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OBSERVATION POST



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THIS ISSUE

A4 -1/7 Marines

A6 -VBS

B2 - OEF Volleyball

HOT TOPICS

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 Saturday 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 830-6132 x253 or visit ITT in the Marine Corps Exchange.

CREDO MARINE CORPS WEST RETREATS

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

COMING NEXT ISSUE

- Flag Dedication
- HQBN Change of Command
- Dental Assistant Training Program

THIS DAY IN MARINE CORPS HISTORY

July 7, 1941

The 1st Marine Aircraft Wing was commissioned at Quantico.

MCAGCC celebrates the 4th



LANCE CPL. KATELYN A. KNAUER

Fireworks lit up the sky over the Combat Center Tuesday night. See B1 for story and photos.

3/7 Marine awarded Bronze Star

LANCE CPL. MICHAEL S. CIFUENTES
COMBAT CORRESPONDENT

Action came quick for assaultman Sgt. Mark E. Dean, a former section leader with Company K, 3rd Battalion, 7th Marine Regiment.

He joined the Marine Corps and ended up fighting in Iraq right after entry-level training. But that is what he wanted, he said. Four years later, he'd be leaving the Marine Corps as a sergeant, a combat veteran and a Bronze Star recipient.

Dean's Marine Corps career began Dec. 1, 2002, when he began recruit training at Marine Corps Recruit Depot San Diego. From there, he was trained in his military occupational specialty as an assaultman at the School of Infantry. Along with 19 other fellow classmates from SOI, Dean joined 3/7, who were already deployed to Iraq.

"Going from SOI straight to Iraq was pretty scary at first," said Dean, an Owasso, Okla., native. "We were just new guys and we hadn't even been to our first duty station yet. As soon as we got there, we got mortared some and that immediately took our anxieties away."

Dean deployed with 3/7 for each of their three deployments in Iraq, experiencing three different fights, he said.

"The battles changed every single time we went back," said Dean. "After our second deployment we actually had a year to train, so our last deployment was the best prepared we've ever been."

"It was very motivating

going into it," he continued. "Even the guys that were married with kids couldn't wait. We were all just ready to 'get it on' again."

During the battalion's most recent deployment to Iraq, their mission was to train the Iraqi army, take out the insurgents and win the hearts and minds of the civilians, said Dean.

On Oct. 17, 2005, roughly a month into his most recent deployment, an enemy mortar round landed three feet away from Dean. The 24-year-old section leader with Weapons Platoon was immediately knocked down taking shrapnel above his right knee.

"I got up and I didn't even know I was hit," said Dean. "I was in shock. I was standing next to an interpreter at the time who was also knocked down by the blast. I helped him up, brought him to a safe place and began looking for where the rounds were coming from."

Dean and his unit didn't find the location of the enemy at that time.

After searching throughout the day for the enemy, Dean and his unit engaged in a two-hour long firefight. They were attacked from nine different positions by rocket propelled grenade fire, heavy machinegun fire, small arms fire and mortar fire again. Dean and his platoon were fighting from the rooftop of a building.

"I directed our fire for the whole two hours," said Dean. "I finally called in for some jets to come over and drop some bombs on them. After the jets came in and dropped



1ST LT. JASON C. COPELAND

Sgt. Mark E. Dean, a former section leader with Weapons Platoon, Company K, 3rd Battalion, 7th Marine Regiment, was awarded the Bronze Star June 1 for a series of valiant actions in Ar Ramadi, Iraq.

their bombs on the building the enemy was in, I directed some AT-4s [Anti-Tank 4] on to the building as well and enemy fire ceased right away.

"We shot a total of nine AT-4s that day," added Dean. "We definitely killed them all. Luckily for us, no one was killed or injured during the fight."

Later in the deployment, Dean and his platoon found themselves in a similar firefight with the enemy attacking them from all directions. The enemy started firing mortars, followed by RPG rounds and machinegun fire. This time, there was also a sniper who was trying to kill Marines who peaked out of

their position on the rooftop of a building.

"The enemy was pretty efficient with the way they directed their fire," said Dean. "Just as we were calling in for an air strike, one RPG round took out our comm [communication] gear that left us on our own for about 15 minutes."

See BRONZE STAR, A10



Misfire

Last week Lt. Col. John M. Neumann's name was incorrectly spelled. Neumann was formerly the commanding officer of Marine Unmanned Aerial Vehicle Squadron 1.

Sempertoons

By Gunnery Sgt. Charles Wolf



Drunk Driving: A Problem That Isn't Solved

DEREK NELSON,
NAVAL SAFETY CENTER PUBLIC AFFAIRS

A look at national, Navy and Marine Corps drunk-driving statistics leads to a single conclusion: Way too many people still think it is okay to drink and drive, even though nearly 17,000 Americans are killed, and more than 700,000 are injured each year in alcohol-related traffic crashes. That's 46 people on an average day—nearly 40 percent of traffic deaths.

Navy and Marine Corps DUIs decreased every year from FY96 to FY00, but then they started to increase, peaking at 2,042 in FY04. Military examples of DUI deaths are all too easy to come by. Here are three.

A Petty Officer 2nd Class, with only two months of experience on motorcycles and a learner's permit, went drinking with some buddies. He had an estimated six beers and three shots. His shipmates tried to stop him when he got ready to leave, but he ignored their efforts and took off just before midnight. He lost control in a sharp right turn and slammed into a drainage ditch, dying instantly.

A Corporal with a BAC of 0.30 hit the road in his Camaro to get some more alcohol. He was speeding when he lost control. His car veered off the road, tore through a chain-link fence, and rolled several times. The Marine was dead at the scene, and a passenger was in serious condition.

Several friends from a Helo squadron went drinking at a local bar. Another squadron mate agreed to come pick them up if they drank too much to drive back. They consumed six pitchers—about eight beers each over a five-hour period. At midnight, two called for their pre-arranged ride. Two others decided to drive and insisted that they were okay; the driver's BAC was 0.12. On the way back to their apartment, the Sailor at the wheel roared into a 30-mph exit ramp at between 65 and 70 mph. He lost control and drove over an embankment. The car fell 40 feet and landed

on the roof, catching fire. One of the Sailors wasn't wearing a seatbelt. He was ejected and tumbled 80 feet across six lanes of traffic. He was dead at the scene. The other Sailor was buckled up and seriously injured.

