

# OBSERVATION Post

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MARINE CORPS AIR GROUND COMBAT CENTER

JANUARY 9, 2008

SERVING THE TWENTYNINE PALMS COMMUNITY SINCE 1957

VOL. 51 ISSUE 2

## HOT TOPICS

### OCOTILLO GATE CLOSURE

Ocotillo Gate will be closed Jan. 21-25 for road paving. Residents affected by this are encouraged to use the Main Gate and Condor Gate for base access. Traffic will be delayed during the days of gate closure so residents are requested to be patient through the necessary road work. School bus stops will also be adjusted. For further information, turn to A4, log on to [www.29palms.usmc.mil](http://www.29palms.usmc.mil) or tune in to CCTV-6.

### SCHOLARSHIP APPLICATIONS NOW BEING ACCEPTED

Applications are now being accepted for the Officer Spouses Club Scholarship program. Applicants must be a spouse or child of an active duty, retired or deceased military service member. Applicant and military service member (or surviving parent or spouse if military service member is deceased) must live in the Morongo Basin at the time of application. Child applicants must have graduated from an area high school, home school program, or be attending a local college at time of application. Deadline is March 15. For more info e-mail, [OSCscholarship@hotmail.com](mailto:OSCscholarship@hotmail.com)

### FALLEN HERO'S RUN

The 7th Marines and the Knights of Columbus are sponsoring a Fallen Hero's Run and all proceeds will go to the Knights of Columbus Iraqi Fund. The fund is used to support Marines and sailors from MCA GCC who are deployed to Iraq. There will be a 5K Fun Run/Walk and 10K race and it will cost \$15 to participate in either event. The run will begin at 8 a.m. Friday and begins and ends at the Desert Winds Golf course. For a run application form please contact Master Gunnery Sgt. Theodore Drennan at 830-8847 or [theodore.drennan@usmc.mil](mailto:theodore.drennan@usmc.mil). Runners who have not registered prior to the race may go directly to the Golf course at 6:30 a.m. and complete their application. Also, there will be a registration table at the MCX during lunch hours until the day of the race.

## FINEX sums up Steel Knight

LANCE CPL. JARED J. BUTLER

COMBAT CORRESPONDENT

The Marines and sailors of 1st Tank Battalion and 3rd Combat Engineer Battalion trained in Steel Knight's final exercise at the Combat Center's training area Dec. 15 to 17.

The FINEX incorporated all of the training aspects of Steel Knight into a three-day event that tested the Marines and forced them to act on their feet.

Alpha Company; Tube-launched, Optically-tracked, Wire-Guided missile System Platoon; 1st Platoon, Delta Company and 3rd Combat Engineer Battalion completed this event to hone their skills in preparation for their upcoming deployment this Spring.

See FINEX, A6



LANCE CPL. JARED J. BUTLER

Marines of Alpha Company, 1st Tank Battalion, help their simulated wounded to the helicopter during the final exercise of Steel Knight 2007 at the Combat Center's training area Dec. 17.

## Marine recognized by Army for actions in Afghanistan



LANCE CPL. NICOLE A. LAVINE

Gunnery Sgt. Edward D. Parsons, deputy director of the Combat Center's Marine Corps Staff Noncommissioned Officer Academy, received an Army Commendation for his actions while serving with the Training and Education Command's Embedded Training Team in Afghanistan.

LANCE CPL. NICHOLAS M. DUNN

COMBAT CORRESPONDENT

Chester Nimitz once said that uncommon valor was a common virtue about the Marines who fought the battle of Iwo Jima.

The saying still holds true as

Marines continue to distinguish themselves as America's 9-1-1 force.

Gunnery Sgt. Edward D. Parsons, deputy director of the Combat Center's Marine Corps Staff Noncommissioned Officer Academy, received an Army Commendation for his actions

while serving with the Training and Education Command's Embedded Training Team in Afghanistan.

While in Afghanistan, Parsons and the rest of the ETT were responsible for training and

See ACTIONS, A10

## Combat Center welcomes its first baby of the New Year

DAN BARBER  
PAO NAVY HOSPITAL

The first baby born here at the Naval Hospital in 2008 is the son of Lance Corporal Melanie Wren of Coolidge, Ariz., and husband Ray, Wren of Junction City, Kansas.

The new parents are proud to announce the birth of their son, Brayden Anthony Wren, who was born at 12 minutes past midnight January 1.

Brayden weighed a healthy

See BABY, A12



DAN BARBER, U.S. NAVY

First baby of '08 born at Robert E. Bush Naval Hospital.

### Misfire:

The January 2 Observation Post inside pages had the incorrect date at the top of each page.



4 New MC body fat standards effective June '08



5 1st Tanks Change of Command



7 General delivers message from hero's mother



11 How to protect your ID



# C.O.P. Corner Community Oriented Policing

The proactive voice of crime prevention • Presented by the Provost Marshal's Office, Crime Prevention Section  
Information current as of Dec. 31.



## Larcenies aboard MCAGCC

Larcenies have always been a big problem across the U.S. There has been an increasing problem of thefts aboard the base and especially in the barracks, which is an issue we have to strongly look at and find a way to address.

Out of the 91 larcenies, almost all of them could have been prevented or been easier to solve if the person would have secured the items properly, kept receipts of merchandise or marked or engraved their property for identification purposes. Also ensure that you write down and keep a record of all serial numbers and other identifiers of merchandise and keep that list in a secure location. Most pawn shops will not take property that has engraving markings on them.

Unit	Larcenies
7th Mar	4
1/7	12
2/7	7
3/7	3
3/4	6
3/11	4
3rd LAR	11
1st Tank Bn	4
3rd AABN	3
MWSS-374	5
CLB-7	3
VMU-1	2
MCCES	13
HQBN	9
NAV HOSP	0
23rd Dental	0
Staff Housing	0
Other	4
<b>Grand Total</b>	<b>91</b>

## DUI / DWI Update

Here are the stats on how many DUIs/DWIs that we have had aboard MCAGCC and off the installation:

Unit	Totals	On Base/Off Base	Ranks
7th Mar	11	2/9	1 PFC/1LCpl/7Cpls/1PO3/2nd Lt
1/7	13	8/5	1PVT/2PFC/7LCpl/1Cpl/1Sgt
2/7	13	7/6	1Pvt/2PFC/4LCpl/3Cpl/1Sgt/1SSgt/2ndLT
3/7	5	2/3	1PFC/1LCpl/2Cpl/1HN
3/4	29	8/21	1Pvt/3PFC/12LCpl/7Cpl/2Sgt/1SSgt/1HN
3/11	10	4/6	1Pvt/1PFC/1LCpl/4Cpl/1Sgt/1HM3
3rd LAR	11	9/2	1Pvt/1PFC/4LCpl/5Cpl/2Sgt
1st Tank	10	6/4	4LCpl/3Cpl/1SSgt
3rd AABN	5	3/2	1Pvt/2LCpl
MWSS-374	11	5/6	3PFC/2LCpl/2Cpl/2Sgt/1SSgt/12ndLt
CLB-7	22	7/15	3Pvt/3PFC/10LCpl/4Cpl/1Sgt/1PO3
VMU-1	1	0/1	1LCpl
MCCES	16	2/14	1PVT/2PFC/3LCpl/2Cpl/1Sgt/3SSgt/1MSgt
HQBN	30	11/19	1Pvt/12LCpl/11Cpl/1Sgt/3GySgt/1Capt
Nav Hosp	1	0/1	1 Unknown Rank
23rd Dental	0	0/0	0/0
Other Mil	10	3/7	4Cpl/2Sgt/1GySgt
Mil Dep	8	8/0	6Wives/1Husband
DOD Civ	0	0/0	
Other	4	4/0	3 Civilian-NMA
<b>Grand Total</b>	<b>210</b>		

Here is a total number of Marine related DUI's broken down by month. It began Jan/10 thru Dec/31.

Out of the 210 DUIs/DWIs, all of them have lost or will lose their driving privileges for a minimum of one year.

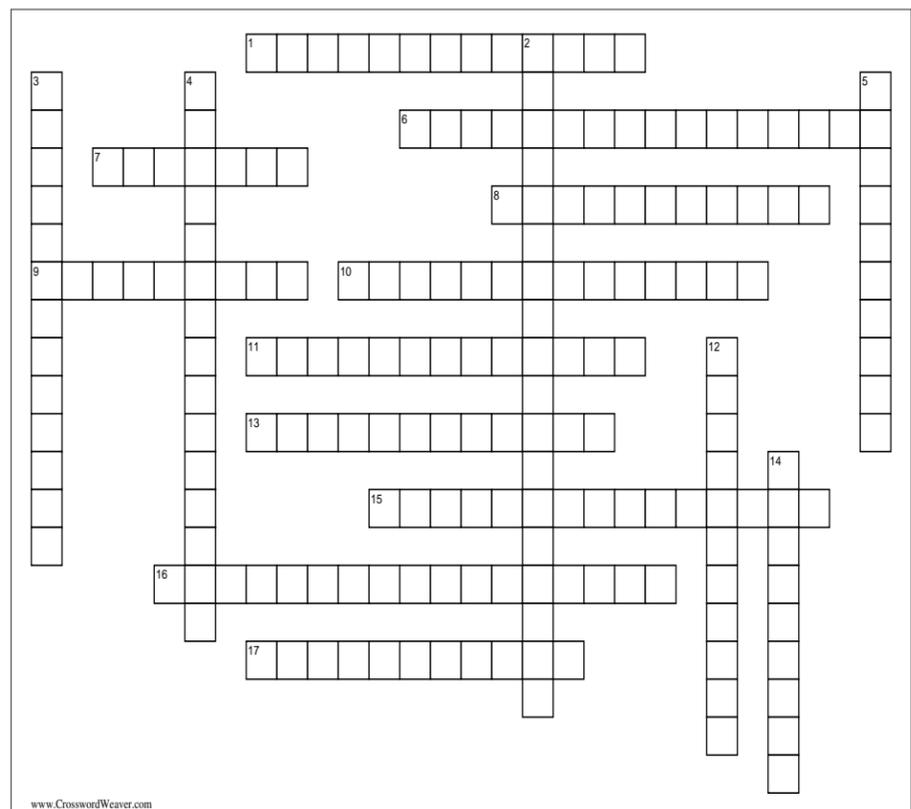
The following services are available to on-base personnel and residents through the Crime Prevention Section:

Literature, Briefings, Education, Crime Assessments, Safety Tips, Stranger Danger Program, McGruff the Crime Dog, Officer Friendly Program, Operation Identification (Property Identification), Child Identification and Fingerprinting.

For more information about the above services, contact the PMO Crime Prevention Section at 830-4561/6094.



## AMERICAN AUTHORS



### ACROSS

- Early American poet with a strange background
- Robert Redford portrayed the main character of his best book on the big screen
- Won the 1948 Nobel Prize in Literature
- He took to road less traveled by
- Modern warfare is his specialty
- One of the most famous female poets of the 19th century
- Advocated socialism in his meat-packing novel
- Wrote the most famous Civil War novels ever
- War novel author of the early 20th century
- Wrote his most famous novel after living in solitude for 2 years
- Known for writing horror stories

### DOWN

- Responsible for scarlet letter grades written on high school book reports every semester
- Author of 'The Grapes of Wrath' and 'Of Mice and Men'
- Used a "stream of consciousness" in his characters
- Wrote 'The Catcher in the Rye'
- The current presence in legal literature
- Perhaps the most socially intelligent man of the 19th century

[Solutions on A9]

## Centerspeak

Who is going to win the BCS national championship, Ohio State or Louisiana State?

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



PVT. BRANDON LARA  
3/4

"I think Ohio State will win because they have had a good team forever. LSU is a good team, but I think Ohio State is better."



LANCE CPL. ERIK WARREN  
3/4

"Ohio State will win because they have the #1 defense in the country."



LANCE CPL. PETE MARINELLO  
3/4

"I think Ohio State will take it because they are a consistent team."

## Sempertoons

By Gunnery Sgt. Charles Wolf

"Am I BUSY??!!!..., HA!, Take a look around, EINSTEIN!!"



