Station Baltimore. He joined 1st Tank Battalion in 1993, serving as the maintenance management officer, Alpha Company commander and assistant operations officer until 1995. In 1997 he served as a systems engineer at United States Transportation



LANCE CPL. MICHAEL S. CIFUENTES

Sgt. Maj. Eddie D. Reid, sergeant major of 1st Tank Battalion, hands the battalion colors to Lt. Col. Aaron T. Slaughter, former commanding officer of the battalion, in a change of command ceremony June 22 on the commanding general's parade field. Slaughter then handed the battalion colors as he relinquished his command to Lt. Col. James B. Stopa, the battalions new commanding officer.

Command until he was stationed at the Combat Center in 2001.

Slaughter is a graduate of Hickman High School and Tulane University. He achieved a Masters of Science from the Naval Postgraduate School and a Masters of Military Studies from Marine

Corps University. He is also a graduate of the Armor Officer Basic Course, the Armor Officer Advanced Course and the Marine Corps Command and Staff College.

During the ceremony, Slaughter expressed thanks and appreciation to the service men of 1st Tanks, key volun-

teers and those who gave him guidance in his career.

"We've been on numerous deployments, deploying all over the world to defend the country against terrorists," said Slaughter facing the battalion formation. "The hardest part was dealing with our comrades who have died.

"You know how much all of you mean to me," added the Columbia, Mo., native. "We talked about love before, and I know you all considered it real odd that 'our C.O. is talking about love.' But follow the golden rule, take care

See TANKS, A10



WILLIAM D. MOSS

Run with the president

U.S. Army Staff Sgt. Christian Bagge, who lost both legs in Iraq last year when an improvised explosive device hit his Humvee, runs with President Bush. The run took place on the South Lawn of the White House in Washington, June 27, 2006.

Sempertoons

By Gunnery Sgt. Charles Wolf



www.sempertoons.com

C.O.P. Corner

Community Oriented Policing

The proactive voice of crime prevention



Presented by the Provost Marshal's Office Crime Prevention Section

Fireworks

Combat Center Order P1630.6E prohibits the transportation, storage, possession, firing and discharge of fireworks.

State of California Penal Codes 12676, 12679-80, 12684-85, 12688-89 states:

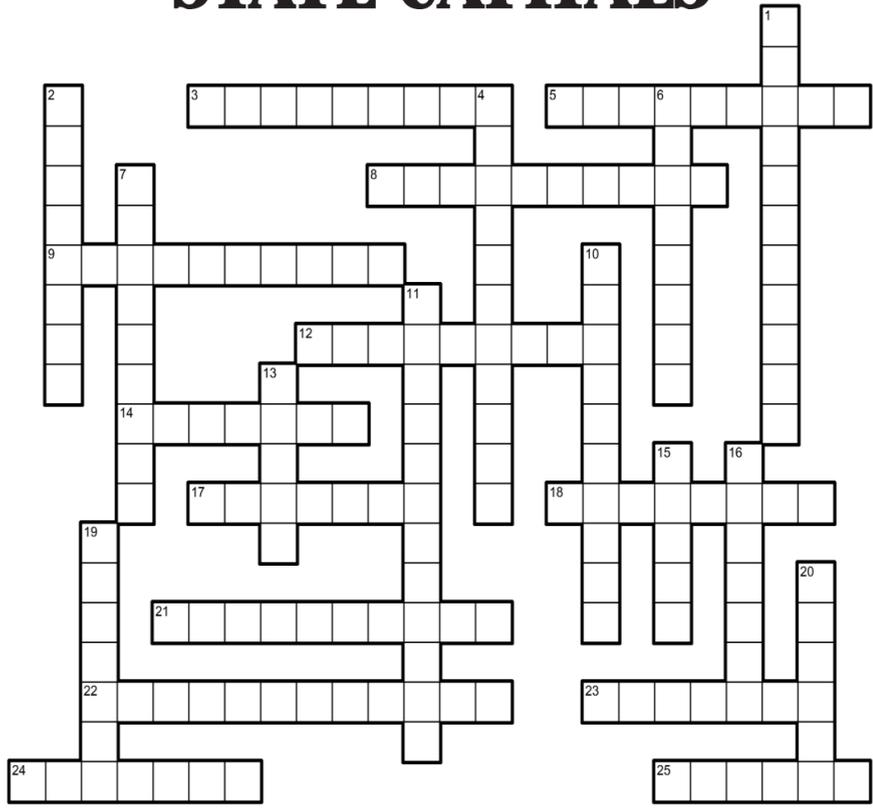
- The selling period is from noon, June 28, through noon, July 6.
- You must be 16 or older to purchase fireworks.
- If you have a public display, resell, and/or transporting from a wholesaler, a state permit is required.
- Only "safe and sane" fireworks marked with the State Fire Marshal's Approval Label may be used. For example, fountains, sparklers, wheels, smoke and snake items, strobes, ground spinners, novelty fireworks that do not travel, snappers and caps.
- "Dangerous Fireworks" which are prohibited by the State of California are firecrackers, skyrockets, rockets, roman candles, chasers, sparklers, all fireworks designed to create an element of surprise, explodes through means of friction, or explodes on impact, fireworks kits, flares and/or other emergency signaling devices (emergency use only), and fireworks determined by State Fire Marshal to be unsafe.
- All illegal fireworks may be seized by fire and/or police personnel.

For more information visit http://www.fireworks.com/fireworks_laws/laws_california.asp or <http://www.leginfo.ca.gov/calaw.html>.

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

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- 18 Hawaii
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- 25 Alaska

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- 2 Ohio
- 4 Illinois
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- 7 Maryland
- 10 Louisiana
- 11 Indiana
- 13 Delaware
- 15 Idaho
- 16 Maine
- 19 Mississippi
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[Solutions on A9]

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MCCS
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WE ALL MAKE A DIFFERENCE
PLEASE FOR DRINKING RESPONSIBLY

Centerspeak

What does Independence Day mean to you?

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



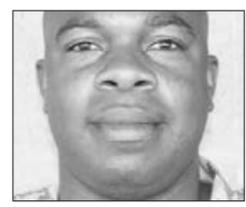
HM3 JOHN GUSTAFSON
NAVAL HOSPITAL

"It's a celebration of our freedom. It's the embodiment of everything we are."



BONNIE CASPER
MCCS EMPLOYEE

"It's a day of celebration because we get to live in this country where we are free to express ourselves."



GUNNERY SGT. VICTOR BROWN
MWSS-371

"It's a celebration of freedom to remind us where we came from and the fight and struggle we had just to have this day."

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

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A Reflection on Operation Summer Force Preservation

A few weeks ago we entered what we like to call the Critical Days of Summer. From Memorial Day to Labor Day, the Navy and Marine Corps incurs more off-duty mishaps and traffic deaths than it does the entire rest of the year. The statistics are always disturbing, especially since most of the deaths were preventable.

Most of you know what happened to Pittsburgh Steelers Quarterback Ben Roethlisberger. 'Big Ben' was involved in a motorcycle accident and, because he wasn't wearing a helmet, suffered serious damage to his face, jaw and teeth. It does not take a rocket scientist to figure out that if he was wearing a full-face helmet he would have walked away from that accident with only minor damage.

Face it, the decisions you make affect your life and those around you. A poor choice can cost you a lot – physically, financially and emotionally. What's more, the law of averages works against us and when any of us tempt fate we are headed for a collision course with something bad.

The challenge for every Marine and Sailor this summer is to be there for each other and remind everyone to be alert, aware, and able to manage risk all day, every day. It seems to me that the Navy and Marine Corps on-duty safety record is superb because we practice operational risk management all the time. We are safety experts. However, as soon as we take off our uniforms, we drop our guard and forget to factor in risk and safety. The results often hurt the Navy and Marine Corps readiness.