The Sailor in that last mishap wasn't doing anything unusual by not wearing a seatbelt—unfortunately, nearly 80 percent of all occupants killed in alcohol-related traffic crashes weren't buckled up.

In spite of widely reported crackdowns on the problem of DUIs — in 2004, about 1.4 million drivers were arrested for driving under the influence of alcohol or narcotics — that is still only about 1 percent of the 159 million self-reported episodes of alcohol-impaired driving among U.S. adults each year.

In other words, less than 1 percent of the drunk drivers on the road at any given time are being caught and punished. This fact makes you think twice when you drive around at night on weekends, and dramatizes why spotting drunk drivers should be a big part of your defensive-driving skills.

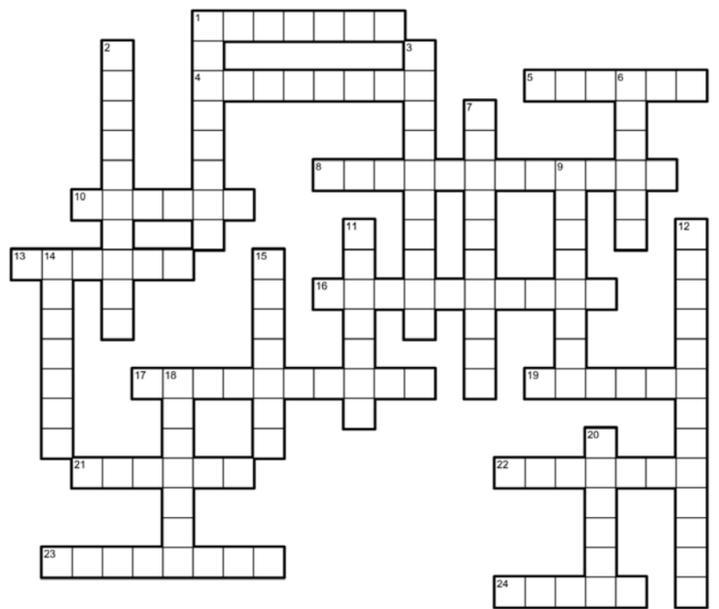
Resources

The National Commission Against Drunk Driving: independently unifies public- and private-sector organizations in order to advance effective solutions to the drunk-driving problem. Their web site is <http://www.ncadd.com/>. Look for their "Safe Party Guide," a two-page pamphlet you can download, as well as "Partners in Progress: An Impaired Driving Guide for Action," which summarizes strategies and actions designed to reduce the carnage on our nation's roadways attributable to drunk driving.

NHTSA 2004 Alcohol-Related Fatalities, by State, at <http://www-nrd.nhtsa.dot.gov/pdf/nrd-30/NCSA/RNotes/2005/809904.pdf>

MADD and its 600 local chapters are excellent resources. Their web site <http://madd.org> contains useful statistics and drunk-driving research.

STATE CAPITALS



ACROSS

1. North Carolina
4. South Carolina
5. New York
8. Oklahoma
10. Montana
13. Massachusetts
16. Vermont
17. Nevada
19. Colorado
21. Minnesota (_ . _)
22. Wisconsin
23. North Dakota
24. Oregon

DOWN

1. Virginia
2. West Virginia
3. California
6. Texas
7. Rhode Island
9. Wyoming
11. Arizona
12. Missouri
14. Washington
15. New Hampshire
18. Georgia
20. South Dakota

[Solutions on A7]

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Centerspeak

What was the worst thing your parents made you eat or do when you were growing up?

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



PETTY OFFICER 1ST CLASS
FRANK SMALL
TTECG, HQBN

"They used to make me eat the slimy spinach or else I couldn't leave the table."



LANCE CPL. JAMES REYNOLDS
SCOUT PLATOON, 1ST TANK BN.

"I used to have to get up really early in the morning and feed 15 to 20 different animals. It used to take at least two hours every day."



CIANNA HARMON
SALES ASSOCIATE, MAIN EXCHANGE

"My mom used to make chicken mole and I hated it. I didn't like the bitter taste so I used to squirt ketchup all over it to try to make the taste bet-

What's on your mind?

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

Address submissions to:

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Public Affairs Office
(Attn. Press Chief)
MCAGCC
Box 788200
Twentynine Palms, CA 92278-8200

Or E-mail to:

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Rick Monday's flag, Patriot Guard visit Combat Center

LANCE CPL. MICHAEL S. CIFUENTES
COMBAT CORRESPONDENT

On April 25, 1976, the Chicago Cubs traveled to Dodger Stadium to play the Los Angeles Dodgers in a Major League Baseball game. During the game, two trespassers ran onto the field and tried to set fire to an American flag they brought with them.

The intruders darted into the outfield and stopped near center field. With a can of lighter fluid and matches in hand, the young men unfurled the flag, doused it in lighter fluid and lit a match with plans to burn the flag in Dodger Stadium's center field. The wind blew out the first match.

As they attempted to get another match lit, Rick Monday, playing center field for the Cubs that season, darted over and grabbed the flag from their hands. The fans in the stadium reacted with a roaring cheer. One of the protesters threw the can of lighter fluid at Monday as he jogged calmly off the field with the flag he saved. The ballpark police arrested the two trespassers.

The flag has been in safe keeping with the Monday family since the incident.

On June 17, Monday's wife, Barbara, embarked on a journey with the flag to deliver it to Rick at Dodger Stadium in Los Angeles on July 4 where he is now a professional announcer for Dodger baseball. She traveled from their Vero Beach, Fla., home and was escorted by the Patriot Guard Riders. The Patriot Guard Riders are motorcycle riders who support their beliefs of showing sincere respect for fallen service members, their families, and their communities by shielding mourning family and friends from interruptions created by protestors through strictly legal and non-violent means.



Patriot Guard Riders, Marines with the Provost Marshal's Office and Barbara Monday stand holding the flag that was rescued by Chicago Cubs' center fielder Rick Monday April 26, 1976, from two protestors who tried to burn it.

The Patriot Guard Riders started in August 2005 as a gathering of American Legion motorcycle riders and has since developed into a group of veterans, motorcyclists, and others who attend funerals of service members at the invitation of the deceased's family.

On June 30, 13 days into the trip, the convoy of Patriot Guard Riders, Monday's family and the flag visited the Combat Center.

