

OBSERVATION POST

MARINE CORPS AIR GROUND COMBAT CENTER

FEBRUARY 27, 2009 SERVING THE TWENTYNINE PALMS COMMUNITY SINCE 1957 VOL. 52 ISSUE 8

Former devil dogs face uphill battle

LANCE CPL. M. C. NERL
COMBAT CORRESPONDENT

Marines who have ended their term of active service and want to re-join the Marine Corps now face an uphill battle to get back in.

Multiple obstacles face former Marines because of their lapse in time, which is an even larger issue for those who are a sergeant or above, said Staff Sgt. Matthew T. White, a prior service recruiter from Recruiting Station San Diego, who is based at Marine Corps Base Camp Pendleton, Calif.

"Sergeants and above who have gaps in their fitness reports because of their time out face even more challenges," said the Burbank, Calif., native. "Marines don't usually make copies of things like their medical and dental records. Stuff like that gets sent to Kansas City, Mo., by the government and takes an act of Congress to get it back if there aren't any other copies."

"Marines usually just drop their pack when they get out, meaning they just forget about the Marine Corps and just go straight into Inactive Ready Reserve," White said.

White hinted at other issues, such as the available space in their Military Occupational Specialty.

"Other than a bad MOS that's already filled up,

See RE-JOIN, A8

... in the snow of far-off Northern lands



CPL. NICOLE A. LAVINE

Lance Cpl. Robert L. Couret, a low altitude air defense gunner with Battery B, 3rd Low Altitude Air Defense Battalion out of Marine Corps Base Camp Pendleton, Calif., aims at a notional aviation target while fellow gunner Lance Cpl. David M. Ogle directs him during an exercise at training area Falcon at Marine Corps Mountain Warfare Training Center Bridgeport, Calif., Feb. 12.

CPL. NICOLE A. LAVINE
COMBAT CORRESPONDENT

MARINE CORPS MOUNTAIN WARFARE TRAINING CENTER BRIDGEPORT, Calif. — Marines from the 3rd Low Altitude Air Defense Battalion out of Marine Corps Base Camp Pendleton, Calif., took advantage of a unique training opportunity at Marine Corps Mountain Warfare Training Center Bridgeport, Calif., Feb. 1 to 15.

The Marines of Battery B, 3rd LAAD, who reported to MWTC voluntarily, learned the ins and outs of providing mobile air defense to forward combat troops in a cold weather, mountainous environment, said Capt. John P. Muntzer, the commanding officer of Battery B.

The battery set up three operation stations at MWTC training areas Dodo, Falcon and Oriole. There, the gunners, or Marines who fire missiles from the ground at avi-

ation targets, practiced engagements on notional targets in scenario-based exercises.

3rd LAAD can cover air space up to 10,000 feet from the ground with missile systems like the FIM-92A Stinger Weapons System, said 1st Lt. David S. Robertson, the Battery B executive officer.

The Stinger system is a man-portable, shoulder-fired guided missile system used to engage low altitude aircraft, said Robertson, a

Richmond, Va., native.

Robertson said although this function is unique to LAAD batteries, these Marines do more than point a fire-and-forget weapon at enemy targets from the ground.

"LAAD Marines have multiple roles when they deploy," he said.

In addition to using gunners in missions, LAAD Marines also secure perimeters with automatic weapons.

See SNOW, A10



SGT. MICHAEL S. CIFUENTES

U.S. Marines stationed at Henderson Hall in Arlington, Va., stand at parade rest in front of the Marine Corps War Memorial in Arlington moments before a flag raising ceremony Feb. 23. Active duty and reserve Marines, Marine veterans, retired Marines and civilian spectators gathered at the memorial, which depicts the five Marines and one Navy corpsman raising the American flag on Mount Suribachi during World War II, to observe the 64th anniversary of the actual flag-raising.

Flag still flying high after 64 years

SGT. MICHAEL S. CIFUENTES
HEADQUARTERS MARINE CORPS

ARLINGTON, Va. — Sixty-four years ago on Feb. 23, 1945, U.S. Marines stormed the sands of Iwo Jima and raised the American flag atop Mount Suribachi.

In honor of the 64th anniversary of that historic event, dozens of spectators and Marines, including nine individuals who fought in the Battle of Iwo Jima, gathered at the Marine Corps War Memorial today for a flag-raising ceremony.