Now, if you're reading this thinking you're safe and you won't get hurt, consider the following statistics:

220 Sailors and Marines died in PMV and off-road duty recreational mishaps from summer 2002 to summer 2005.

73% were between 18 and 26 years old.
45% were drivers or passengers in cars or light trucks.
31% of the total fatalities involved alcohol use.
25% died in shore/recreational mishaps.
25% were motorcycle riders.

Marines and Sailors, it's obvious the younger you are the more at risk you are. The average rank of those who have died in the past four years is E3 and the average age is 22. The majority of the mishaps took place between 12-3 a.m. Sunday. All leaders at every level realize that, 'nothing good happens between midnight and 2 a.m.' Each year many prove that statement true.

The summer is so dangerous because it's the period where many go on family vacations and often travel longer periods than we should without a rest or break. It's when the weather is ideal for outdoor and water activities. And it's also a time for cookouts and picnics, which often include alcohol consumption.

First, let's address alcohol consumption: no one in the Navy or Marine Corps under 21 years of age can consume alcohol because it's the law...period. For those over 21, all any leader can ask is for you to drink responsibly. Drinking responsibly means NEVER driving after drinking. It means naming a designated driver. It also means preventing Marines and Sailors from drinking and driving.

While alcohol does play a factor in many mishaps, it's not the only factor we need to consider. Some of the less-publicized things we need to do to be safe are:

- Always wear a seatbelt and ensure everyone else in the vehicle wears theirs as well.
- Drive the speed limit.
- Get plenty of rest before a trip and don't try to drive too far in a single day.

- Do not drive and use a cell phone or do other distracting activities.

- Maintain your vehicle.

- Respect road conditions.

In addition to driving safety, off-duty recreation mishaps are also high in the summer months. Here are a few tips to help keep you, your friends and your family safe:

- Learn water survival skills.

- Don't leave camp fires unattended.

- Make sure grills are in proper working order and never put your face over the grill.

- Hydrate and don't over-exert yourself in the heat.

- Stay out of storms, especially when lightening strikes are probable.

- Stretch before you exercise and don't overdo it.

Although most of what has been mentioned may seem like common sense, each year the statistics prove common sense is often discarded. Why Marines and Sailors put themselves in risk is always a mystery. Our hope is that each of you realizes life is short, accidents happen, and that our bodies are fragile. In an instant our lives can be shattered when we make a bad decision or discard safety.

Marines and Sailors, have a great summer. Have fun with friends and family. Go on vacation and have a good time – but above all, be safe. Think before you drink, plan before you drive, stretch before you work out, and try to keep in mind your limits. The Marine Corps and Navy needs each and every one of you healthy, strong and full of spirit! Good luck.

Anyone heard of Rideshare?

CPL. EVAN M. EAGAN
COMBAT CORRESPONDENT

Does anyone at the Combat Center know what a rideshare is? Apparently not. At least I hope not. I hope that's why after sitting at the rideshare terminal on Del Valle Road for nearly 30 minutes, with at least 200 cars passing by, nobody bothered to offer a ride to two young leather-necks during the hottest part of the day.

It was 4:30 p.m. and the temperature was well above the 100 degree mark when a friend and I made our way from the barracks on Griffin Road headed for the softball diamonds at Del Valle Field.

We were going to meet up with our softball team at the field, where a teammate would undoubtedly give us a ride to our final destination of Felix Field.

When we got to Del Valle Field we discovered that our team had either canceled practice or had already practiced and left for the game. Regardless, we were without a ride.

With the game starting in less than an hour we hurriedly called teammates looking for a ride. Without much luck, we walked from the

softball diamond toward Del Valle Road where we noticed the rideshare terminal. We thought we had our solution. We were wrong.

I want to believe that every single person who drove right past us was unaware that the rideshare terminal is there for those in need of a ride, and those who want to do a good deed.

I'm not saying everyone who has a car is responsible for transportation for those who do not, much less strangers, but it was "rush hour" on Del Valle with most Marines heading home from work at this time, and of the more than 200 cars that passed us I'm sure a majority of them were heading right past Felix Field and in to base housing.

I must have made eye contact with about half the drivers. A few even honked

at us. Surely they weren't mocking us from inside their air conditioned vehicles, as we sat there getting beat down by the Mojave sun. I'm sure they were all in too much of a hurry to stop, all 200 of them.

As time passed it became evident we would not be getting a ride from a Combat Center "Good Samaritan."

I challenge anyone reading this to answer yourself this question: would you have offered a ride?

Do I really think the 200 or more cars that passed us didn't know what the rideshare terminal was for, or that they were too busy to give us a lift? No, but I do know that Marines take care of their own, and if I was in need of a ride again I would sit at that terminal believing sooner or later someone would offer me one.



A car drives by the rideshare terminal on Del Valle Road.

CPL. EVAN M. EAGAN

VMU-1 "Watchdogs" in new hands



LANCE CPL. KATLEYN A. KNAUER

Col. Mark G. Cianciolo presents Lt. Col. John M. Neuman a Bronze Star Medal for combat operations as commanding officer in support of Operation Iraqi Freedom.

LANCE CPL. KATLEYN A. KNAUER
COMBAT CORRESPONDENT

Lieutenant Col. John M. Neuman relinquished command of the Marine Unarmed Aerial Vehicle Squadron 1 to Lt. Col.

Geoffrey H. Field, in a change of command ceremony at the commanding general's parade field here June 23.

During his time as commander, Neuman and the "Watchdogs" deployed twice

in support of OIF For his achievement in connection with combat operations as commanding officer of VMU-1 in Operation Iraqi Freedom from August 2005 to March 2006, Neuman

received a bronze star.

"To the watchdogs, you have done everything in a superb fashion. You've met every challenge and you have exceeded every expectation. Every mission you have been asked to do you have done it a hundred percent, said Neuman. "I'm extremely proud of each and every one of you. I wish you the best of luck in the next year and upcoming deployment."

Neuman will now report to the U.S. Army War College in Carlisle, Penn.

Fields was commissioned through the Platoon Leaders Course in 1989. He graduated The Basic School in March 1990 and reported to Marine Air Control Group 48. In 1993 Fields deployed with Marine Medium Helicopter Squadron 162 reinforced, 22nd Marine Expeditionary Unit as a squadron logistics officer aboard the USS Guadalcanal. It is here that he participated in Operation Provide Comfort, Bosnia-Herzegovina, and Operation Restore Hope, Somalia.

In 1995 Fields participated in Exercise Strong Resolve, Norway aboard the USS Wasp. He again deployed with HMM-162 (REIN), 22nd MEU in 1995 participating in Operation Assured Response, Liberia, as the squadron flight officer aboard the USS Guam.

In 1998, in his three year tour with Marine Heavy Helicopter 464, he participated in Operation Easter Access, Vieques, Puerto Rico. From there he reported in July 2001 to Marine Corps Air Station Quantico, where he was assigned to Presidential Helicopter Squadron One for four years. In 2005 he was assigned to Camp Lejeune's II Marine Expeditionary Force, G-3, Expeditionary Operations Department.

Field is a graduate of Marine Corps Command and Staff College, Survival Evasion Resistance Escape course and the Tactical Air Control Party course.

Fields awards and decorations include the Meritorious Service Medal, Air Medal

with Combat "V" with "1" Strike/ Flight award, Navy and Marine Corps Commendation Medal with a gold star in lieu of second award, and the Navy and Marine Corps Achievement Medal with a gold star in lieu of second award. Field is also authorized to wear the Presidential Service Badge.

Field is married to the former Phyllis Thomas and has three children Matthew, Chase and Kyle.