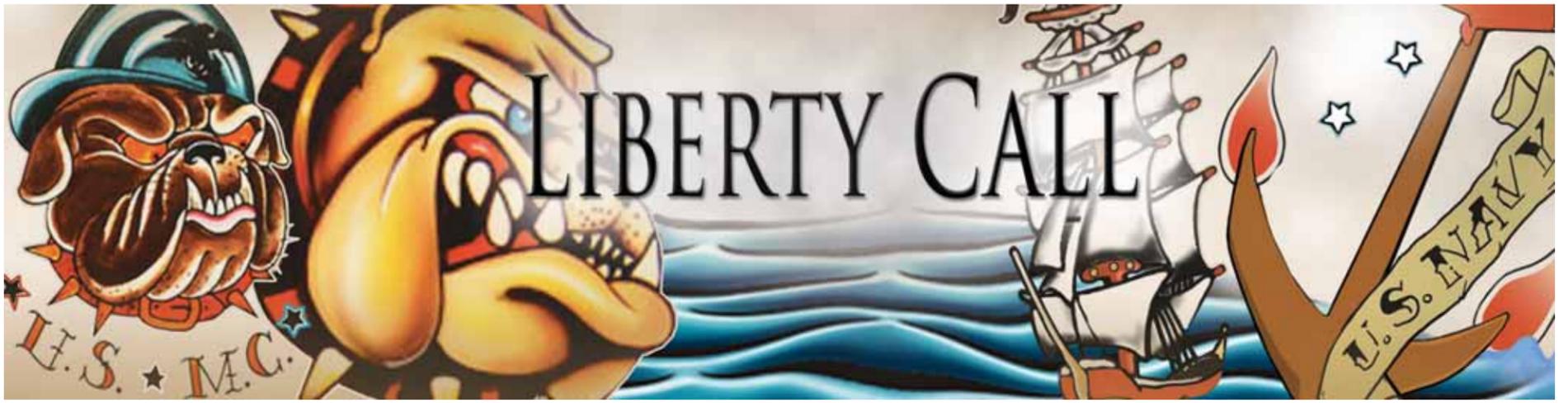
-AHHH, THE DAILY BUTT KICKING CONTEST-

sempertoons.com  
cafepress.com/sempertoons  
myspace.com/semperton

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**SINGLE MARINE PROGRAM**

**SMP EVENTS**

**FRIDAY SMP BINGO**  
7 P.M. @ THE ZONE

**SATURDAY, JAN. 19**  
**OLD TOWN SAN DIEGO TRIP**  
SIGN UP BY JAN. 16 - \$5 FEE

Movies for the upcoming week at the Sunset Cinema

**WEDNESDAY**  
Enchanted  
7 p.m. - PG

**THURSDAY**  
Hitman  
7 p.m. - R

**FRIDAY**  
Beowulf  
6 p.m. - PG-13  
This Christmas  
9 p.m. - PG-13  
The Mist  
Midnight - PG-13

**SATURDAY**  
The Lion King  
FREE  
11 a.m. - G  
Mr. Magorium's Wonder Emporium  
2 p.m. - G  
Enchanted  
6 p.m. - PG  
August Rush  
9 p.m. - PG  
Hitman  
Midnight - R

**SUNDAY**  
Alvin & the Chipmunks  
2 p.m. - PG  
The Golden Compass  
6 p.m. - PG-13  
TBA  
9 p.m.

**MONDAY**  
Beowulf  
7 p.m.

**TUESDAY**  
TBA  
7 p.m.



**Get To Palm Springs!**

**RIDE MBTA**

15 MCAGCC-Palm Springs Friday							
Base Post Exchange	Building 1664	Subway	29 Palms Community Center	29 Palms Staters	Joshua Tree Park Blvd.	Stater Bros WalMart	Palm Springs Airport
5:00	5:25	5:30	5:40	5:45	6:00	6:10	7:00

15 MCAGCC-Palm Springs Friday				
Palm Springs Airport	Indian Canyon & Andreas (Casino)	Indian Canyon & Tacheva (Hospital)	Stater Bros WalMart	MCAGCC
7:00	7:10	7:15	7:50	8:30

15 MCAGCC-Palm Springs Saturday/Sunday*							
Base Post Exchange	Building 1664	Subway	29 Palms Community Center	29 Palms Staters	Joshua Tree Park Blvd.	Stater Bros WalMart	Palm Springs Airport
10:00	10:25	10:30	10:40	10:45	11:00	11:10	11:45
4:00	4:25	4:30	*4:40	*4:45	*5:00	*5:10	*5:45

15 MCAGCC-Palm Springs Saturday/Sunday*				
Palm Springs Airport	Indian Canyon & Andreas (Casino)	Indian Canyon & Tacheva (Hospital)	Stater Bros WalMart	MCAGCC
12:00	12:10	12:15	12:50	1:35
*6:00	*6:10	*6:15	*6:50	*7:35

\*SUNDAY SERVICE BEGINS AT 29 PALMS COMMUNITY CENTER. All weekend service is for Saturday only except for the final return trip which includes both Saturday and Sunday service.

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**Twentynine Palms Art Gallery**  
29 Palms Chamber of Commerce

An exhibit of desert paintings and photography by artists Esther Shaw of Yucca Valley and Ellie Tyler of Joshua Tree opens now - 27 at the Twentynine Palms Art Gallery.

**ARTIST ESTHER SHAW**  
Esther Shaw's series of oils on canvas, entitled Intense Nature, is a representational response to the desert environment, and one she hopes will bring attention to the plight of shrinking wildlands.

**EARTH IMAGES BY ELLIE TYLER**  
Award-winning nature photographer Ellie Tyler presents some of her best work. Her photographs have been exhibited and published widely, and have appeared in Sunset Magazine, Sierra Club and National Geographic books.

Also showing are recent works by members of the Twentynine Palms Artists Guild.

Twentynine Palms Art Gallery is located at 74055 Cottonwood Drive (off National Park Drive) in Twentynine Palms. Open Wednesday through Sunday, 12 to 3 p.m. For more information, call (760) 367-7819 or visit the web site: [www.29palmsartgallery.com](http://www.29palmsartgallery.com)

**Call for artists**

The Joshua Tree Chamber of Commerce invites artists to create public works of art from segments of 16" diameter PVC water pipe. Finished works to be publicly displayed in the Town of Joshua Tree and then auctioned for the benefit of the Joshua Tree Chamber of Commerce in the Spring of 2008. So there's plenty of time!! Please call the Chamber Office for details or to arrange to pick up a water pipe segment, 760-366-3723, M - Fri. 10 a.m. - 3 p.m. Or just stop in to take a look!

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# Retiree Identification card news

SEMPER FIDELIS  
MEMORANDUM FOR  
RETIRED MARINES  
OCTOBER-DECEMBER 2007

## Two forms of identification are now required: To be issued a retiree/eligible family member ID card

One form of identification is no longer sufficient at ID card issuing sites that now have updated software for the Defense Enrollment Eligibility Reporting System/Realtime Automated Personnel Identification System.

Before your next ID card is issued:

- You will need to provide a primary photo form of identification and a secondary non-photo form of identification. Examples of photo IDs: military ID card, driver's license, federal/

state/local government ID or U.S. passport.

- Examples of secondary IDs: social security card, voter registration card or birth certificate.

If you have any questions, contact your nearest ID card issuing site at MCAGCC (760) 830-5365, MMSR-6 at 1-800-336-4649 or (703) 784-9310 and press option "0."

NOTE: To avoid lengthy delays, call your nearest ID card site to determine if a scheduled appointment is needed.

## Military ID card for family members

- The status of a retired Marine's identification card remains indefinite.
- Eligible family members and survivors who are 75 or older are able to receive a permanent ID card.
- Beneficiaries with a valid ID

card should get a permanent ID card within 90 days of their card's expiration.

- If the card is not due to expire for at least another year, do not apply for the new ID card until the card is within 90 days of expiring.