The riders of the convoy met with Combat Center Marines at the Provost Marshal's Office. They shared with the Marines the story of the flag and their mission.

"I thought this was a great

way to bring more attention to the flag and its importance," said Barbara, speaking of the 17-day journey with the Patriot Guard Riders to Dodger Stadium. "Along the way I learned that our nation is rooting for us. This flag means so much to me, and it can mean so much to others if they know the story. That day it was about a man defending his country, not a baseball game."

The Monday family has been offered \$1 million for the flag, but to them it's priceless, said Barbara.

Although Rick was not part of the trip, he spoke to some Combat Center Marines over the phone.

"My family and I are honored that the Marines in Twentynine Palms took time to meet with the riders," said Rick, a former reserve Marine. "That flag represents a lot of rights and freedoms. Hopefully we make a difference."

Rick also reminisced about the incident.

"When I saw and figured out what they were doing, I

was in shock," he said. "I knew what they wanted to do was wrong and I thought to myself, 'not on my watch.'"

More so than the expedition of motorcyclists and the flag, Barbara expressed to the Combat Center Marines the gratitude she

has for their service.

"This really isn't just about getting the flag back to Dodger Stadium, it's about you guys, and letting you know that we are always here for you," said Barbara. "This trip is to remind everyone in the country how much you do for us."

**'...not on
my watch.'**

—Rick Monday

1/7 Marines work 24/7 to reinforce new police force

CPL. ANTONIO ROSAS
REGIMENTAL COMBAT TEAM 7

AL QA'IM, Iraq — More than 300 local Iraqis from Euphrates River towns near the Iraqi-Syrian border lined up at the Marines' outpost June 27, in hopes of becoming policemen in one of Iraq's newest police districts.

The enlistment drive marked the largest turnout of police recruits in recent months. More than 100 Iraqis were accepted for enlistment.

The drive was held just days after police here were paid months of back-pay by Iraq's Ministry of Interior.

A lack of consistent pay has been the primary cause for the high attrition rate within fledgling Iraqi police forces in western Al Anbar province since late last year, according to Maj. Lowell F. Rector, the 42-year-old Marine in charge of all U.S. police transition teams who mentor, train and oversee the establishment of Iraqi police forces throughout the western Al Anbar province.

Altogether, all six of western Al Anbar's police districts have received nearly \$1.3 million in back pay.

"I think the large turnout of Iraqis was in part due to the fact that the locals heard the police were finally paid," said Maj. Robert C. Marshall, the police transition team officer-in-charge for the Al Qa'im region.

One 26-year-old Iraqi, who wants to become a police officer and serve in his hometown of Ubaydi — a town of about 10,000 citizens — said through an interpreter that becoming a

cop would mean he could "earn his highest wage ever."

"I don't care that there are insurgents here because there are many more police officers now," said the Iraqi man, who asked for anonymity.

Though Marines here have held regular monthly recruiting drives, this latest push to fill the region with Iraqi police, who Marines say will add more security to the region, produced the largest turnout Marshall has seen since arriving here more than three months ago, he said.

Despite several attacks on the police force in the nearby city of Husaybah, a border city of about 50,000 people, Marshall says the Iraqis are willing to take the risk of becoming policemen because a cop's monthly salary is a lot of money for the average Iraqi — around \$100 a month.

The transition team here has been fervently working with the Iraqi Police, advising and mentoring them so they can become a self-sustaining force.

But Marshall says the police force here faces several problems, such as a lack of police vehicles and more body armor for existing forces.

The region's remote location, in the far reaches of western Al Anbar province, makes it difficult to get the necessary equipment from Ramadi, according to the 37-year-old from Denver.

The team recently received a shipment of necessary gear the police have needed for several weeks now — specifically body armor, flak vests and weapons.

"It boggles my mind why things take so long to get here," said Marshall.

There are still several logistical kinks to be worked out, such as coordinating shipping of supplies, which need to be worked out at the higher level, said Marshall.

Although the police here are still without vehicles, it has not kept them from conducting security foot patrols with the Marines of 1st Battalion, 7th Marine Regiment — the U.S. military unit responsible for providing security in this northwestern pocket of Al Anbar province.

The Marines maintain an outpost near the Iraqi police station here.

The transition team has made progress in standing up the new police force with the opening of the first police station in the Al Qa'im region last month.

The Marines conduct daily security patrols with the new police officers and teach the new policemen tactics they'll need to know to eventually maintain law and order on their own.

The added foot patrols puts the police in the forefront of local security operations, and takes the burden off Iraqi soldiers and Marines who have provided the bulk of security thus far, said Marshall.

As local police numbers increase, so do the number of police stations. The newest police station in the region opened last week in Karabilah, a city of approximately 30,000.

While the station is only several days old, the citizens



Iraqi police officers greet Marines of 1st Battalion, 7th Marine Regiment during a local Iraqi police recruiting drive in Al Qa'im, Iraq.

of Karabilah have responded warmly to their new police force after not seeing any police in the area for more than three years, according to Sgt. Manuel F. Gonzalez, a 24-year-old Marine and the transition team's radio operator.

The push for a police force came after months of urging from local tribal sheikhs who have been eager to see a police force restored with men from their tribes, the Marines say.

Right now the transition team is working on equipping the new Karabilah police station with weapons, flak vests, uniforms and furniture so that the Iraqis can live and work out of their police station.

The police districts here will also be revamped with an additional 19 police officers on the force, who have just completed a three-week officer training course in Baghdad.

This will solve the

region's shortage of officers, said Marshall.

The challenge the Marines and local city governments face in beefing up the number of police officers is finding qualified applicants. During the June 27 recruiting drive, the Marines said most of those not accepted for police training failed to pass a literacy test.

Iraq's Ministry of Interior, the government agency which controls all of the country's police forces, will only accept applicants with at least an eighth-grade reading and writing level, the Marines say. Those who have at least a fifth-grade reading and writing ability will be accepted for service, however, they are required to pass a six-week literacy course before attending police training.

Along with U.S. Marines, the transition team heavily relies on the experience of retired American police offi-

cers to train the new Iraqi police squads in the day-to-day functions of operating a police station, such as administrative procedures, organization, and policing methods.

The Marines add that the retired U.S. policemen bring decades of combined experience in managing and organizing the new police departments — a plus for U.S. forces who are trying to get Iraqi Security Forces ready for independent operations.