"Watchdogs, Marines," said Field. "We are all privileged to wear the eagle, globe and anchor. The rich legacy that is captured in those words is the standard that governs our services. Our challenge is to conduct ourselves in a manner that deems us worthy successors of the many, many Marines that have gone before us. We do that by practicing stewardship. Very simply defined stewardship is the desire to serve others before self. My pledge to you today is that my stewardship begins right here, right now. God bless you and your families. Semper Fidelis."

Marine bandsman receives Purple Heart

GUNNERY SGT. MARK OLIVA
1ST MARINE DIVISION

CAMP FALLUJAH, Iraq – Next time Sgt. Aaron C. Morgan marches in a parade with the 1st Marine Division Band, expect his uniform to look just a little different

Morgan, a bandsman assigned to Regimental Combat Team 5, was awarded the Purple Heart Medal June 24. Morgan, a percussionist from the 1st Marine Division Band, was wounded while performing security operations for an explosive ordnance disposal team April 17.

Morgan was the turret gunner in the lead vehicle of his convoy running down one of the more traveled roads in the area. It was late at night, the sky split with lightning.

"We just completed our job and were returning to Camp Smitty," said Morgan, a 25-year-old from Baird, Texas. "I saw a bright flash and heard an extremely loud noise. I was covered in dirt and rocks."

The next few actions occurred all in moments, Morgan explained. He dropped into his turret and bounced back up to his gun to search for a possible triggerman. He felt something wet on his cheek and it tasted coppery. It was his own blood.

"My first thought was I just wanted to see my wife," Morgan said. He collected himself, assessed there was no major damage and everyone else was good. The convoy pressed on.

"You're worried about the gunners," said Cpl. Guy N. Griffin, a 19-year-old from Ruidoso, N.M., who was a couple vehicles back from Morgan that night. "They radioed back and said everyone was good. When we got back, I could see Sgt. Morgan was a little banged up in the face."

Corpsmen and doctors helped clean the dirt and debris from Morgan's face and found a piece of shrapnel had torn across his cheek, just inches below his eye.

"I was just glad to be alive and it wasn't worse than it was," he said.

While Morgan isn't the first Marine bandsman wounded in combat, he's among a rare few. It's a telling sign that Marines from all walks are giving their part in the fight against terror, according to Master Sgt. George E. Schweizer, the 1st Marine Division band master who deployed to be RCT-5's security chief.

"The reason Sgt. Morgan was out there was because he was hand-picked," said 41-year-old Schweizer, from Wheeling, W.V. "He was put in a tough position because I knew he could multi-task."

The fact that Morgan is

wearing a Purple Heart, not a decoration most would immediately associate with a Marine from the band, shows that it's not just infantry Marines giving their all in Iraq.

"It's not as unique as we as a band come back to Iraq" Schweizer said. "We're performing more security missions out on the roads every day, supporting the infantry and that's what it's all about."

For his part, the Purple Heart is an award Morgan never set out to earn.

"It's really no more unique than anyone else," Morgan said. "We all have a job to do."



GUNNERY SGT. MARK OLIVA

Col. Larry D. Nicholson, commanding officer of Regimental Combat Team 5, congratulates Sgt. Aaron C. Morgan after he was awarded the Purple Heart.

A Bronze Star Marine rises after tragic battles

LANCE CPL. MICHAEL S. CIFUENTES
COMBAT CORRESPONDENT

Well before graduating from Anacortes High School, San Diego, in 2001, Cpl. Christopher R. Harman, a TOW-gunner with 3rd Battalion, 7th Marine Regiment, made up his mind about enlisting in the Marine Corps.

He wasn't interested in going to college. His grandfather, Dutch Probst, a former Marine who fought in the Korean War, guided his thoughts on how he could set up a good foundation for his future. Nonetheless, joining the Corps was mostly his own idea, said Harman.

With little vacation from high school, Harman entered recruit training at Marine Corps Recruit Depot San Diego in late June 2001. After finishing School of Infantry, Camp Pendleton, Calif., and all other entry-level training, he was assigned to 3/7.

"My first impression [of the fleet and its Marines] was that they were really professional," said Harman. "It was different from anything else I ever experienced including boot camp and SOI. It was just a band of tough guys that knew their [knowledge]."

Since he entered, Harman has been on two combat deployments to Iraq. He was there for the initial push toward Baghdad during Operation Iraqi Freedom 1, and has recently, in March, returned from a deployment in Ar Ramadi, Iraq.

"Our first deployment to Iraq was very exciting," said Harman. "It was a chance for us to finally put forth all that we've trained on."

"The amount of time we spent in Kuwait was very frustrating though," continued Harman. "We were all anxious to do something, but we never knew what was going to happen and when. A lot of the guys started to feel really confused. When we finally got the word to cross the line of departure, everyone was ecstatic. I remember it being one of the most motivating times I ever had in the Marine Corps."

After returning from their first combat deployment to Iraq, 3/7 spent a lot of time training for their second push back into Iraq, said Harman. However, he could not join his comrades due to a shoulder injury that left him behind with 3/7's Remain Behind Element.

In September 2005, 3/7 embarked on their third combat deployment to Iraq. Harman deployed as a vehicle commander and dismounted squad leader with Combined Anti Armor Team Red, Weapons Company.

"Our last deployment was insane," said Harman. "I already knew what to expect and we got to plenty of close engagements as soon as we got to Ramadi. It brought back a lot of memories. It was a different place and a different fight though."

Less than a month into the deployment, Harman and CAAT Red were operating as

part of the battalion's Quick Reaction Force, and responded to a mass casualty call from an improvised explosive device in an intersection of a street in Ar Ramadi. The IED blast was the initial action of an ambush from enemy forces. Harman maneuvered his vehicle into the kill zone of the ambush in an effort to recover Marines and numerous Iraqi Security Force casualties. His actions helped recover the wounded Marines and Iraqi soldiers. Under fire, he established a casualty collection point where he directed Marines and corpsmen too.

"I really cannot remember exactly what happened, but I remember I had no time to think about anything," said Harman. "Bringing my vehicle into machine gun fire is what had to be done. I didn't want to be in that intersection any longer than anyone else."

Lance Cpl. Carl J. Franklin, a rifleman with Weapons Company from Medford, Ore., was at the scene.

"We were just as scared for his life as we were for ours or as he was for his own," said Franklin. "But he conducted himself very mature and professional under that situation."

A month later, Harman and his unit of Marines responded to a similar call, only this one involved Harman as a casualty. Harman maneuvered his vehicle to recover two casualties that remained in an exposed intersection after an ambush.

"It was a very [horrible]



LANCE CPL. MICHAEL S. CIFUENTES

Cpl. Christopher R. Harman, a vehicle commander and dismounted squad leader with Combined Anti Armor Team Red, Weapons Company, 3rd Battalion, 7th Marine Regiment, stands in front of Lt. Col. Roger B. Turner, commanding officer of 3/7, moments after he was awarded the Bronze Star with Combat "V" behind 3/7's command post June 21.

feeling to see to Marines lying motionless in an intersection like that," said Harman. "It was a feeling that I felt deep in the gut, and it was something that I hoped to never see again."

Harman pulled his vehicle into the intersection and called the corpsman. He and the corpsman attempted to approach the two Marines who lied in the intersection. After his first attempt was held off by enemy fire, Harman called for more Marines. Just as his team was in position to retrieve the casualties, an IED detonated 15 meters away from him, knocking him to the ground.

"I remember out of nowhere I was laying

down," said Harman. "I quickly sat up, checked all my limbs, and I saw that I was good to go."

Reacting quickly, Harman took advantage of the cloud of dust and debris that was provided by the IED blast and ran to retrieve one of the casualties that was still in the intersection. Nonetheless, the enemy continued to provide a heavy rain of gunfire on the intersection. Still, by his zealous initiative, he was able to drag the Marine, who had been killed, out of the intersection.