• When applicable, it is the retired Marine's responsibility to register family members in DEERS and provide updates due to any changes in status such as marriage, divorce, birth, or adoption.

- ID cards for college students expire when the student reaches 23.
- Incapacitation of family members before reaching 21. The determination of benefits for incapacitated family members; however, can occur after 21.
- Contact your nearest ID card site or MMSR-6 if you require additional assistance.

MARINE CORPS AIR STATION MIRAMAR, Calif. – Sgt. Julian Martinez, military policeman, provost marshal's office, Headquarters & Headquarters Squadron, Marine Corps Air Station Miramar, participates in the integrated strength training drills. The new training is part of the functional fitness concept adopted by the Marine Corps to condition Marines for combat not the physical fitness test.



LANCE CPL. FRANCES L. GOCH

## New standards mean 1st class PFT won't save overweight Marines

LANCE CPL. M. DANIEL  
SANCHEZ  
MCAS YUMA

MARINE CORPS AIR STATION, YUMA, Ariz. -- A first-class physical fitness test score won't excuse Marines with extra body fat any more, the Corps'

commandant recently directed in a letter outlining big changes to training and personal appearance rules going into effect by June 2008.

Additionally, Gen. James T. Conway announced the creation of a combat-related fitness test and a military appearance program in a Nov. 26 White Letter sent to all Marine commanders.

"Our nation has high expectations of her Marines ... Accordingly, our high standards of professional and personal performance, to include our physical fitness and military appearance, must be maintained and adhered to by every Marine," wrote Conway.

Currently, Marines can be overweight as long as they have a body fat index no higher than 22 percent for males and 30 percent for females and earn a first class score on their physical fitness test.

Male Marines who don't achieve a first-class PFT must not exceed 18 percent, while females must not exceed 26 percent.

According to the letter, the new body fat standards will vary depending on a Marine's age.

The new standards are: 18 percent for male and 26 percent for female 17-26 years old, 19 percent and 27 percent for ages 27-30, 20 and 28 percent for ages 31-45, and 21 and 29 percent over 46.

In Headquarters and Headquarters Squadron here, for example, 34 of the unit's more

than 500 Marines -- 7 percent -- would now be considered overweight despite high PFT scores, said Staff Sgt. Gerald Collins, squadron training chief.

Finally, Conway wrote that war-zone waivers for BCP will be discontinued.

"Combat experience in Iraq and Afghanistan has revealed the requirement to develop a combat fitness program and evaluation that will better measure the functional elements of combat fitness," Conway wrote.

The combat fitness test will augment the PFT and consist of events that replicate the physical demands of combat.

"The CFT will be a scored event that will influence promotion, retention and assignment," Conway said.

The exact events are in development, but two Iraq veterans here said there are a few things they would add to the test.

Marines should run in sand with a full combat load, including body armor, ammunition and a weapon, said Cpl. Ramiro Montemayor, who recently returned from Iraq with Marine Wing Support Squadron 371 in October.

"Just walking in the sand wears you out," said Montemayor, who has a first-class PFT.

Cpl. Juan Ramirez, who has

See PFT, A8

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# 1st Tanks XO takes command of BN

LANCE CPL. JARED J. BUTLER

COMBAT CORRESPONDENT

The 1st Tank Battalion held their change of command ceremony at Lance Cpl. Torrey L. Gray Field Dec. 21.

Lt. Col. James B. Stopa, 1st Tanks commanding officer, passed the command of the battalion to Maj. Lee M. Rush, 1st Tanks executive officer.

Stopa commanded 1st Tanks for 18 months during which time he helped improve battalion training exercises Summer Heat and Steel Knight.

The Marines and sailors of 1st Tanks finished the final portion of Steel Knight 2007 Dec. 18.

"I would like to thank the Marines and sailors of 1st Tanks for their focus, work ethic and ability to accomplish the mission at hand," said Stopa. "They have exceeded my expectations by going above and

beyond what's required of them."

Stopa not only addressed his Marines, but he thanked the families of 1st Tanks for all of their support during the past year and a half.

"My objective was to leave 1st Tanks better than it was when I came here, and I couldn't have done it alone," said Stopa. "I thank everyone around me for helping me do it."

Rush served under Stopa as the battalion's executive officer since he was transferred to 1st Tanks from 4th Light Armored Reconnaissance Battalion in the summer of 2006.

"It is my distinct pleasure to serve the Marines of this battalion as I have done in the past," said Rush.

Stopa will continue to serve the Marine Corps as the 1st Marine Expeditionary Force forward operations officer and plans to deploy this month.



LANCE CPL. JARED J. BUTLER

Maj. Lee M. Rush, 1st Tank Battalion executive officer, receives the colors and command of the battalion from Lt. Col. James B. Stopa, 1st Tanks commanding officer, at the 1st Tanks change of command ceremony at Lance Cpl. Torrey L. Gray Field Dec. 21.

## America Supports You: Foundation Seeks a Few Good Students



### AMERICAN FORCES PRESS SERVICE

WASHINGTON – The Marine Corps Scholarship Foundation is looking for eligible students to apply for its 2008 scholarships.

"These scholarships provide life-changing opportunities for students that need financial assistance towards a college degree, and they increase their chances for success in their personal and professional lives," said Chris Randolph, the foundation's president. "That's critical for our Marine families."

Eligible students must be children of a current U.S. Marine or of a living or dead retired Marine. They also must be high school

graduates or registered as undergraduate students at an accredited educational institution and have a family income of \$77,000 or less. This limit increases if siblings apply.

Scholarships are not offered for graduate study.

Children whose parents are participating or have participated in operations Iraqi Freedom or Enduring Freedom may qualify for additional scholarship funding.

The foundation provides assistance to children of Marines or Navy corpsmen serving with Marines, with special consideration given to children with a parent who was killed or wounded in action.

The foundation is a supporter of America Supports You, a Defense Department program connecting

citizens and corporations with military personnel and their families serving at home and abroad.

Application deadlines are March 3 for graduating high school seniors and first-time college freshman and April 15 for all other students.

Since its founding in 1962, the organization has distributed more than 21,000 needs-based college scholarships and bonds totaling more than \$34 million. In 2007 alone, more than 1,000 Marine children received awards, foundation officials said.

More information about the foundation and its scholarships can be found on the organization's Web site, [www.mcsf.org](http://www.mcsf.org), or by phone at 800-292-7777.

[a] [b] [c]

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# Marine participates in Theater 29 play "She Loves Me"

LANCE CPL. MONICA C. ERICKSON  
COMBAT CORRESPONDENT

A Marine at the Installation Personnel Administration Center performed in the romantic-comedy musical "She Loves Me" with Theatre 29 at the John Calver Theatre from Nov. 16 through Dec. 15.

When rehearsals began mid-September, Sgt. Arthur D. Schocken, travel section leader, met the director through his wife who was also trying out for the musical.