"It's difficult working with the Iraqi police because the Iraqis already have their own laws and we're here to work with their existing system," said Arthur L. Dehlinger, a 14-year police veteran from Big Spring, Texas. "We're here to use our experience and our expertise to make their system work for them so that they can run a police station on their own."

Dehlinger said the Iraqi cops do essentially the same job as American cops back home.

"The only difference between American police officers and Iraqis is the legal side of things," said Dehlinger.



CPL. ANTONIO ROSAS

Lance Cpl. Curtis R. Shanley sits on the hood of his humvee after conducting hours of security patrols through the Euphrates River villages near the Iraqi-Syrian border.

1/7 Marines battle elements while facing insurgents

CPL. ANTONIO ROSAS
REGIMENTAL COMBAT TEAM 7

ZELLA, Iraq—When the Marines of the small outpost near this Euphrates River village of Iraq's western Al Anbar province aren't responding to the latest shower of mortar fire, they're doing one of two things — working out or sleeping.

When he's not conducting mounted security patrols aboard his Humvee and interacting with local Iraqis, Lance Cpl. William D. Hyden, says the best retreat from the 100 degree-plus heat is in his "hooch," Marine-speak for "living space," where his platoon has recently acquired a much needed commodity — air conditioning.

But the heat is not the biggest threat for Hyden, a rifleman with Company A, 1st Battalion, 7th Marine Regiment — it's the improvised explosive devices lining Iraq's roadways he's worried about.

The 21-year-old from Little Rock, Ark., has much reason to feel threatened by the deadly roadside bombs; he's already survived two IED blasts in the past several weeks.

Hyden is assigned to a Mobile Assault Platoon, which is a team of Marines who patrol Iraq's roads and cities while mounted in humvees. They cover large areas where the ground forces on foot can't get to.

Hyden says life at his battle position, small outposts where Marines live and work alongside Iraqi Army soldiers, is alright "as long as you've got air-conditioning."

"The heat is not so bad if you're inside the truck and

the truck actually has air-conditioning," said Hyden. "But if you're in the turret in the direct sunlight, you're hurting."

Marines who man the machine guns on the humvee's roof wear additional body armor over their shoulders and arms, adding protection from shrapnel as well as added discomfort, according to several Marines.

"When you're up there in the turret it's so hot you'll go through three to four water bottles in two hours," said Hyden. "I've got salt stains on my uniform like you wouldn't believe."

Greeted by locals everywhere they go near this region in western Al Anbar province, the Marines are usually swarmed by children, who ask the uniformed men for candy, toys and soccer balls. The Marines don't mind the warm greetings though, said Hyden. Still, he says the friendly atmosphere the locals provide simply masks the fact that this is still a dangerous area.

Just several weeks ago, Hyden's team killed an insurgent who was planting IEDs on one of the main roadways in broad daylight

The team rolled up on three insurgents, two of whom immediately began running at full speed out into the open desert.

"Nobody is just running out in the desert for no reason," said Hyden.

After the team found the digging site and the IED making materials the terrorists left behind, they pursued the insurgents on foot and detained them.

A third man opened fire on the Marines with an automatic rifle from inside a vehicle, sending bullets everywhere.

Fortunately, no one was hurt.

"It was like the scene from the movie 'Pulp Fiction' where the two guys get sprayed with a dozen rounds and miraculously don't get hit," said Hyden.

The Marines killed the insurgent after he opened fire on them.

But firefights like this are not a common occurrence, according to the Marines here.

IEDs remain the Marines main concern here, as the mobile platoons in the area discover anywhere from four to five a week. The humvee Hyden drives recently survived two separate IED blasts just days apart from each other.

"The explosion was the loudest thing I have ever heard," said Hyden.

The detonation occurred a mere five feet from the driver side door of the Humvee, he said.

Hyden recalled the blast with sketchy details.

"I remember seeing a flash of light and was immediately knocked out," said Hyden. "It was a pretty humbling experience. I felt good to be alive."

Upon returning to the operating base, Hyden received a medical checkup by the platoon corpsman and was in good health.

Since then the mobile team has been finding IEDs on a regular basis. In one day they found three IEDs in a matter of hours — explosives which could have hurt or killed U.S. or Iraqi military forces, as well as any civilians unfortunate enough to detonate the bombs.

Despite the threat, Hyden feels safe around what he calls "the best non-commissioned-officers in the company."

He's looking forward to his sister's home-cooked meals upon the battalion's return to the U.S. in September.

"I miss my two dogs, Tahoe and Mason," said Hyden, who carries a collection of photos of his family members in the visor of his Humvee.

One of Hyden's fellow platoon members, Cpl. Ian R. Whipple, the vehicle commander, is the Marine who sits in the passenger side of Hyden's humvee during their daily security patrols.

Whipple recalled the second time their vehicle was hit by an IED.

"The cab of the Humvee was filled with so much dust you could barely see," said the 25-year-old. "It was like being in a dust cloud."

It is Whipple's responsibility to pass information over the radio to headquarters of the platoon's whereabouts at all times.

Whipple, who will be a father next month, said nothing has changed despite his brush with death.

"I may not like sitting in

the truck in the 100-degree weather, but I have a job to do and it's got to be done," said the Snohomish, Wash., native.

Upon returning home, Whipple plans on spending time with his family and his Labrador-mix, "Addie."

"There are good days and there are bad days out here," said Whipple. "Sometimes we'll be in the truck sitting in a field somewhere and it will remind me of eastern Washington, where I'm from."

When the mobility assault platoon is not "outside the wire," Whipple often sits on the hood of his Humvee and writes letters home.

The Marines said despite the IED blasts, they are seeing the results of the work they are doing in Iraq — locals are more friendly, and beginning to show signs that they trust the Marines and Iraqi soldiers partnered with the U.S. battalion.

"I'm proud to be here," said Whipple. "I know I'm making a difference."

Children enjoy summer fun, learning at VBS

SGT. ROBERT L. FISHER III

COMBAT CORRESPONDENT

Children across the Combat Center attended Vacation Bible School at the Protestant Chapel June 26 - 30.

They learned through a Christian-based curriculum, which included activities, crafts, song and dance, about the night before Jesus' birth.

"I think VBS is a wonderful program," said Luther Starks, VBS volunteer. "It brings Christians together from both Catholic and Protestant backgrounds."