As soon as both KIAs were retrieved and all sensitive material and gear was retrieved and accounted for, the team left the scene of the incident.

"The deployment was a very rough, but very good experience," said Harman. "Would I go back? Yeah, I'd go back."

Harman and 3/7 returned to the Combat Center in March. On June 21, Harman was awarded the Bronze Star with Combat "V" for his heroic actions in Ar Ramadi.

The medal was pinned on by his battalion commander, Lt. Col. Roger B. Turner, behind 3/7's command post.

"Cpl. Harman is very deserving of the award," said Franklin. "He had a lot of nerve to keep going after getting hit by the IED blast. I was just hoping he was alright right after I saw the blast go off. Aside from those incidents, he's a good Marine. He's always alert and aware of his surroundings. He's very respectful. This was my first combat deployment and it felt surreal to me, but [Harman] kept checking in with me, making sure reality was sinking in. He's a really good Marine."

Aside from surfing or dedicating his time to his family and girlfriend, Harman makes sure the mission is being carried by the Marines under him. Most of the time, tasks are always finished before Harman is aware of them, he said.

"Weapons Company in general is the best company I [have] ever served with," said Harman. "I'm very proud and glad to have served with them over there."

1/7 Marines, Sailors teach Iraqi Security Forces Medical evaluations

CPL. ANTONIO ROSAS
REGIMENTAL COMBAT TEAM 7

WESTERN AL ANBAR PROVINCE, Iraq -- Iraqis from the Euphrates River villages of Al Amari, Haffha and Zella say they have never had immediate, quality health care.

Marines in the region are looking to change that.

Recently, Marines and Sailors from 1st Battalion, 7th Marine Regiment, along with a handful of Iraqi soldiers, provided two days of medical evaluations to citizens of the small villages in Iraq's western Al Anbar province.

The operation was the first of its kind in the area where Iraqi soldiers and Marines conduct daily security patrols, weeding out insurgents and the improvised explosive devices terrorists plant alongside Iraq's roadways.

"We're here to help the people with their medical problems and seeing what types of medical needs the Iraqis have in this area," said Navy Lt. Leonard Blinder, the battalion's surgeon. "Eventually, the Iraqis will have to carry out operations like this by themselves with their own doctors."

An Iraqi Army officer was present with several Jundi -- Iraqi Army privates -- in order to learn how to conduct an operation of this nature on their own as Iraqi Security Forces continue towards taking the lead from U.S. forces on all military operations in Iraq.

The team of Iraqi soldiers, Marines, and Navy corpsmen set up their temporary medical clinics at elementary schools in each town. They advertised the free medical evaluations through a loud-speaker and the citizens responded immediately. During the 'doctor visits,' patients described their grievances and U.S. physicians evaluated the problems.

Within several hours, more

than 100 Iraqis received an evaluation by the Americans. The large turnout for the village of less than 1,000 Iraqis was a clear sign that cooperation is improving between Iraqis and the Iraqi Army, according to Navy Petty Officer 2nd Class Michael Christoforo, team corpsman for 3rd Civil Affairs Group.

As the citizens made the short trek to the clinics, they were immediately greeted by Iraqi soldiers who provided security.

"It was the Iraqi soldiers who the people saw right away when coming to this clinic and they were able to see that it was the Iraqis taking charge," said Staff Sgt. Jason C. Neale, a platoon sergeant with the battalion's Company A.

Neale stresses the importance of operations like these because the Iraqis living in the tiny villages in this remote corner of the country have seen very little of the Iraqi Army, he said.

The battalion has just recently begun patrolling many of the small Euphrates River communities, which had no previous contact with Coalition forces until the Marines built an outpost, or battle position, near the numerous villages.

U.S. military physicians treated a number of Iraqi patients, many who were suffering from rashes, infections and muscular pain, according to the corpsmen.

Medication was provided whenever possible, while several of the Iraqis with medical conditions beyond the capabilities of the clinic were directed to the local hospital in Ubaydi, more than 20 miles away.

During the second day of the operation, Marines and Sailors went house-to-house to inform citizens of the free medical evaluations.

"It's just one way that we are demonstrating to the

locals that we are here to help them and we want to make sure they are not helping the insurgents," said Blinder.

For each patient assessment, an Iraqi officer stood by taking notes and interacting with the people of the village. The 35-year-old officer spoke with every patient and provided a relaxed atmosphere among the throng of villagers by answering their questions, according to the U.S. physicians.

Overall, citizens were friendly and responded in large numbers to the operation according to Neale, who has exchanged smiles and greetings with citizens while patrolling the streets here on a daily basis.

The recent presence of the Marines here is eliminating any possible hiding place for insurgents looking to settle in the area, according to Neale.

"We didn't expect any problems from the people," said Neale. "The people know we're out here every day and that we want to help them."

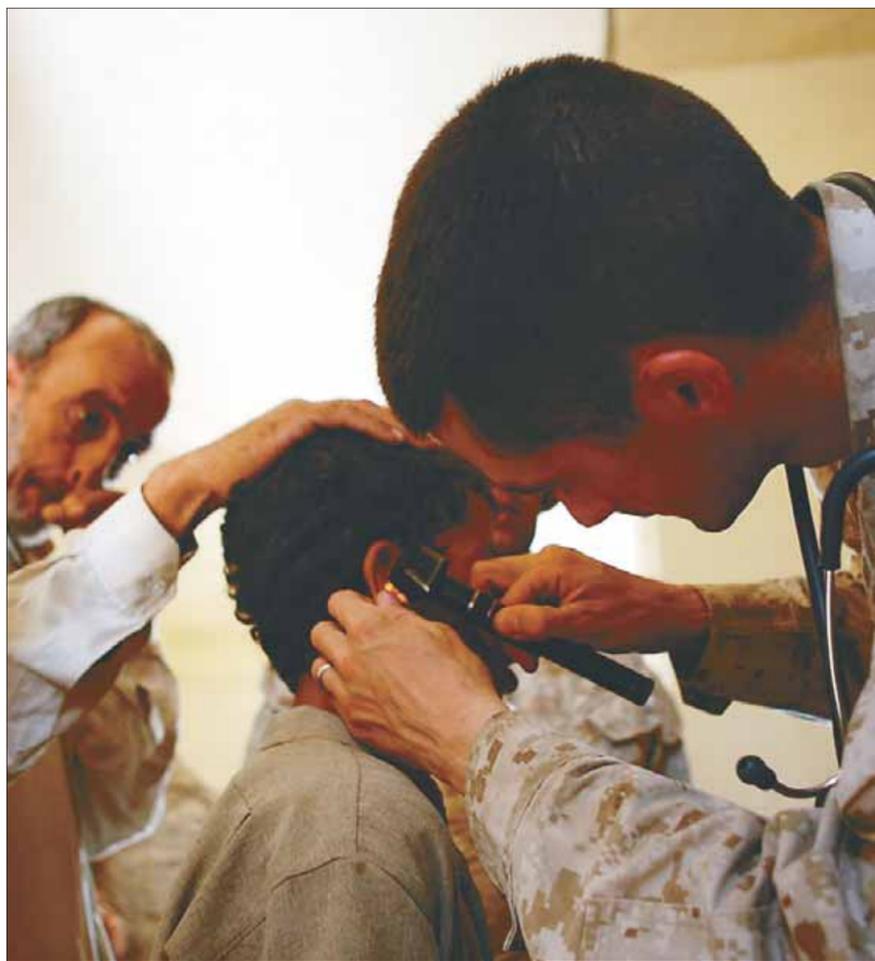
Despite the positive response from the locals, Marines living in this area are still encountering improvised explosive devices and mortar fire on a near-daily basis.