One of the Iwo Jima veterans present at the event acted as a forward observer during the battle, calling for and guiding indirect artillery fire from the island.

"The [flag-raising] brings back so many memories," said former Pfc. James Wheeler, a Falls Church, Va., native. "It gave me goose bumps all over to see that flag go up again."

Wheeler also said Feb. 23

should be an important date everyone should remember because a lot of Marines sacrificed their lives for that victory.

Before the ceremony's conclusion, the Iwo Jima veterans placed a wreath at the base of the memorial to pay homage to those who were killed during the battle.

The Marine Corps War Memorial was sculpted by Felix de Weldon, using the iconic flag-raising photograph shot by Associated Press photographer Joe Rosenthal. The memorial was officially dedicated Nov. 10, 1954, on the Corps' birthday by President Dwight D. Eisenhower.

"This war memorial is a reflection of all Marine sacrifices. Not just the Marines who fought at Iwo Jima, but Marines who fought years before that, years after that and today," said Michael Kessler, national executive director for the Young Marines National Headquarters and a retired Marine colonel.



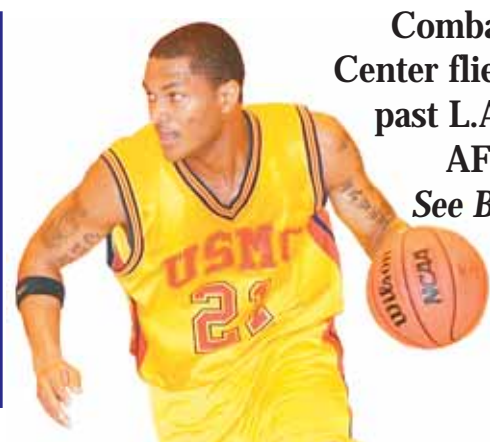
Hoofin' it at MWTC
See A3



1st Tank Marines receive honors
See A4



No late-bloomers - See B1



Combat Center flies past L.A. AFB
See B1

Registering at DEERS prevents future problems

CPL. MARGARET HUGHES

COMBAT CORRESPONDENT

A recently married service member deploys and his spouse stays with her family instead of the service member's duty station. Tragedy hits. The spouse is in a car accident and sent to a local hospital. The family is left with thousands of dollars in medical bills because she was never enrolled in the Defense Enrollment Eligibility Reporting System.

DEERS is the computerized database of the Department of Defense that is used to determine TRICARE eligibility, the medical insurance for the uniformed services.

Although the family can file a claim and be reimbursed for the majority of the medical bills, they still have to pay the bills until their claim goes through, said Tara Mogan, a beneficiary representative for TRICARE. This type of situation can easily be prevented if the spouse is enrolled in DEERS right away.

The coverage will be backdated to the marriage or birth certificate, but they will be put in TRICARE Standard, Mogan added. Standard allows the service member and dependents to go to any medical facility off base without a referral, but the entire bill is usually not covered.

Dependents have a couple of ways to enroll in DEERS before a similar situation happens.

The service member can fill out DD form 1172, which is an application for a uniformed services identification card and DEERS enrollment for their dependents, said Sgt. Travis

Hagen, a DEERS clerk with Headquarters Battalion. The form can be found online at <http://www.usa-federal-forms.com> or any DEERS office.

After the form is completed, the service member can accompany the dependent into any DEERS office to enroll with proof of dependency, like a marriage or birth certificate. The dependent must have two forms of government identification to receive a military ID card.

If the service member is unable to accompany the dependent, the dependent can bring in the original completed DD form 1172 with the appropriate identification to enroll in DEERS aboard any military installation, Hagen added. It does not have to be on the same base where the service member is stationed, or the same branch of service. The regulations for DEERS enrollment are DoD wide.

After the dependents are enrolled in DEERS they automatically receive medical coverage, Hagen said. The service member or dependent must visit a TRICARE service center to add dental coverage for the family and to switch to TRICARE Prime.

TRICARE Prime allows service members and dependents to use base medical centers without paying out of pocket, but they must get a referral to use medical services off base.

For more information about DEERS enrollment call 830-5365. For more information about TRICARE options call 1-888-874-9378.