Navy Lt. Catherine Pace, chaplain at the Religious Ministries Directorate, said the children, while quiet in the beginning, enjoyed the week. It just took some of them a little longer to realize how much fun they were having at VBS.

"You see the kids come in and they're so shy at the beginning of the week, and by the end of the week they're so totally into it, they're smiling and doing the dances," she said.

Going back in time

At the beginning of the week, the children were divided into groups named after the 12 tribes of Israel: Reuben, Simeon, Levi, Judah, Dan, Naphtali, Gad, Asher, Issachar, Zebulon, Joseph and Benjamin.

The children stepped out of a normal summer afternoon and into costumes resembling traditional clothes from ancient Israel. They also made handbags from burlap, selected herbs and spices common in Israel and carried around plastic, gold-colored coins, called shekels, to give to Pace, the beggar, and to pay the taxes to the census taker each day.

"I take their money and make them sign in," said Princeton T. Fant Sr., who played Antonius, the census taker. "I make sure they are accounted for."

As the children stepped out of the chapel, they moved to different stations to learn more about the culture and traditions of ancient Israel and also about the birth of Jesus.

The marketplace and census taught the children different crafts each day. On the playground they played games and learned about the chariot race, and the synagogue taught them about Jewish traditions.

Along with the marketplace and synagogue, Marine volunteers roamed the area as Roman guards, collecting taxes or playing with the children, or shepherds, ensuring there was plenty of water.

"Children get bored during the summer, so this gives them something to do," said Mike Medina, VBS volunteer. "The children definitely enjoyed it. You can see it when they gather at the end of the day."

Going to the Synagogue

Starks ran the synagogue where the children learned about the culture and traditions of the Jewish people 2,000 years ago. They also learned Jewish roots and Jewish ancestry and its



Betty Hughes, Vacation Bible School volunteer, looks under a bottle to find the name of a spice for the children at the marketplace, one of the activity stations at VBS.

importance during Jesus' time.

"We all, Jews and Christians, we're looking for the same thing, we're looking for redemption," said Starks. "We're looking for holiness, truth and justice, righteousness in the world. These are the same things Jesus wanted, and this is what we want in the world also."

Starks taught the children a variety of different things about Jewish traditions, including the Menorah and its significance, the difference between Christmas and Hanukkah, and Jesus' struggle for his people.

"We've discussed the fight against incredible odds," said Starks. "Jesus' fight was not only against the Romans, but also against people of his own faith who wanted to keep this puppet government of the Romans. He fought against incredible odds, and sometimes we have to fight against incredible odds for what we believe in. That's what I teach here, and that's also what Jesus taught."

The children may not understand all of the "complex ideals and concepts" of the Jewish people and Jesus' fight for his people, but they understand the basic idea of what Jesus wanted, he said.

"They do understand the value of love," he said. "They all come from various backgrounds, yet they are coming together to love. And the central theme of that love is Jesus. The central theme of that love is faith in God. And they are an example we should all emulate."

Summer fun

Most of the children said they enjoyed the week, and it could be seen on their faces as they shouted and sang each day.

"I enjoyed learning some of the old traditions and customs," said Bree-anna Perez, daughter of Staff Sgt. Ricardo Luna, India Battery, 3rd Battalion, 11th Marine Regiment.

The adults as well as the children enjoyed each day of VBS from the beginning to the end. Some of the adults said they had more fun than the children.

"I've had the absolute privilege and pleasure of doing VBS," said Pace. "It has been a wonderful experience for the children and the adults. I think sometimes the adults get just as much out of it as the children do because of what we're trying to share about the message and the things we're trying to teach."

VBS teaches the children very important principles about God that everyone needs in life, whether young or old.

"It's about God's love and fellowship with people and how we need to take care of one another," said Pace. "We need to teach them as they're little children how to do that so when they grow up and become Marines and Sailors they can still have some of that foundation on fellowship that is important."

The children learned a lot at VBS about the birth of Jesus and the foundation of God's love and how it applies to everyone's life. As each child went home at the end of the week, they each left with something more than the crafts they made. They left

'Outlaws' take on DAC at Mojave Viper

D Co., 2nd LAR, uses all aspects of unit to complete mission

PFC. NATHANIEL SAPP
COMBAT CORRESPONDENT

The temperature was breaking 110 degrees easily on June 30. With Independence Day right around the corner and the majority of the Marine Corps on holiday, the Marines of D Company, 2nd Light Armored Reconnaissance Battalion, 2nd Marine Division, nicknamed the Outlaws, were doing their Mojave Viper pre-deployment training in preparation for their turn to serve America overseas.

Despite the temperature, which was even hotter for the Marines carrying a full combat load and the claustrophobia-inspiring space inside the Light Armored Vehicles, morale was high as they took on the Direct Assault Course.

While the course consisted of objectives that used all the aspects of an LAR unit, such as artillery support, air support, objectives for the LAV crews to use their vehicle to complete and objectives for the scouts, the scenario was based on defeating the enemy insurgents and allowing the civilians of the town to complete elections, said Lance Cpl. Aaron J. Mammarelli, a 21-year-old grenadier for 2nd Platoon, from Baton Rouge, La.

"It was a combination of everything we had," said Mammarelli. "With LAVs and infantry Marines, this course showed why this unit has so much to offer."

Because of the amount of different elements the unit employed during the course, which took roughly seven hours to complete, communication and coordination were two huge issues.

"The completion of this course took a whole lot of people working together," said Lance Cpl. Zach C. Downing, a 23-year-old LAV gunner from Springfield, Ill. "I had to be on the radio monitoring everything from the battalion and the company, so that plus the heat were some of the biggest challenges."

It was pretty much agreed



Two Marines from Company D, 2nd Light Armored Reconnaissance Battalion, 2nd Marine Division, receive orders and prepare to move on the Direct Assault Course.

by all the Marines that seeing the Marine Corps Line Charge — a string of C-4 that creates a huge explosion to clear a path for vehicles — blow up was one of the best parts, said Downing.