"She told the director a little bit about herself and mentioned we were in a show together called the 'Apple Tree' back in 2004," said Schocken. "I guess the director saw me in that show and had been trying to locate me on base ever since to get me to do more shows with the theatre."

According to the Theatre 29 Web site, "She Loves Me" is based on the famous film in 1940 "Shop Around the Corner" starring Jimmy Stewart and a different musical called "In the Good Old Summer

Time" and popular recent film "You've Got Mail" starring Tom Hanks and Meg Ryan.

The play rotates around characters Georg Nowack, played by Schocken, and Amalia Balash, played by Jen Paulk, who constantly argue with each other while at work at the local perfumery in Budapest, Hungary, yet are unaware that they are secret pen-pals and met through lonely heart ads in the newspaper.

The play twists when Georg is accused of beginning a relationship with the shop owner's wife and nearly loses his job at the perfumery.

"She Loves Me" was a Broadway hit in 1963 and continues to be frequently revived all around the United States and Europe.

"It definitely is a productive activity to do in my off hours," said Schocken. "It has a lot of extra responsibilities and stress that go with it, but that comes with doing any performance. All-in-all, it is about having fun. When the actual performance of the show started, it made all those hours worth it."

Schocken, along with all cast members, rehearsed more than 25 songs for both acts of the musical every Monday through Friday until the show started, bringing the cast to 100-180 hours of rehearsals together.

"Surprisingly, I like the singing aspect of the show," said Schocken. "I wasn't exactly sure about having to get on stage and sing all by myself, but as it turns out I like it."

"My favorite part of the show is the start of the second act when my character already knows that his pen-pal is his co-worker," Schocken continued. "He tries to figure out if she likes him without coming out and saying he is the pen pal, he does this by making up a story and trying to gauge her response. Hilarity ensues."

Theatre 29 has already begun productions for another upcoming show "Rumors," which will run from January to February.

For more information about Theatre 29 or Schocken's participation, visit Theatre 29's website at [www.theatre29.com](http://www.theatre29.com) or call at 361-4151.



LANCE CPL. MONICA C. ERICKSON  
Sgt. Arthur D. Schocken as Georg Nowack listens as his boss explains his philosophy, the essence of which is five words: Do not lose your job.



LANCE CPL. MONICA C. ERICKSON  
Sgt. Arthur D. Schocken [left] dons a wig to perform with fellow actors Shelby Art, Adrienne Guerrero, Kurt Schauppner, Alex Gomez and Sherry Hall in "She Loves Me."



LANCE CPL. MONICA C. ERICKSON  
Les Taylor thinks that Sgt. Schocken Schocken should learn to dance while he practices with Rachael Ray, who plays a clerk in a perfumery.

## FINEX from, A1

Marines in the field act as Iraqi role players throughout the exercise to assist in providing a realistic training experience.

The Marines of Bravo Co. returned from Iraq in November and were specifically tasked to be a part of the FINEX to keep their training current.

"The final exercise was very realistic, and the effects have improved since last year's Steel

Knight," said Lance Cpl. Joe Todaro, tank crewman, 2nd Platoon, Bravo Company, 1st Tanks. "It was very well-organized, especially the forward operating base."

The FOB was also in play for the FINEX, keeping Marines on their toes with simulated mortar attacks, improvised explosive device attacks, and chemical attacks.

In addition to Bravo Co. role players, contracted Iraqi role play-

ers took part and provided a language barrier for the Marines in training.

Marines had to meet with local Iraqi officials and maintain good relations with the local nationals and general public to discover and seek out insurgents.

Insurgent role players were placed throughout the training area and they set up multiple small arms and IED attacks to disrupt the battalion operations.

Scenarios were set up that

mixed enemy role players within the same group of good role players and put Marines in the position to solve problems socially.

At the Combat Center's Range 225, the Iraqi police abused the local population and carefully hid insurgents within their town. This was one of many situations the FINEX provided for Marines to work together and use their training to overcome.

Everyone who participated in the FINEX worked long hours in

cold weather conditions for a successful conclusion to Steel Knight 2007.

"The training we went through was well worth the hard work and dedication the Marines put into it, and it will save lives someday in Iraq," said Cpl. Bruce Mills, Stryker Section leader, TOWS Platoon, 1st Tanks.

First Tanks will host Summer Heat 2008 in the summer and plans to host another Steel Knight next December.



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# Marine Corps general delivers message from hero's family to Marines in Afghanistan



STAFF SGT. LUIS P. VALDESPINO JR., USMC

Gen. Robert Magnus, assistant commandant of the Marine Corps, speaks to Marines serving in and around the Afghan capital of Kabul at the Camp Eggers dining facility during a visit Dec. 26, 2007.

STAFF SGT. LUIS P. VALDESPINO JR., USMC  
COMBINED SECURITY TRANSITION COMMAND  
AFGHANISTAN PUBLIC AFFAIRS

KABUL, Afghanistan – The assistant commandant of the Marine Corps made a quick stop at Camp Eggers yesterday and passed a message from a modern-day Marine Corps hero's family to Marines serving in and around Afghanistan's capital city.

Marine Gen. Robert Magnus was on the move throughout the country, but made it a point to praise leathernecks here and to pass on a message from Debra Dunham, the mother of Marine Cpl. Jason L. Dunham, who received the Medal of Honor posthumously for his heroism in Iraq.

"Deb Dunham asked me to bring a simple three-part message," Magnus said.

"First, 'Thank you.'" the second-ranking Marine said. "Now this is a 'Gold Star Mother' saying

thank you, so she knows exactly what she's thanking you for." Mothers of American military men and women killed in combat have been referred to as Gold Star Mothers since the early 1900s.

"Second, keep doing what you're doing. Keep doing your mission," Magnus said. "She knows that your mission is fundamentally important.

"I want your family to someday feel as comfortable as they felt on Sept. 10, 2001," he added.

"The third part of the message is, 'Please take care of each other,'" the general said. "That's exactly what Corporal Dunham was doing when he was on his mission."

The general briefly spoke about Dunham's heroic act in saving the lives of his fellow Marines in Iraq when he covered a grenade, which ultimately cost him his life.

Magnus told the Marines that he recognized the difficul-

ty in being away from family during the holidays, but told them that it is good to be with their Marine Corps family as an alternative.

"This is a great time to be a warrior and a Marine," he said. "You are God's gift to your family. ... The Marine Corps is God's gift to the United States ... and to the Afghan people and the Iraqi people."

He also reminded the Marines that it is important for them to consider serving an additional combat tour, or staying in the Marine Corps longer, as well as to encourage young Marines to do the same.

"Your Marine Corps is at war. Your buddies are at war," Magnus said. "You know why you're here now. You're here to help these people win back their neighborhoods and so we don't have another 9/11, and you know that.