MOVIN' ON UP

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36														
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42														
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55														
58														
61														

ACROSS

- Tour de France, for one
- Islands dance
- Miner's filing
- Periods of history
- Cross to bear
- For this reason
- School yard game
- Rent-a-carquotes
- Te- (cigarbrand)
- Garfield's pal
- Pub crawlers
- Wailer of Irish folklore
- Star's wheels
- Beatnik's digs
- Happy-go-lucky
- Treat like a pariah
- Drop off
- Nixon's pardoner
- Kachina doll carvers
- Like many super heroes
- Etcher's fluid
- "You said it!"
- Felt remorse over

DOWN

- Place to kick a habit, for short
- Coffee allure
- Plumped-up chicken
- Winding curve
- Like a parka
- Set loose
- "The Women" playwright Clare Boothe
- Cheroot residue
- Auto trim material
- Trusting act
- Pre-deal payment
- Pastry prettifier
- GI's fare
- "Yankee Doodle Dandy" composer
- Pooped out
- Diver's starting point
- Lolled in the hammock
- Made do, somehow

ACROSS

- Young girl, informally
- Criminal underworld
- On the contrary
- Hell- (determined)
- Corn units
- "Cheers" bartender Sam
- Seven Hills city
- Mai
- Name on a rap sheet
- Help for a stalled motorist
- Retailer's spot
- Dresden's river
- Still in play
- Makes smooth
- Oktoberfest quaff
- Decked out

DOWN

- Giant birds of myth
- A dwarf planet
- Whirling water
- Carpeting choice
- Deep sleep
- Ready for business
- Intimidate
- Construction site hoist
- Contemplates
- Eyeglasses pair
- Place for a sticker
- Molded ice cream confection
- Sell online
- Maggot or grub
- Positioned
- WMD part
- Utah ski resort
- MGM roarer
- Call the shots
- Brother of George W.
- Special attention, briefly

[puzzle Solutions on A7]

Victims of Sexual Assault Requested to Talk to Task Force

It's time to hear first-hand from victims and survivors of sexual assault in our military.

The Defense Task Force on Sexual Assault in the Military Services needs victims or witnesses of sexual assault to tell their personal story to gain valuable insight into the military's approach and response to this crime.

Anyone who's been a victim, whether or not the assault was ever reported, and who is not part of an ongoing case under investigation, is being asked to contact the task force to participate in a confidential interview.

The task force is on a year-long, worldwide effort, looking at sexual assault programs in the Army, Marine Corps, Navy and

Air Force, to find out how the services' programs are working to prevent and respond to sexual assault.

When the assessment is complete, the task force will report to Congress about trends they have found in the military and will make specific recommendations to improve our military programs.

If you or someone you know has been a victim of sexual assault, and are willing to talk to a member of the task force, please contact DTFSAMS at 888-325-6640 or assist@wso.whs.mil

For more information, see our website at: www.dtic.mil/dtfsams.

Combat Center Spotlight



Name: Judgee Brucker

Hometown: Oregon City, Ore.

Job Title: Recreational attendant

Organization: Desert Winds Golf Course

Job Duties: Reserving tee times and cart rentals, processing golfers.

What do you like most about your job: The people, the golfers.

Any significant achievements: Employee of the quarter

Hobbies: Flying, traveling, learning how to cook

Military Service: none

Time at the Combat Center: 7 years

Hot Topics

YOUNG MARINE FUNDRAISER AT DEL TACO

This Saturday, from 4 to 8 p.m., a portion of all Twentynine Palms Del Tacos' profits will go to the local Young Marines, the Mojave Vipers.

NEW GYM HOURS

The East and West Gym/Fitness Centers' new hours of operation will be 4:30 a.m. - 10 p.m., seven days a week.

SAN BERNARDINO COUNTY VETERANS AFFAIRS OPENS NEW OFFICE

Starting today, San Bernardino County Department of Veterans Affairs will have a part-time office in Room 82 of The Village Center at the Marine Corps Air Ground Combat Center Twentynine Palms. The office will be open every Thursday from 9:00 a.m. - 3:00 p.m. Certified veteran services representatives can help veterans and their dependents with VA claims, case management services and applications for monetary and health care benefits. Additional part-time offices located in the Morongo Basin include:

Yucca Valley Office
56357 Pima Trail
Yucca Valley, CA 92284
(760) 228-5234

Open Tuesdays from 9:00 a.m. to 3:00 p.m.

Twentynine Palms Office
73629 Sun Valley Drive
Twentynine Palms, CA 92277
(760) 361-4636

Open Wednesdays from 9:00 a.m. to 3:00 p.m.