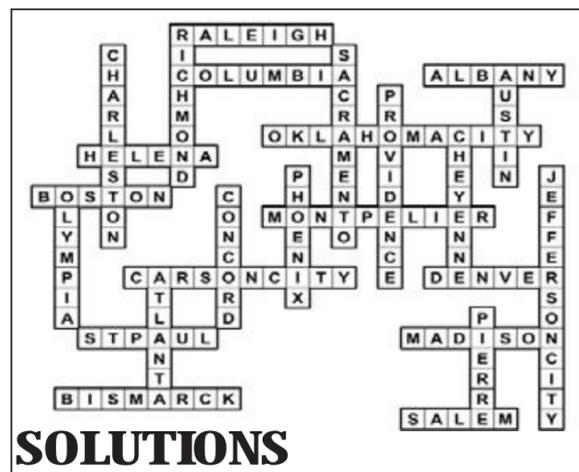
However, Mammarelli, whose job as a grenadier means he carries an M203 grenade-launcher on his rifle and belongs to the scout aspect of the unit, had a different view on the best part of the training. "By the time [the unit] reached the part where we came into play, we had been sitting in the back of the vehicles, sweating, for a couple hours," he said.

"But instead of being tired and worn down, when it came down for us to do our part, everyone was flying around the town kicking down the doors of suspected insurgents."

The town consists of basic concrete structures built for Marines to practice moving through and around buildings as well as clearing rooms as a team.

"As great as the town was, this whole course really gave everyone a chance to work together," Mammarelli said. "And that's important for us to do now, because that's exactly how it's going to be in Iraq."

The harsh conditions the Marines face out here while training, and the teamwork that develops to overcome them and keep morale high is going to be instrumental in the success that the unit ultimately has, he added.



2nd LAR Marines storm bunkers, Range 410A



PFC. NATHANIEL SAPP

Marines from Delta Company, 2nd Light Armored Reconnaissance Battalion, 2nd Marine Division, attack a bunker during a live-fire Squad Hasty Attack Course as part of their Mojave Viper training June 22.

PFC. NATHANIEL SAPP
COMBAT CORRESPONDENT

After a short night of sleep on the rocky terrain at Range 410A here, Marines from A, C and D Companies, 2nd Light Armored Reconnaissance Battalion, 2nd Marine Division, awoke

early June 22 and took the Squad Hasty Attack Course head-on as part of their Mojave Viper pre-deployment training.

The live-fire course consists of three bunkers and forces the Marines to employ basic and advanced skills they've learned.

"Essentially what we did there is pretty much the foundation of what the Marine Corps is made of," said Staff Sgt. Scott P. Rixmann, a Cheyenne, Wyo., native and acting company gunnery sergeant for Company D.

"This course allowed us to

not only perform the same function as any other infantry unit, but also use the strength of our vehicle's weapons for a longer period of suppressive fire," he added. The vehicles' weapons consist of 25 mm chain-gun and a 7.62 mm machine-gun.

The Marines take advantage of this type of training due to the positive impact it has on the entire team, as well as the reinforcement of basic skills.

"Mainly this type of training can be used as a confidence builder for shooting on

the move, formations and movement and most importantly, unit cohesion," said Sgt. Johnny W. Benson, an Oakman, Ala., native and squad leader for 2nd Platoon, Delta Company.

"We started training for this range way before we even came out here," He said. "When we got out here we did two range-walks, one dry-run [a run with blank rounds], and finally the live-fire."

Much like how a band practices their songs individually, the Marines practice single elements

until they know them by heart, before they put on their "show."

"We aren't able to do training like this on such a large scale back in [Camp Lejeune] because we don't have the facilities there," he added. "Instead we just break it down into little parts and tackle those."

It's because full-scale training like this that these Marines are able to deal with the heat and other rough conditions.

"What made it worth it was watching and working with my Marines, seeing them come into their billets and lead," Benson said."

Overall, the course went well with the Marines meeting and exceeding expectations.

"I expect my Marines to be genuine, to accomplish the tasks set out to them and to perform as a team," said Rixmann. "Ultimately I saw all of that during the training."

Desert Mail Call meets the needs of those deployed



Cpl. Thomas Nodes, VMU-1, participates in the Desert Mail Call program accepting donations from the sorority Alpha Gamma Delta at their convention June 24.

LANCE CPL. KATELYN A. KNAUER

COMBAT CORRESPONDENT

It's those simple conveniences of being able to walk to the store and purchase toothpaste and soap that everyone takes for granted. It's those little necessities that make a world of difference to the men and women currently deployed.

"The Desert Mail Call Program was created approximately four years ago as part of Operation Enduring Families," said Heather Fiske, Single Marine Program coordinator. "The program primarily collects correspondence from individuals and organizations and mails those letters to Marines of our base who are currently deployed.

"It's the neatest thing when a school or a Sunday school adopts a unit as a writing assignment," said Fiske. "They bring me the letters along with pictures to mail."

The program also receives donations from the community on base and off base, she said.

The program collects items such as phone cards, travel games, hygiene products, snacks, clothes and letter writing gear.

"Recently the Alpha Gamma Delta sorority contacted me asking if they could adopt the DMC program as their annual convention community service project," said Fiske.

"We wanted to do something for the military," said Connie Y. Brown, international president of the sorority. "If it wasn't for the young men and women we wouldn't be able to be here holding our annual convention."

There were eight Marines at the convention to accept

donations. Three were from Marine Unmanned Aerial Vehicle Squadron 1 and five were from 3rd Battalion, 7th Marines, said Fiske.

"This program touches every Marine that has been deployed from our base," said Fiske. "So many people are impacted by this program."

On the third Wednesday of every month volunteers meet at The Zone to pack the donations. The program on average mails about 30 to 50 boxes a month. The amount rises during October and November and into the holiday season mailing 87 to 141 boxes a month.

It is a reward when Marines write back, said Fiske. It shows Marines appreciation of the support from the community.

In a recent letter from Combat Logistics Battalion 7, Commanding Officer Lt. Col Drew T. Doolin wrote, "As we provide logistical support to all units in our area of operation in western Iraq, we are continually reminded of the love and support of patriotic Americans such as yourselves by your caring support with these gifts. Thank you!"

Doolin's letter is one of several, all along the same lines thanking donors and volunteers for their support, prayers and contributions. Many talk about the boost in morale of the Marines who receive letters and boxes.

As for the future of the program, "I see Desert Mail Call being a program in existence to support the Marines as long as they are being deployed," said Fiske.

BRONZE STAR, A1

We continued fighting until our platoon commander was able to fix the gear.