Until recently, the only presence the locals had with the Marines and Iraqi Army were daily security patrols, according to 1st Lt. Craig O. Davis, a platoon commander with Company A.

"We're trying to gain as much intelligence about the insurgency in this area as we can," said Davis. "For every patrol the Iraqi soldiers are with us and that's important because they really help us out when we're trying to talk to the people."

During daily security patrols, Davis said it is not unlikely to encounter locals who seek the Marines out for some type of medical assistance.

When Company A



CPL. ANTONIO ROSAS

Navy Petty Officer 2nd Class Michael Christoforo, a 32-year-old from St. Marys, Ga., and hospital corpsman for 3rd Civil Affairs Group, conducts a medical evaluation of an Iraqi boy June 10, in the village of Al Amari near the Iraqi-Syrian border.

Marines patrol through an area, a corpsman will sometimes aid the locals; however, he can or he will point them in the right direction to seek further medical care, said Davis.

While this is the first operation of its kind in the small villages bordering the Euphrates River, Marines and Sailors plan on holding similar future operations along-

side Iraqi soldiers, they said. "The more we do these types of operations, the better the Iraqi soldiers will be able to handle security on their own," said Christoforo.

1/7 trains Iraqi soldiers for new humvees

BY CPL. ANTONIO ROSAS

REGIMENTAL COMBAT TEAM 7

CAMP AL QA'IM, Iraq — Fifty brand-new, tan humvees are parked in the 3rd Brigade, 7th Iraqi Army Division headquarters here — vehicles the unit received this month from Iraq's Ministry of Defense in an effort to provide Iraqi Security Forces with more heavily armored — and reliable — vehicles.

Before the soldiers can begin conducting security operations in their new trucks, Marines of 1st Battalion, 7th Marine Regiment, are equipping the soldiers with the training and knowledge they'll need to operate the up-armored vehicles.

The humvees add additional armored protection for the soldiers, who normally drive through Al Anbar province's IED-laden roads and towns in pick-up trucks, which have minimally armored machine guns mounted in the trucks' beds.

Now, they'll be rolling in the same vehicles as American forces, and will have the training to operate the humvees in any condition, and keep the vehicles maintained.

The Marines' goal is to have 150 certified Iraqi soldiers qualified to drive the vehicles within the next 90 days, according to Military Transition Team officials here — one of several teams of U.S. service members responsible for mentoring and advising Iraqi Army units throughout

western Al Anbar province.

The transition team here works directly with 3rd Brigade near the Iraq-Syria border.

The Marines are currently teaching the Iraqis operation and maintenance basics in a course that will enable them to drive and maintain their new humvees without assistance from the Americans.

"For someone who has never been behind the wheel of a humvee, they're doing pretty good," said Cpl. Alfredo Solis, a motor transport operator and instructor for the course. "These guys will do well because they ask a lot of questions and that tells me that they're eager to learn this stuff."

The course is the first step in the process of licensing the Iraqi soldiers, the Marines say.

"This class is important because the Iraqi soldiers have never had humvees before," said Maj. Stanley M. Horton, 39, the logistics advisor for the brigade's military transition team at Camp Al Qa'im, near the Iraqi-Syrian border.

U.S. forces have used the Humvee since 1981 when a prototype was built for the U.S. Army, according to the manufacturer's Web site. In Iraq, the Humvee's capabilities allow Marines to accommodate a wide range of weapons aboard a turret on the vehicle's roof, including .50 caliber machine guns, and the MK-19 40 millimeter grenade launcher.

While most Iraqi Army brigades have already com-



An Iraqi student tests on the driving portion of the humvee course where he is required to maneuver the vehicle around a set of road cones June 17. Before the soldiers can begin conducting security operations in their new trucks, Marines of 1st Battalion, 7th Marines, are equipping the soldiers with the training and knowledge they'll need to operate the up-armored vehicles.

CPL. ANTONIO ROSAS

pleted similar courses, 3rd Brigade is the youngest brigade in the country, and one of the last to receive the training, said Horton, a native of Colorado Springs, Colo.

The Iraqis are responsible for completing 32 hours of instruction in order to pass the class. The course is broken down into an equal part of classroom instruction and hands-on application to put the uniformed Iraqis under the hood of the humvees to become familiar with the vehicle's working parts.

"It's important that the Iraqis know what everything is on the humvee and under-

stand how everything works because these vehicles are theirs and they will need to upkeep them on their own," said Solis, a native of Santa Ana, Calif.

While several of the soldiers have experience as drivers and know basic vehicle maintenance, such as changing fluids and filters, the Marines stress the hands-on portion of the class since humvees are new to the Iraqi military, according to Horton.

Moreover, the soldiers must demonstrate that they can both fix a humvee, and operate it safely, before graduating the course.

"If they can't back up a humvee with a trailer for 100 feet, I'll make them do it over and over again until I see they can do it on their own," said Solis. "They need to be able to do everything without their buddies giving them the answer."

One soldier, a 26-year-old Jundi from Baghdad, has shown considerable progress in the course and says he is looking forward to driving the same armored vehicles that the Marines drive.

The soldier, who chose to remain anonymous, says the humvees provide better protection from improvised

explosive devices — arguably the number one threat against Iraqi and coalition forces in Al Anbar province.

By and large, the humvees seem to have bolstered the Iraqi soldiers' confidence in the amount of protection they'll have now when traveling Iraq's roads. They say the humvees are a huge step up from their current fleet of pick-ups.

"The vehicle feels good. It is comfortable to drive and the steering is better than our vehicles now," said another Iraqi soldier, through a translator.

"You can trust this vehicle," said another soldier, who added that he has more than 10 years of experience as a truck driver.

The vehicles can be used for a variety of tasks, from providing security for convoys, to conducting mounted patrols through towns and villages.

The Iraqi students are eager to complete the training in order to begin conducting future operations in their new vehicles, according to Staff Sgt. Lynn D. Brown, the motor transport operations chief with 1/7.

"They want to get outside with the humvees and get hands-on training," said Brown, a native of Detroit, Mich.

After the Iraqi soldiers complete the course here, they will move to the next evolution of training by attending a more concentrated course at a larger Marine base at Al Asad, said Horton.

TANKS, A1

of each other and hold each other responsible for what they do.”

Slaughter's wife, Andrea, and children, Jacob, Michael and Katherine were all present at the ceremony.

Maj. Gen. Richard F. Natonski, commanding general of 1st Marine Division, also spoke to the guest during the ceremony.

“This is a very special day for Aaron and his family, but also very emotional,” said Natonski. “Aaron is a tanker ‘par excellence.’ The work he has done with the battalion will be part of the tanker legacy.”

“Welcome, Lt. Col. Stopa, to 1st Marine Division and 1st Tanks,” continued Natonski, addressing the battalion's new commanding officer. “You come well-qualified, and I know you're suited for the job, so welcome aboard and have fun.”

The battalion's new commanding officer hails from Niagara Falls, N.Y. After the first semester of his senior year at State University of New York at Buffalo, Stopa took a semester off to attend recruit training January 1986 at Marine Corps Recruit Depot Parris Island, S.C. After completion of entry level training and communication school, he was assigned to Headquarters and Service Company, 8th Tank Battalion, Rochester, N.Y., in June 1986 as a field wireman.

In the spring of 1988, he graduated with a Bachelor of Science in Social Science Interdisciplinary Studies from the University of Buffalo. Shortly after graduation, he attended Officer Candidate School and was commissioned as a second lieutenant in April 1989.