This Day in Marine Corps History

Feb. 28, 1991

Active hostilities during Operation Desert Storm ended after only four days.

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			9		2		1
		3			7		4
2				6		5	

SUDOKU

Centerspeak

Which comic book character would you like to see made into a movie?

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



PVT. FERZAN T. MOHAMMED
TANKER, HEADQUARTERS AND SERVICE CO.,
1ST TANK BATTALION

"Captain America."



LANCE CPL. CHRISTOPHER W. DOLIN
COMBAT ENGINEER HEADQUARTERS AND SERVICE CO.,
2ND BATTALION, 23RD MARINE REGIMENT

"The Flash."



LANCE CPL. TUN N. YANG
MACHINE GUNNER, GOLF CO., 2ND
BATTALION, 23RD MARINE REGIMENT

"Green Lantern."

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Marines, soldiers gain solid footing at animal packers training

CPL. NICOLE A. LAVINE
COMBAT CORRESPONDENT

MARINE CORPS MOUNTAIN WARFARE TRAINING CENTER, Calif. -- Through a break in the dusty, shrub-covered canyon, a winding chain of mules, donkeys, soldiers and Marines descend a steep and rocky fault. They are on a training mission to recover a casualty and lost gear after a simulated enemy attack.

This was the scenario used by formal school instructors of the Marine Corps Mountain Warfare Training Center Bridgeport, Calif., during the Animal Packers Course at the Hawthorne Army Ammunition Depot in Hawthorne, Calif., Wednesday.

This school teaches units how to use mules, donkeys and horses to move military gear through elevated and dangerous terrain where they

cannot take vehicles, said Staff Sgt. Tyler McDaniel, staff noncommissioned officer-in-charge of the Animal Packers Course. Although using live animals instead of vehicles may sound more difficult, it is not. But it is a tradeoff, said the Baton Rouge, La., native.

"With vehicles, you have to worry about things like lubrication, ties and fuel. With the animals, you have to think about stuff like [horse] shoes and grooming," McDaniel said.

The pack animals are capable of carrying gear ranging from water and ammunition, to first aid kits and weapon systems.

"Here, the students learn how to handle, pack, catch and saddle the animals," said McDaniel. "It's not uncommon to have a majority of students who have never dealt with large pack animals before," he said.

Some first-time students like Lance Cpl. Steven M. Peterson, a rifleman with Company G, 2nd Battalion, 3rd Marine Regiment, out of Marine Corps Base Kaneohe Bay, Hawaii, said they looked forward to passing on their knowledge to their fellow Marines and sailors.

"We came here voluntarily," said Peterson, a Chicago native. "It's important for us to learn this stuff and bring it back with us so our units can know what we know. This training was a great opportunity."

Gunnery Sgt. Lance R. Stewart agreed. Stewart is the company gunnery sergeant of Military Police Company B, Headquarters and Service Battalion, 4th Marine Logistics Group out of Marine Corps Reserve Center North Versailles, Pa.

The training will help prepare his unit in the event they are called to serve in

Afghanistan, said Stewart, a Brush Valley, Penn., native. The training will also assist the reserve unit's upcoming annual training in Hawthorne called Javelin Thrust this June, he said.

"I've had experience working with large animals before, but this training is not what I expected," he added. "I wasn't prepared for the number of miles we covered during the course."

"These arduous conditions and high altitude make you realize how important it is to acclimatize yourself," Young said. "It takes extra effort to make sure the animal's needs are met before your own."

Other Marines from 3rd Battalion, 4th Marine Regiment, out of Marine Corps Air Ground Combat Center Twentynine Palms, Calif., and 6th Engineer Support Battalion, 4th Marine Logistics Group, Marine

Corps Reserve Detachment in Green Bay, Wis., also attended the formal course.