Dean and his Marines took several more RPG rounds and a barrage of heavy machinegun fire on their position until two jets came and dropped ordnance on the enemy. "Their machine gun bunker was taken out and we no longer took any enemy sniper fire."

The only enemy position left threatening Dean and his platoon was taken out with several shots from an M203 Grenade Launcher, said Dean.

The battalion returned home from the seven month deployment in March. On June 1, Dean received the Bronze Star in a formation behind his battalion command post for directing the close air support during the attack, putting his Marines' safety above his own and protecting his operation area.

"The award was a shock to me," said Dean. "They told me I deserved it, but I was just doing my job."

"Out there, you're pretty much fighting for the person next to you," he said. "My only goal was to just bring all

of my guys home."

Dean's relationship with his fellow Leathernecks is very personal, yet very professional, said 1st Lt. Jason C. Copeland, Weapons Platoon commander.

"Sgt. Dean is well-respected," said Copeland, a Roswell, N.M., native. "He leads by example through his personal character. He knows every Marine he works with, their families, wives or girlfriends."

Copeland fought alongside Dean during the deployment. He trusted all of Dean's decisions and the commands he gave to the Marines, he said.

"He's well trained, and he knew exactly what he was doing," said Copeland. "There was never any doubt in judgment when the time came for him to act. It is Marines like Sergeant Dean that make my job easier. He is well-deserving of the award for his performance, consistently under fire. You don't know the magnitude of the award unless you're there, seeing the action."

It was a relief to come home, said Dean. He ended his honorable service June 30 and is now a firefighter in Oklahoma, living with his wife of three years, Becky Jo.

SPORT SHORTS

SMOKING CESSATION CLASS

Kick the habit and learn to become tobacco free! The Robert E. Bush Naval Hospital Health Promotions Program offers tobacco cessation classes in the Hospital. Classes are offered at two convenient times of noon and 5:30 p.m. To sign up, call Health Promotions at 830-2814. The next set of tobacco cessation classes will start July 11. Also, don't forget that there is a tobacco cessation support group that meets at 4 p.m., in the same classroom as the tobacco cessation class.

FREE SUMMER MOVIES

The Community Center will be hosting their free summer movies matinees every Friday through August 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:
 July 7: The Polar Express
 July 14: Daddy Day Care
 July 21: Shrek 2
 July 28: Cheaper by the Dozen
 Aug. 4: Shark Tale
 Aug. 11: Chronicles of Narnia
 Aug. 18: The Incredibles

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.

MOMMY AND BABY AEROBICS

MCCS Aerobics has added a new Mommy and Baby Aerobics Class every Monday and Tuesday at 12:30 p.m. in the Community Center. Come and enjoy fitness for you and fun for your baby. For more information please call 830-4131.

PILATES CLASS

MCCS Aerobics has added a Pilates Class every Tuesday at 5:30 p.m. and every Thursday at 9 a.m. in the Community Center. Build core strength and flexibility with this exciting pilates class. For more information please call 830-4131.

LEISURE

BLOOD DRIVE AT NAVAL HOSPITAL

The next base blood drive is scheduled for Saturday from 10 a.m. to 2 p.m., in Classroom 4 of the Naval Hospital.

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?

A baby octopus is almost the same size as a flea at birth.



The Marine Corps Air Ground Combat Center hosted the largest fireworks show in the Morongo Basin.



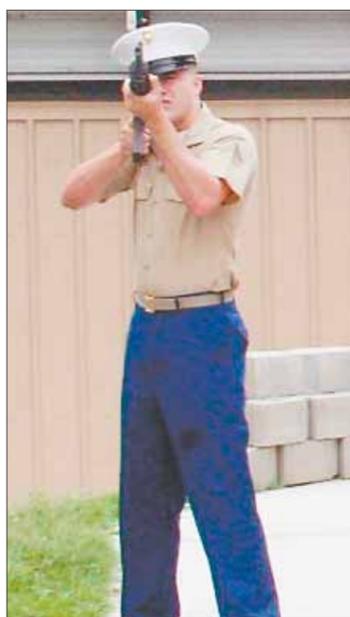
Two-year-old Jarred Ruiz climbs through a tunnel while participating in activities set up for children at the Fourth of July Celebration.



Singer Debra Arlyn provides live music.



Colorful fireworks light up the evening sky over Victory Field.



A member of the Combat Center Funeral Guard fires off a 21-gun salute.

4th of July Celebration ends with a bang

STORY AND PHOTOS BY
LANCE CPL. KATELYN A. KNAUER
 COMBAT CORRESPONDENT

In America it's more than just a night to watch fireworks and eat barbecue. It's a celebration of the birth of our nation. It's a night where we can honor those who fought for our nation and those who are fighting for our nation. It's a time when everyone is invited to come celebrate the most patriotic night of the year.

The Marine Corps Air Ground Combat Center kicked off this year's Fourth of July celebration at Victory Field Tuesday afternoon with lots of fun, food and live entertainment.

There were several activities set up for younger kids to enjoy such as a rock climbing wall, an inflatable water slide and inflatable jump toys. Several Marines from around the base volunteered to run the events.

"It felt good to see everyone come out and to see the little kids having fun," said Pvt. Todd Colomb-Green, Marine Corps Communication-Electronic School student. "I like being able to volunteer and help out."

Several units set up food stands to raise money to help offset the cost of their unit's Marine Corps Ball by selling cotton candy, snow cones and ice cream all the way down to turkey legs, hamburgers and hotdogs.

Tunes from the band Mylin, Debra Arlyn and the Combat Center Band echoed across the field throughout the event.

"This is my second time being able to perform for the Marines at Twentynine Palms," said Arlyn. "It always is a great time because the Marines treat us awesome."

"It's an outstanding event with lots of music," said Cpl. Derek Norman, 3rd Battalion,

7th Marines.

At around 7:45 p.m. the color guard marched on the colors as the Combat Center Band played the national anthem. A look around Victory Field showed several Marines standing at attention rendering a salute and family members with their hands across their hearts along side them.

Following the color guard, Combat Center commanding general, Brig. Gen. Douglas M. Stone, gave a speech joined by the base sergeant major.

"Marines are a part of the great America," said Stone. "What they do, it's brave and honorable. They fight for life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness."

Bringing his granddaughter on stage Stone joked around. "This is a great time to be with our families. There is a lot of little kids running around, if you see this one she belongs to me."