From 1990 to 1993, Stopa was assigned to 2nd Tank Battalion where he served as a tank platoon commander. He then returned to MCRD Parris Island as a series officer, company executive offi-



LANCE CPL. MICHAEL S. CIFUENTES

cer and commanding officer of Charlie Company, 1st Recruit Training Battalion until 1996.

Stopa made his first debut to 1st Tank Battalion in September 1996 and served as the battalion assistant logistics officer, commanding officer of Charlie Company and battalion operations officer until 1998. Almost eight years later, he returned to the battalion to assume command.

“I am honored and privileged to stand here today,” Stopa said to the Marines and Sailors of the battalion. “I look forward to meeting and

working with each and every single one of you.”

Stopa is married to the former Paula Austin of Ransomville, N.Y. They have three children, Alyssa, Alexa and James.



SPORT SHORTS

TRAINING TANK LAP SWIM

Lap swim at the training tank is Monday through Friday from 11 a.m. to 12:45 p.m. This is exclusively for lap swimming only. No PT or recreational swimming is allowed.

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.

DESERT WINDS

Desert Winds Golf Course will host another 6-week Golf School on Saturday, July 15. The Adult School will start at 8:30 a.m. and the cost of \$80 will include instruction, golf club rental, range balls, and green fees. \$50, also including instruction, golf club rental, range balls, and greens fee. Maximum number of participants for each class is 12, and you must register by July 14. Call 830-6132.

INTRAMURAL FOOTBALL

The Commanding General's Intramural Football 2006 season is Aug. 21 - Nov. 24 at Felix Field. Entry deadline is Wednesday, Aug. 2. A coaches meeting will be held on Wednesday, Aug. 2 at 10 a.m. in building 1341. Gear Issue begins Monday, June 26 by appointment. For more information call Sports 830-6857.

LEISURE

POKER TOURNAMENT

Hashmarks SNCO Club will hold a Texas Hold'Em Poker Tournament on Saturday, July 15. There is a \$25 buy-in to play. Gift certificates and prizes will be given to the top 8 players. The tournament is open to all NCO's, SNCO's and Officers. Reservations are requested and space is limited. Please call 830-6610 or 830-5080 after 4 p.m. to reserve your spot.

MONGOLIAN BBQ

The Officers' Club will present a Mongolian BBQ on Friday, July 19 from 5-7 p.m. AND a Sunday Brunch on Sunday, July 16 from 9 a.m. to 12:30 p.m. Reservations are requested for both meals. For more information, or to make a reservation, please call 830-6610.

FREE MOVIES

The Community Center will be hosting their FREE Summer Movies Matinees every Friday from June 23 through Aug. 18. Admission and popcorn are free. Food and covered drinks are allowed. ALL MOVIES ARE G or PG RATED. The list of movies is as follows: JUNE 23: Herbie Fully Loaded; JUNE 30: March of the Penguins; JULY 7: The Polar Express; JULY 14: Daddy Day Care; JULY 21: Shrek 2; JULY 28: Cheaper by the Dozen; AUGUST 4: Shark Tale; AUGUST 11: Chronicles of Narnia; AUGUST 18: The Incredibles. For more information call 830-3380.

Did You Know?

It is estimated that the world's oceans contain 10 billion tons of gold.

Tattoos: How much is too much



Lance Cpl. Benjamin Hartnell, Weapons Company, 3rd Battalion, 7th Marine Regiment, shows the tattoo he got because of what it represents, "always being faithful."

SGT. ROBERT L. FISHER III
COMBAT CORRESPONDENT

"Tattoos are a military tradition." While there is no order stating this, many service members will argue this point until the end of their contract. To some, tattoos are a big part of the military lifestyle. Some service members will refrain from getting a tattoo, but many more will get inked at least once before leaving.

But where should the Marine Corps draw the line?

The Marine Corps has always had a conservative take on tattoos, especially while the Army and the rest of America has become more accepting of the practice. Some Marines have said the Corps should follow society and its statement of ink as art.

Tattoos in America

Throughout history, tattoos have often borne the mark of ill repute. But as society continually develops and people become more with their flesh, ink stitched through the skin adorns the biceps, bellies and backs of sinner and saint alike.

"We live in the land of the free and the brave -- people are allowed to do whatever they want," said Staff Sgt. Gordon Vanschoick, Weapons Company, 2nd Battalion, 7th Marine Regiment. "But I understand that in the Marine Corps, you have to put on a good face... your decisions always cost you."

A poll taken by Harris Interactive, a market research company, found 16 percent of all adult Americans have at least one tattoo. The poll further found 13 percent of adults age 18 to 24 and 36 percent of adults age 25 to 29 have tattoos. With numbers like this growing each year, it shows America has become more accepting of the tattoo.

While most Marines agree with and abide by the Marine Corps' policies on tattoos, there are some Marines who disagree with the conservative stance and have called for more leniency.

"In this country, tattoos are becoming more popular, and they're being understood as more of an art form or self-expression," said Lance Cpl. Dan Kaehler, Weapons Company, 3rd Battalion, 7th Marine Regiment. "It's become more acceptable to society."

What the Marine Corps says

With society walking in this liberal direction, the Marine Corps does not appear to share the same thoughts on body art and continues to make the emphasis on professionalism. Despite the number of service members who get tattoos, the Marine Corps is clear in its recruiting policies on what exactly is an acceptable tattoo.

"It's been a long tradition in all the military services," said Sgt. Maj. John L. Estrada,

sergeant major of the Marine Corps, about tattoos during a recent visit to the Combat Center. "We continue to set the pace for all the armed forces. We have to be selective in the tattoos; we have not changed that policy."

Estrada said the only thing that has changed is people's interpretations of the order.

Marine Corps Order 1029.24G, Marine Corp Uniform Regulation, defines how a Marines should look at all times. It covers everything from proper uniform, haircuts and tattoos to what constitutes beach attire. It states a Marine should "present the best possible image at all times and continue to set the example in military presence."

According to the order, tattoos or brands on the neck and head are prohibited. In other areas of the body, tattoos or brands that are prejudicial to good order, discipline and morale or are of a nature to bring discredit upon the Marine Corps are also prohibited.

Another order, MCO P1100.72C, Military Personnel Procurement Manual, Volume 2, Enlisted Procurement, further defined unacceptable tattoos. The criteria included tattoos of a sexist nature, such as expressing nudity; or of a racist, eccentric or offensive nature; or with an association with conduct or substance prohibited by the

Marine Corps Drug Policy or the Uniform Code of Military Justice; or that depict vulgar or anti-American contempt, anti-social behavior, bring possible discredit upon the Marine Corps or association with any extremist group or organization.

What the Marines say

To some Marines, the idea of discredit or an offensive nature can leave the order open for discussion. What is offensive to some may not be so to others.

Lance Cpl. Joe Ramirez, 2/7 Weapons Company, said a Marine's attitude is more important than what they decide to put on their skin. Ramirez said that as long as Marines can work with one another, treat other right and put on the same uniform, it shouldn't matter what kind of tattoo they choose to get. Ramirez has an Aztec calendar and smoke inked on his back, which he says represents the heritage of his grandmother who grew up on a reservation.

Others disagreed with this style of thought, saying the Marine Corps should clear the mist and muddle around what defines an offensive tattoo.

"People have different opinions," said Lance Cpl. Aaron Cassel, 3/7 Weapons Company. "To some people [a tattoo] doesn't mean anything but where they come from... In the Marine Corps, if it is that big of a deal to

where somebody may misconstrue the tattoo as racist, then I think they shouldn't get it."

Most Marines realize, while tattoos may not be tradition, it is still a big part of being in the military.

Lance Cpl. Sebastian Velasquez, 2/7 Weapons Company, doesn't have any tattoos, and he said he doesn't want to get any either. Some of his fellow Marines ridiculed him saying tattoos are part of a "military tradition," but it does not bother him or change his mind about tattoos, but he said he understood the desire to get inked.