"This mission is not over by a long shot, and you know that," the general added.

## Face of Defense: Marine bridges gap between cultures

CPL. ANDREW KALWITZ,  
USMC

2ND MARINE LOGISTICS GROUP

TAQADDUM, Iraq, – They have their differences. In fact, they often don't even speak the same language. But U.S. service members and the Iraqi people here have the same goal: security and stability for Iraq's Anbar province.

Marine Corps Staff Sgt. Robert Sanders, operations chief for Kilo Battery, 1st Battalion, 11th Marine Regiment, helps to bridge the cultural gap.

Sanders developed an understanding of Arab culture during his upbringing in Iran, Saudi Arabia and Egypt. He was born at Fort Benning, Ga., but his father's discharge from the Army after the Vietnam War led to a job as an oil

field worker, which kept the family on the move.

Now Sanders' own travels have taken him back to a familiar culture, but with his new extended family -- his fellow Marines.

"Staff Sergeant Sanders is our bid for success in the villages," said Marine Corps 1st Lt. Matthew Thompson, battery executive officer. "He has found his niche in working with the Iraqis. He can communicate with the Iraqis without an interpreter, and they can communicate with him."

Thompson, a Presho, S.D., native, credits Sanders with helping to gain rapport between Marines and the people in the nearby village of Kabani. In addition to the battery's plans to build a new water treatment plant, a rebuilt school now stands as a testament to the coordination between the Marines and the villagers.

Sanders has put his cultural and linguistic skills to use for the military before. He lived among the Iraqi people for seven months at the East Fallujah Iraqi Compound during his 2004 deployment.

He supervised civilian contractors there and grew comfortable

with the Iraqi people and their lifestyle, even getting used to the food and water to the point where returning to his old eating habits upset his stomach when he returned to the United States, he said.

Things were different then, the staff sergeant said. This was before thousands in Anbar province turned against the insurgency to cooperate with coalition forces in what came to be known as the "Anbar Awakening."

"I remember sitting at Fallujah, and you could sit up on a Hesco barrier and you could watch car bombs exploding in the distance," said Sanders. "Every night, we'd sit out there on the Hescos and smoke cigars, and you could watch tracers shoot across the sky. You don't hear that anymore."

Bonding with the people, he said, was a major part of the solution. Sanders has held classes to further his Marines' understanding of the Arabic language and culture.

"It definitely makes our job a lot easier," said Lance Cpl. Hunter Leger, a fire team leader with the battery. "We've been able to handle things without having to call

someone up."

Leger, a Lake Charles, La., native, said he and his colleagues are knowledgeable enough to work the entry control points without the help of an interpreter. As one of Sanders' Marines at their home station of Marine Corps Air Ground Combat Center Twentynine Palms, Calif., he said he's developed a respect for the staff sergeant's professionalism. It seems many of the local Iraqis have done the same.

When the battery sends Marines to Kabani to coordinate with the muqtar, or mayor, he first asks them "Where is Abu Iskander?" in reference to Sanders, the father of Alexander.

As Sanders has with many of the village's people, he has developed a friendship with the muqtar, who jokes that the Marine could win over enough popularity in the town to beat him out for his position in the next election.

"The people like him too much," Muqtar Ismail Mohmood Hamad said. "They come in from time to time to see what's going on, and he always likes to help the people."



CPL. THOMAS J. GRIFFITH, USMC

Staff Sgt. Robert Sanders and his fellow Marines prepare to greet some of the local people in Sin Adh Dhibban, Iraq. Sanders spent much of his upbringing in Iran, Saudi Arabia and Egypt, learning the language and ways of the Arabic people. He now uses that knowledge while on missions with Kilo Battery, 1st Battalion, 11th Marine Regiment.

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**PFT from, A4**

deployed three times in support of the Global War on Terrorism, said carrying or dragging a casualty, with both Marines in full combat gear, would be a good test.

Even the Corps' top enlisted man agrees.

"Have you ever seen a Marine carry another Marine in combat wearing running shoes and green 'silksies' The PFT will not go away, this will just be in addi-

tion," said Sgt. Maj. Carlton Kent, sergeant major of the Marine Corps.

Lastly, the commandant's proposed appearance program will give commanders the power to do something about leathernecks who look like Marines on paper but not in uniform. It will give Marines the assistance and guid-

ance they need "to improve their appearance, lifestyle habits and overall wellness," said Conway.

Even though most specifics aren't hashed out, the commandant expects Marines to be ready to comply with the standards when they go into effect in June.

"The time is now to take action," said Conway.

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Saving money on regularly used prescriptions got a lot easier in 2007. The new Member Choice Center (MCC) opened to rave reviews as beneficiaries found they could save a bundle on medications – and have them delivered – by switching from retail pharmacies to the safe, convenient TRICARE Mail Order Pharmacy (TMOP).

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order can be accomplished 24/7 via the Web at [www.express-scripts.com/TRICARE](http://www.express-scripts.com/TRICARE), or simply call 1-877-363-1433 to speak to a patient care advocate. The online MCC has proven surprisingly popular with beneficiaries, the majority switching over with the click of the mouse. In either case, the MCC patient care advocates contact physicians to have prescriptions switched over to TMOP.

Take regular heartburn medications? The copay on Nexium was recently lowered to \$3, and a two-year test of over-the-counter (OTC) medications allows beneficiaries to try Prilosec OTC for free. More money saved.

Achieving a healthier lifestyle through activities such as exercise, losing weight and quitting tobac-

co can help save money too – for beneficiaries and for the military health care system.

### "Healthy choices for life"

TRICARE's ongoing "Healthy Choices for Life" campaign is aimed at raising awareness of the problems of obesity, smoking and alcohol abuse. Statistically, service members smoke or chew tobacco at higher rates than the civilian population.

**Quitting tobacco:** is a New Year's resolution that will pay off in healthy dividends and now there is help through the Department of Defense (DoD) educational campaign "Quit Tobacco Make Everyone Proud." Visit the new Web site [www.uca-quit2.org](http://www.uca-quit2.org) where users can develop a personalized plan for quitting, play games, listen to podcasts,

connect to on-line cessation programs and even chat with a trained cessation counselor, seven days a week from 8:30 a.m. to 2:30 a.m. EST. TRICARE's "Kick Butts" multi-media feature on the Press Room at [www.tricare.mil](http://www.tricare.mil) has even more helpful information, links and a list of some of the smoking cessation programs offered by the services.

**Cutting down on alcohol:** use is also a great New Year's "get healthy" resolution. "That Guy" is a DoD funded peer-to-peer campaign to increase awareness of the problems associated with overindulging. The campaign is designed to bring home the message by using humor to reach the target audience – young service

members. Check out the award-winning Web site at [www.thatguy.com](http://www.thatguy.com).