"When I think of the Fourth of July, I think of family and of all the great Americans before us who fought for what they believed in," said Combat Center sergeant major, Sgt. Maj. William Johnson Jr. "Whatever we do today is for the future generation so they can have freedom."

As the night came to a close, the lights on Victory Field shut off and music such as Proud to be an American played. Fireworks lit up the sky marking the event finale and families watched with delight.

"I loved tonight," said Lance Cpl. David Dunlap, Headquarters Battalion. "It was fun and very patriotic."

"This event was great," said Sgt. Mike Kroll, 3/7. "It gave Marines the chance to come out and mix with other Marines. Hosting this event really shows support for what the Marines do."

Stop the Madness

COMPILED BY PUBLIC AFFAIRS

Base safety reports that the Fourth of July weekend led to seven base personnel DUIs while driving aboard the Combat Center. In one holiday weekend, there were nearly as many DUIs as each of the last two months. Before you get behind the wheel, consider the cost of drinking and driving:

- \$2,500 Attorney's fees – this could be higher
- \$187 Towing and storage for vehicle
- \$266 Booking, finger printing, photo fee and license reinstatement
- \$1,696 DUI fine (\$480); Assessment for the court system (\$816); Community service fee (\$44); Payment to the DUI victim's fund (\$100); Victim's impact sessions (\$20); DMV file search charge (\$10); Night court fee (\$1); Time pay-

ment charge (\$35); Restitution fine (\$100); Supervised work release (\$100)

\$550 DUI class
 \$7,360 Insurance rate increase – by 400 percent over a three-year period. This figure represents the cost to an individual who pays an annual premium of \$609. The new rate would be \$3,063 (including any mandatory recoupment charge) per year.

\$12,559 TOTAL COST OF A DUI

Also consider that a DUI includes time in jail; community service; weeks attending a DUI class; four months without a license; a year suspension of base driving privileges; three years probation; seven years with two points on your driving record; and ramifications from the Uniform Code of Military Justice.

Is it really worth it?



A totaled vehicle serves as a reminder of the consequences of reckless driving.

Who is most at risk for a DUI?

- Males are twice as likely as females to kill themselves in a wreck while driving with a BAC of 0.08.
- In 2003, 25 percent of drivers ages 15 to 20 who died in motor-vehicle crashes had been drinking alcohol.
- Young men ages 18 to 20 (under the legal drinking age) reported driving while impaired almost as frequently as men ages 21 to 34.
- Among motorcycle drivers killed in fatal crashes, 30 percent have BACs of 0.08 or greater.
- Among drivers involved in fatal crashes, those with BAC levels of 0.08 or higher were nine times more likely to have a prior DUI conviction than were drivers who hadn't been drinking.
- In 2005, a Mothers Against Drunk Drivers and Nationwide Insurance survey, conducted by Gallup and entitled "Drinking and Driving: Americans' Greatest Highway Safety Concern," studied the reasons why people said they had been discouraged from drinking and driving. The top 10 factors were:
 - Realizing they could kill or injure others (96 percent)
 - Realizing they could kill or injure themselves (91 percent)
 - Jail sentence (91 percent)
 - Possibility of losing their license (89 percent)
 - Paying substantial fines (85 percent)
 - Having car impounded (85 percent)
 - Installing an ignition interlock in vehicle if caught (81 percent)
 - Fear of losing their job (80 percent)
 - Sobriety checkpoints (80 percent)
 - Increased auto insurance rates (80 percent)



David Harmon of 3rd Battalion, 7th Marine Regiment, guards Lamar Tomblin of Naval Hospital in the Commanding General's Over-30 Intramural Basketball League championship.

Naval Hospital slam dunks 3/7 in championship game

LANCE CPL. KATELYN A. KNAUER
COMBAT CORRESPONDENT

Naval Hospital dribbled its way to dual victories over Headquarters Battalion and 3rd Battalion 7th Marines to win the Commanding General's Over-30 Intramural Basketball league championship at the West Gym June 29.

It was a long night for the Naval Hospital who had to win three games to claim the 2006 championship and take the title home for the second season in a row. The night started off with Naval Hospital defeating Headquarters Battal-

ion in the first game 53-36.

In the second game Naval Hospital battled it out with 3/7, the only team to beat them this season. It was an intense defensive game on both sides and at the end Naval Hospital prevailed with a 59-51 win.

The final game between Hospital and 3/7 would determine the championship and both teams were feeling the pressure and fatigue from the previous game.

"For the championship game we're going to try and contain on defense and take it home," said Todd Pontius, 3/7,

about their strategy.

"Its all about heart now," said Miguel Bridges, Naval Hospital. "The key is play smart, play under control, play as a team and leave it on the court."

"We have played two games already, they have played one," said Tim Brender, Naval Hospital. "We're going to keep running them because they're tired"

The championship game was intense and both teams gave it their all but in the end Naval Hospital brought home the trophy with a score of 57-46.

Operation Enduring Families volleyball finishes season

SGT. ROBERT L. FISHER III
COMBAT CORRESPONDENT

Military spouses and family members, civilians and a few service members faced-off in the Operation Enduring Families Volleyball Competition at the West Gym May 15 through June 26.

This year's competition drew four teams from across the base, all competing for the winner's trophy, but more importantly, enjoying the games and meeting other military spouses.

OEF volleyball was open to all military family members, especially those whose husbands are deployed, said Daniel Campese, recreation assistant, who coordinated the event.

"Their loved ones are deployed," he said. "This is to bring additional activities to family members."

A lot of the teams started strong, seeing only the competitive spirit before the spouses

got to know each other, he said.

"In the beginning, they were serious and wanted to win," he said. "In the end, they started having fun with this."

Marine Corps Community Services originally conceived and started OEF volleyball. In previous years, Campese helped set up and watched from the sidelines. This year he received the opportunity to head the competition.

Andrew Solomon, West Gym manager, spoke to all the teams with some parting words after their final games.

"It was a good competition," he said. "I want to thank everyone who participated."

Campese said he really enjoyed the competition and hopes he supervises it next year.

"I say it was a lot of fun watching and being behind the scenes instead of just setting up," he said. "It was nice getting to know the players. Hopefully we'll see them again next year."



Anniemae Tuck tries to defend a hit by Christa Boyd in one of the championship games in the Operation Enduring Families Volleyball Competition.