"I just don't want to do it. People should get whatever they want wherever they want. It's your body, your decision."

While Marines may not always have the answer on what is an acceptable tattoo, it is still a topic of many Marines' conversations. Many of them call for leniency, while others are satisfied with the current orders.

"The American people look up to us, we set the pace for a lot of things that go on in society," said Estrada. "Yes, tattoos are acceptable, but we draw the line on some of it. If you plan on making a career in the Marine Corps, you have to be very cognizant of the type of tattoos you're going to get. Most likely it's going to affect your career's progression."

Base Powerlifters take first at North American Championship, break American, military records

CPL. EVAN M. EAGAN
COMBAT CORRESPONDENT

VISTA, Calif. -- The Combat Center Drug and Alcohol Free Powerlifting team took first place at the 2006 Amateur Athletic Union North American Powerlifting, Bench, Deadlift, and Pushpull Championship here Saturday.

The team took part in the same competition last year, but took second place. This is the first time the team has earned first place in a team competition since it was assembled by coach David Roman, the base drug demand reduction coordinator, in January 2005.

"This is a big victory for the base, to go to the same contest and get better results," said Roman, a retired Marine. "This time we brought home first place. It says a lot for the team."

Comprised of six members, the team began training for the competition in early January, after taking second place in its previous competition in December at the 2005 A.A.U. World Bench, Deadlift, and Pushpull Championship in Laughlin, Nev.

"We were due for a first place finish, after all the work we've been putting in to it," said Wade Kisse, who has been with the team since it was formed. "It's an awesome feeling."

To be a part of the team, each member made sacrifices in their personal

lives to ensure they could achieve peak physical performance.

"These Marines had to maintain abstinence from all alcoholic beverages while training for this competition," Roman said, adding that Marines don't use illegal substances to get ahead of the competition.

In addition to taking home the first place trophy, each member finished first in their individual age/weight categories, with two members breaking records.

Phillip Brown set and re-set a new military record for the deadlift in the 198-pound and below weight class. Brown's first attempt of 584 pounds broke the record and on his second attempt he re-broke it with a lift of 622.75 pounds. On his third lift, Brown attempted an American, world and military record lift of 666.75 pounds, however he was unsuccessful.

David Roman broke an American and military record with a bench press of 341.5 pounds in the 242-pound Masters Division.

"Phil was just phenomenal," said Roman. "He lifted six-hundred and twenty-four pounds at a body weight of one-hundred eighty-six pounds and he's only twenty years old. He's a beast."

Roman said he is very proud of the team for stepping up their training and taking powerlifting to the next level for this competition.

"All the lifters went beyond their



Members of the Combat Center Drug and Alcohol Free Powerlifting team, David West, Wade Kisse, David Roman, Philip Brown, J.D. Hess, and Evan Eagan, pose for a photo after winning the military team event.

capabilities at the competition to bring home this trophy," he said. "I could not be more proud of them. These guys were not experienced lifters earlier this year, but they became experienced while training for this meet."

After a few weeks of rest the team will regroup at the East Gym during the third week of July and begin train-

ing for the 2006 World Bench, Deadlift, and Pushpull Championship in Las Vegas in December.

Any Marine or Sailor who is interested in training and competing with the team, and is willing to abstain from alcohol and other performance enhancing drugs, is encouraged to come out.

Onward to victory for HQBN

BY LANCE CPL. MICHAEL S. CIFUENTES

COMBAT CORRESPONDENT

Another aggressive soccer game from Headquarters Battalion and 3rd Battalion, 11th Marine Regiment, took place Wednesday on Felix Field as the seventh week of the season came to an end. HQBN prevailed against 3/11 in an 8-6 victory.

It was a high-scoring game for both teams, but the difference came to the amount of manpower they had on each bench. HQBN came to play with a full team, leaving ample substitute players to join the game when other players wore out. The game's pace impacted the 3/11 team, as they played the majority of the game with only nine players – two short of a full roster.

The battle came quick from HQBN as they scored five goals in the first half. Jovanni Gonzales of HQBN started the game off with a goal in the

first three minutes, followed by a goal from Esau Zuno 10 minutes later. Michael McAlinden of 3/11 answered back with a goal with 20 minutes left in the first half. HQBN never lost their momentum and were able to score three goals in less than 10 minutes after that. Their third goal came from Zuno once again, and then by Alvaro Pineda back-to-back. 3/11's McAlinden finished the first half with a goal, leaving his team trailing HQBN 5-2 during the half time break.

"We've been showing a lot of effort this game," said Pineda of HQBN. "I've been seeing a lot of good passes. The second half will basically come down to who hustles the most, and I think we got it."

"The other team has been playing good for being short-handed, but I've seen a lot of miscommunication from them," added Pineda.

Within the first four min-

utes of the second half, McAlinden of 3/11 put in a goal, looking for a chance to decrease their three goal deficit. Pineda of HQBN answered with a goal three minutes later. Patrick Tangye of 3/11 reacted to 3/11's rush of momentum by burying two more goals within the next six minutes. Eleven minutes of aggressive play came next from both teams – HQBN looking to seal their second victory of the week, and 3/11 digging to win a shorthanded game. With 17 minutes remaining in the game, Pineda of HQBN sunk in their seventh goal as Gonzales, Pineda's fellow forward, followed him with another. 3/11's Tangye gave his team their final goal, which was followed by the end-of-game whistle blown by the referee 10 minutes later.

"I think we were playing alright," said Tangye. "Physically, we were there. Mental-

ly, we were good-to-go. We just got exhausted running around the field, trying to cover all the empty positions.

"So far we're doing [well]," added Tangye about 3/11's season. "I'm very optimistic that we will be among the first or second place team by the end of the season. We got a lot of potential that can prove it."

Although HQBN tallied another "W" for the league standings, some were unsatisfied with their performance.

"It was an ugly win, but luckily we have people who know how to finish plays and score goals," said Zuno. "The guys that know how to score, scored today. I think we'll do well for the rest of the season."

HQBN's leading goal scorer, Pineda, foresees more victories for his team, he said.

"We finally got a whole team now so we don't expect any more losses," said Pineda. "Every game we're just going to get better."

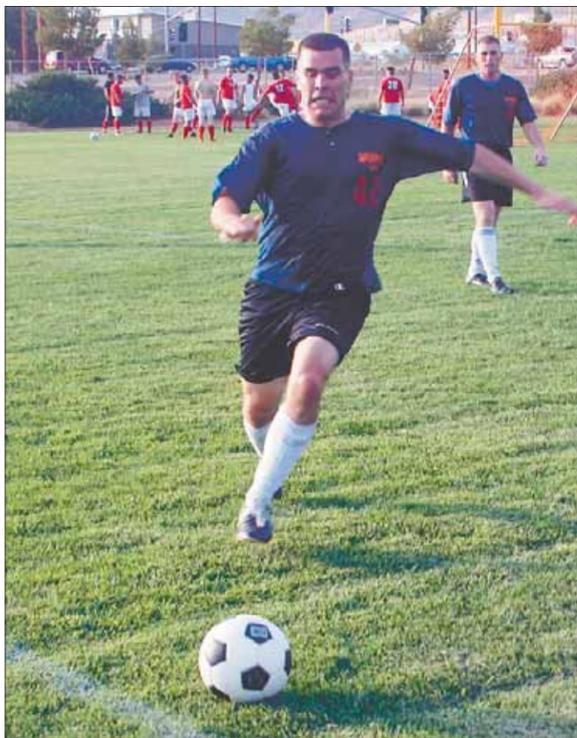


PHOTO BY LANCE CPL. MICHAEL S. CIFUENTES

Sean Campbell of 3rd Battalion, 11th Marine Regiment, darts for the ball, during a loss against Headquarters Battalion Wednesday on Felix Field.