TRICARE is also helping beneficiaries keep "get healthy" resolutions by encouraging clinical preventive services: such as flu shots and regular screenings for colon, prostate and breast cancer. TRICARE also now covers the Shingles vaccine for beneficiaries 60 and older and Magnetic Resonance Imaging (MRI) screening for women who are at high risk of developing breast cancer.

Whether it's increasing savings on prescription medications through TMOP or reducing the risk of illness through preventive screenings, just remember it's a brand new year – so make a "healthy choice for life."

## ACTIONS from, A1

Academy, received an Army Commendation for his actions while serving with the Training and Education Command's Embedded Training Team in Afghanistan.

While in Afghanistan, Parsons and the rest of the ETT were responsible for training and advising 1st Kandak, 3rd Brigade, 201st Corps, Afghanistan National Army. They were responsible for conducting countless patrols and defending their base from numerous attacks by Taliban forces.

However, Parsons has served the Marine Corps in a variety of ways before being assigned to the ETT. He enlisted in the infantry at the age of 18.

"I always knew I wanted to be a Marine," he said. "Ever since the age of five, when I saw the recruiter out and about in my town."

While in recruit training, Parsons served as the guide for Platoon 3117, Kilo Company, 3rd Recruit Training Battalion at Parris Island, S.C. He believes his drill instructors made him who he is today. He also recalls Sgt. Maj. Mark M. Geletko, Headquarters Battalion sergeant major, being a drill instructor for another platoon in his company.

"All of my drill instructors had

an impact on me in some way," he said. "I always remembered him having this massive presence, and I remember always wanting to be something like him."

After Parris Island, Parsons went on to School of Infantry East, Camp Geiger, N.C., where he was trained as a mortarman. In March 1993, he reported to 2nd Battalion, 2nd Marine Regiment, in Camp Lejeune, N.C., where he was assigned to Weapons Company.

While serving with 2/2 as a forward observer for 81mm mortars, Parsons deployed a number of times to places like Okinawa, Japan; Haiti; the Mediterranean Sea; Bosnia and Liberia.

In July 1996, Parsons was reassigned to Marine Barracks 8th and I in Washington, D.C. The following January, he served as a platoon sergeant in President William J. Clinton's inauguration ceremony.

One month later, Parsons became a section leader on the burial detail until December 1998, when he became the assistant drill master for 8th and I.

In March 2000, Parsons returned to Parris Island, this time to become a drill instructor. In June he graduated from the drill instructor school and was assigned to India Company, 3rd Recruit Training Battalion. While

a part of India Company, Parsons trained six platoons of recruits and served as the battalion operations chief.

Parsons left the drill field in 2003 and attended The Career Course at Marine Corps Base Camp Pendleton, Calif., where he received a Gung Ho Award. In July of that year, he joined Alpha Company, 1st Battalion, 7th Marine Regiment, while they were deployed to Iraq and became platoon sergeant for Weapons Platoon.

After they returned in Nov. 2003, he was assigned as Alpha Company gunnery sergeant. While serving as the company gunnery sergeant, Parsons helped set up Stabilization and Stability Operations training for 7th Marines Regiment in preparation for Operation Iraqi Freedom 2.2.

While deployed, Parsons took over as Weapons Platoon commander. When he returned from Iraq he was appointed as Headquarters and Support Company first sergeant. He was recognized and received a Sergeant Major of the Marine Corps Award for his writing skills while attending the Advanced Infantry Course at Camp Pendleton in 2005.

Parsons was assigned to the Combat Center's SNCOA as a faculty advisor in Nov. 2005.

After his first class, he became the academics chief until August 2006, when he was sent to Afghanistan as part of the ETT.

"While I was in Afghanistan, I worked with 17 other guys from all over TECOM," said Parsons. "They were the best noncommissioned officers, staff noncommissioned officers and officers you could ever dream to serve with. They were constant professionals and duty experts in everything they did."

Cited for his actions while serving in Afghanistan as a combat advisor to the ANA, Parsons was awarded an Army Commendation Medal and was recommended for a Bronze Star Medal with Combat Distinguishing Device.

Parsons' award citation highlighted his organization of the defense of a vehicle patrol when it encountered Taliban forces and was attacked, his organization of numerous counter ambush patrols and his efforts to help defend Forward Operating Base Camp Joyce, Afghanistan.

Although Parsons braved enemy fire and risked his life to defend his fellow Marines, ANA and coalition forces around him, he thinks he did not do nearly as much as other Marines who were an integral part of the ETT.

"The entire team has received awards for what we did," said Parsons. "An Army Commendation was the lowest award in the spectrum for us. This means nothing in comparison to what the rest of those guys did."

"They were true to fighting in

every clime and place – true warriors," he added.

Parsons said the unit was also very close due to the small number of Marines doing such extraordinary things.

"I can damn near remember all their social security numbers," he joked. "That's how tight-knit we were. The hardest part about everything we did was letting those guys go."

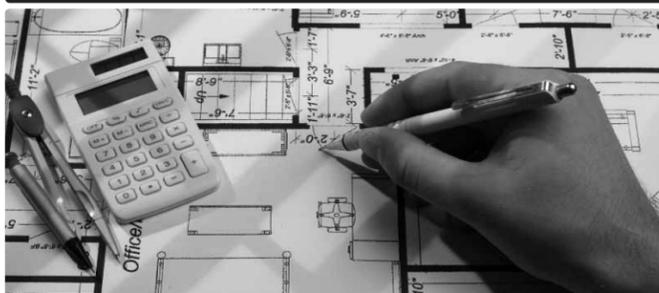
"We all taught each other something and we would all die for each other," he added. "We bonded together so well and were able to conduct a wide variety of operations. That's what made the team so successful."

Since Afghanistan, Parsons has returned to the Combat Center to fill the spot of SNCOA deputy director. He said he knows the importance of his position and the role of the academy.

"Here, we're able to train Marines and leadership and assist them to become better leaders in the Marine Corps," he commented. "It makes my heart proud knowing we can teach not only what's in the curriculum, but what we know from our experiences."

Recently selected for First Sergeant, Parsons has dedicated 15 years of faithful service to the Marine Corps and 13 years to his family. He has a wife, Christina, and four children, Alicia, Major, Gunner and Elizabeth, who are ages 17, 11, 9 and 4. He said he plans to stay in the Marine Corps until there is nothing left for him to do.

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# You are NOT Emmitt Smith

LANCE CPL. NICHOLAS M. DUNN

COMBAT CORRESPONDENT

Remember the television commercials when people would say they were Emmitt Smith? What about the commercials when one person was talking, but it was someone else's voice dubbed over them, describing all the things they bought with that person's money?

Those were commercials about identity theft, and, although they were funny, identity theft is no laughing matter.

Even though identity theft cases have dropped in recent years, the amount of money stolen electronically has increased.

A member assigned to a tenant unit here recently experienced this problem. Capt. Darryl G. Hammonds, executive officer, 3rd Battalion, 11th Marine Regiment, was a victim of identity theft November, 2007.

"One thing about me is I'm real cautious with my finances," he said. "I check my bank accounts every morning when I

wake up and every night before I go to bed.

"On Nov. 27, I got an email from my bank asking if a man named Joseph Nguyen was added to my bill pay," he added. "I knew this wasn't right, so I immediately called the bank to inform them, deleted him, and changed my screen name and password."

Unfortunately for Hammonds, the problem did not end there.

"I tried to check my personal email account after work and somehow, someone had gotten into the account and changed all my information," he said. "I contacted the service number for my email provider to inform them of the problem and it took me more than a half-hour to convince them I was the rightful owner of the account. Fortunately, I was able to give them account information only I would know."

Once Hammonds was finally given access to his email account, he found all his emails were deleted and his personal information had been changed, including his password, address – even his gender.

Another problem Hammonds found with his email account was his financial folders. Whoever hacked into his account had taken information from emails regarding his bank accounts and had used it to hack into them.

As Hammonds dug a little deeper, he discovered small amounts of money had been transferred from his bank accounts to accounts all across the world, mostly in Europe.

Despite the problem caused by the hacker, or hackers, who were plaguing his email and bank accounts, Hammonds said he still feels lucky.

"Fortunately, I was able to get all my money back within five days because all the transfers were fraudulent," he said. "I'm also lucky they never got a hold of my social security number. To think all this stemmed from having a simple password."

Hammonds said his password at the time was 'woodworking.' He said it was easy to remember because it was simple and it is his hobby. Unfortunately for him, it



was also easy to hack.

"Even though I eventually got every penny of my money refunded, it was the biggest pain having to fix all the problems this guy caused," he said. "I had to take time out of work to fix this. I also had to cancel all my credit cards, set up new bank accounts, transfer all my money over. I probably spent 15 to 20 hours on the phone trying to fix everything. Now, I'm checking my accounts three or four times a day to make sure this doesn't happen again."

"The big problem is I have no idea who this guy is and I probably never will," he added.

Bruce F. Dewald, Combat Center security manager, said financial identity theft is a big

problem in the United States, especially in southern California.

"Dumpster diving, mail theft and shoulder-surfing at the ATM are out of control in southern California," he said. "Mail theft, in particular, is running rampant. Identity theft can be avoided and it must be avoided. It can be very costly."

To add to the problem, computer hackers use many other ways to get to your private information through the internet. However, there are ways to protect yourself from identity theft.

For more information about identity theft and how to prevent it, visit <http://www.ftc.gov/bcp/edu/microsites/idtheft>.

## Three steps to help prevent your identity from being stolen

### DETER

- Shred financial documents and paperwork with personal information before you discard them.
- Protect your Social Security number. Don't carry your Social Security card in your wallet or write your Social Security number on a check. Give it out only if absolutely necessary or ask to use another identifier.
- Don't give out personal information on the phone, through the mail, or over the Internet unless you know who you are dealing with.
- Never click on links sent in unsolicited emails; instead, type in a web address you know. Use firewalls, anti-spyware and anti-virus software to protect your home computer, and keep them up-to-date. Visit [OnGuardOnline.gov](http://OnGuardOnline.gov) for more information.
- Don't use an obvious password like your birth date, your mother's maiden name or the last four digits of your Social Security number.
- Keep your personal information in a secure place at home, especially if you have roommates, employ outside help or are having work done in your house.

### DETECT

- Bills that do not arrive as expected.
- Unexpected credit cards or account statements.
- Denials of credit for no apparent reason.
- Calls or letters about purchases you did not make.
- Inspect your credit report.

### DEFEND

- Place a "Fraud Alert" on your credit reports and review the reports carefully.
- Close any accounts that have been tampered with or established fraudulently.
- File a report with law enforcement officials to help you with creditors who may want proof of the crime.
- Report the theft to the Federal Trade Commission. Your report helps law enforcement officials across the country in their investigations.

Identity theft prevention tips courtesy of the Federal Trade Commission. To read more detailed information about identity theft prevention tips, visit the FTC's consumer protection brochure at <http://www.ftc.gov/bcp/edu/pubs/consumer/idtheft/idtheft01.shtm>.

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# Local veterans help Marine families



COURTESY PHOTO

The Sun City Palm Desert Veterans presented checks to Anita Neu-Fultz, Armed Services YMCA, and Darla Holguin and Shaunna Berry, Navy-Marine Corps Relief Society, here Dec. 27. (Left to right) Sy Kaplan, Terry Kay, Jerry Rapoport, Anita Neu-Fultz, Vince Anderson, Darla Holguin, Shaunna Berry, John Ludemann.

## BABY from, A1

9 pounds, 2.2 ounces and measured 21 inches in length.

Lance Cpl. Melanie Wren is assigned to the Maintenance Management Office, Head Quarters Battalion. The new father, Ray, is a student at Everest College in San Bernardino, Calif.

The proud maternal grandparents, Anthony and Maria

Ochoa, along with Aunt Kimberly Ochoa-Farr, of Las Vegas, Nevada, were present to welcome Brayden into the family. Paternal grandparents back in Chapman, Kansas, Howard and Vickie Wren sent their well wishes.

Brayden also has two older sisters, Brianna 4, and Danielle, 12.

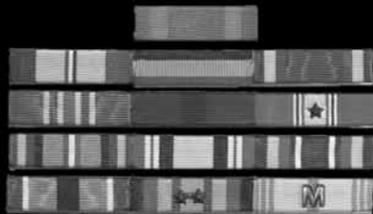
Mom and baby are doing fine.



DAN BARBER, U.S. NAVY

Lance Cpl. Melanie Wren and husband Ray with son Brayden Anthony who was born 12 minutes past midnights January 1.

*to protect and to serve  
my country*



“Forty years ago... I went to Vietnam. When I returned, there were no honors, no recognition. I have made a commitment as chief of this department to honor, whenever possible, those men and women who are serving double duty, both here at home and abroad.”



**William Bratton**  
Chief of Police,  
Los Angeles Police Department



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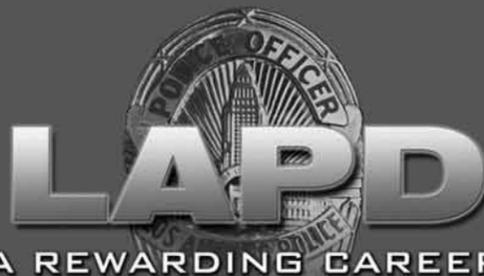
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