PHOTO BY LANCE CPL. MICHAEL S. CIFUENTES

Luis Alfaro of 3rd Battalion, 11th Marine Regiment, attempts to take the ball down the field as he is attacked by Luis Garcia of Headquarters Battalion who defended HQBN's territory in an aggressive soccer game Wednesday on Felix Field.

Village Center, 'I didn't know this was here'

SGT. ROBERT L. FISHER III

COMBAT CORRESPONDENT

The Personal Readiness and Community Support Branch helps service members and their families meet the challenges of the military way of life. But many Marines and Sailors don't know what services they offer.

"We have a lot of stuff over here that people do not realize is here and it frustrates me because we go out to almost every command on this base and people still say, 'I didn't know this was here,'" Larry Stratton, PR&CS Branch supervisor.

If more service members and their family members came in just to have a look around, they would see there are several services provided to help in any situation, said Stratton.

Information and Referral

A window sits just inside the door of the Village Center with a friendly, smiling person who wants to help them, said Stratton.

"That person walking up to the counter is the most important person in our life right at the moment," said Richard Crummet, relocation manager. "No question is too dumb because the question they're asking is important to them."

Service members and their families can use Information and Referral to find out about Professional Military Education, military and civilian resources and information for new spouses. They may also use the computer kiosk to check their e-mail or look for resources online, said Stratton.

While someone may not find all their answers at the Village Center, they will be sent in the right direction.

Stratton stressed the PR&CS helps families by not only answering their questions, but also making them self-reliant.

"We're not going to take them by the hand because if we do that, we're not doing them any good," said Stratton. "We want to teach them how to help themselves. We make them self-reliant so they have the confidence in themselves to get through the hard times. We're teaching them to teach someone else."

To contact Information and Referral, call 830-6344.

Relocation Assistance

Eventually in a service member's life they must face orders for a permanent change of station. That time can be scary for anyone. The Relocation Assistance office stands ready to prepare the military member and their family for their upcoming move.

Joanne Ferraro, relocation specialist, and Crummet work in the Relocation Assistance office, each devoted to assist-

ing anyone preparing to relocate, they both said.

As a military spouse, Ferraro moved five times in four years before settling down in Twentynine Palms, so she said she understands what it's like to move often.

"We take the fear and the unknown out of the PCS," she said. "We educate the client to what services are available, what things they can do, and that takes the fear out of the move. Once you know, knowledge is power, and you're not afraid, and you can attack the PCS."

A lot of times, with service members deployed to Iraq, they are getting PCS orders while deployed and the spouses have to prepare everything before their Marine or Sailor returns home.

"I don't like to hear, 'Oh, not Twentynine Palms,'" said Ferraro. "I've been here for 14 years, and I love the community. My job is to inform the person who has never been here who has heard preconceived bad things about Twentynine Palms."

Relocation Assistance also offers the Overseas Connection and the Customs and Courtesies briefs to prepare military members and their families before embarking on a PCS overseas.

To contact the Relocation Assistance Office, call 830-4028.

Volunteering

Christina Curtin, volunteer coordinator, directs spouses who want to volunteer their free time to services that need their assistance, such as American Red Cross, the education center, information referral in community services and many others.

"Spouses come in, and they're interested in volunteering, and I find out what their interests are and what they want to give their free time in," said Curtin.

She said it helps the spouses because it gives them something to do as well as experience in various jobs they can use for future reference.

"They enjoying giving of their free time, and they get to fix up their resumes especially with them being here and there are not a whole lot of jobs," she said. "They get to keep their resumes fresh and new so when their spouses transfer they have stuff to add to their resume."

To contact the volunteering coordinator, call 830-4262.

Retired Activities

Volunteers with the Retired Activities office act as liaisons between the retired community and community support branch.

"A lot of times when a person calls, they don't know what to do or where to go," said Bill Skinner, Retired Activities volunteer. "We get them the infor-

mation they need".

The program helps retired military members and their families by answering their questions or pointing them in the right direction to find out what they want to know, he said.

"We're strictly a reactive office," he said. "When they call in and they have a problem or questions, we have resource information and points of contact, and it's up to them to follow through with it."

To contact the Retired Activities Office, call 830-7550.

Personal Financial Management

Jany K. Wasdin, Personal Financial Management Program coordinator, teaches service members how to receive the maximum benefit from a military paycheck and how to reduce the worry and frustration over the continual change of a military lifestyle.

The PFMP provides personal financial management education, training, and counseling. The program emphasizes personal financial responsibility and accountability through money management, special counseling, consumer education, and information and referral, said Wasdin.

"This program is a starting point for service members and their families to acquire financial management skills and consumer knowledge," said Wasdin.

Something Wasdin hears often from Marines and Sailors is, "I do not make enough money to save." She disagreed with this thought because anyone can start saving at anytime.

"Everyone makes enough money to save," said Wasdin. "It does not have to be a large sum of money to start savings. The point is to begin habit building. Saving is the foundation of a successful personal financial plan."

To contact the PFMP, call 830-7342.

Exceptional Family Member Program

The EFMP provides identification and enrollment into the EFMP, resource referral and PCS assistance. Some service members are misled to believe that enrollment in the EFMP can hurt career retention and future duty station preference.

"This program is not here to ruin careers, it is here to enhance careers and to take care of your family," said Stratton about the program.

Gillian King, EFMP manager, said the program helps families by providing them with the informa-

tion and assistance they need to meet medical conditions or be located near necessary hospitals.

"If something happens, like if a child gets really sick, such as they get cancer, they need chemotherapy," she said. "I can help the command and the Marine work together to get the Marine stationed [near the right hospital] so he doesn't have to travel back and forth."

"I can help them find hospital case managers, the Tri-Care representatives they need to see and help them find medical equipment," she said.

Another common myth about EFMP is that if you're on EFMP it stops you from going overseas. It's a case-by-case basis depending on what country you're going to. A lot of medications available in America are illegal or not available in some countries, said King.

Stratton spoke from personal experience about what many parents go through.

"A lot of these parents do not realize children have learning disabilities," he said. "Schools will tell them you rate this, but your child really doesn't need it. And they'll

say things like that, and that's not right."

King teaches parents how to represent their child when it comes to medical, educational or any other needs to help the child.

"I get the families one-on-one and I will teach them how to be advocates for their own children – their own advocates for medical, housing and hospitals," she said.

To contact the Exceptional Family Member Program, call 830-7740.

Marine Corps Family Team Building

Monica McBroom, information and referral specialist, provides information and direction to spouses and military members interested in the Key Volunteer Network; the Lifestyles, Insight, Network, Knowledge and Skills; the Chaplains Religious Enrichment Development Operation; and the Prevention and Relationship Enhancement Program.

She also prepares spouses to work in the KVN or to become a KVN coordinator, as well as training service members to become family readiness officers for their unit.

To contact the Marine Corps Family Team Building

Program, call 830-4163.

We're all at the Village Center

With all of the PR&CS Branch centrally located in the Village Center, service members and their spouses should find it easier to get what they need, said McBroom. Oftentimes, if she does not have the answer, she will walk them to the office that can help them.

"It makes it easier to provide the services to service members and their families," she said. "If you have any question whether it falls under us or not, come see us or give us a call, we'll at least point you in the right direction."

The Village Center is meant to be a welcoming environment so anyone can come and ask questions without the intimidation or fear of asking a "stupid" question, said Stratton. If they feel welcome, they're more apt to ask questions and come back in the future.

"We're hoping they find they get a friendly face, they get a smile and they get help," he said.

For further information on the PR&CS Branch, call 1-877-727-5300