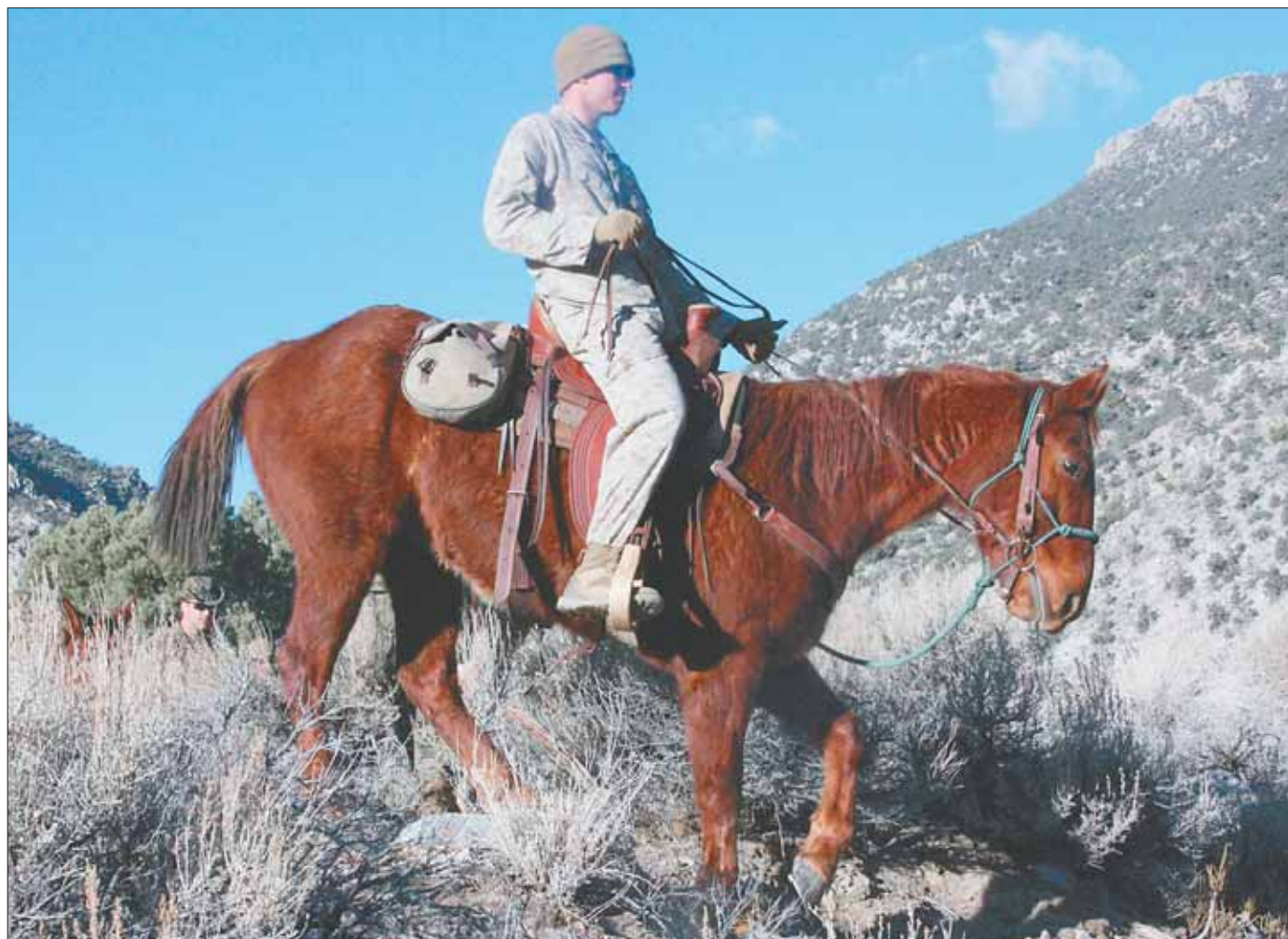
Although the reserve soldiers and Marines don't know

exactly when and where they will deploy, most agreed training is exactly what they'll need to be successful in any mountainous terrain.



CPL. NICOLE A. LAVINE

Pack mules, like the ones shown here, are used by instructors of the animal packers course to carry gear and supplies in terrain where motorized vehicles would be dangerous or difficult to operate. These animals were used to assist soldiers and Marines in an animal packers training exercise at the Hawthorne Army Ammunition Depot training grounds in Hawthorne, Calif., Wednesday.



CPL. NICOLE A. LAVINE

Sgt. John A. Freeshea, an animal packers course instructor at Marine Corps Mountain Warfare Training Center Bridgeport, Calif., leads the way on his horse Doc while animal packer course students follow with their mules during an exercise at the Hawthorne Army Ammunition Depot training grounds in Hawthorne, Calif., Wednesday.

Red Cross youth club make disaster kits, help base prepare for emergencies

LANCE CPL. MONICA C. ERICKSON
COMBAT CORRESPONDENT

Children participating in the Combat Center's American Red Cross youth club, Let-N-Tomorrow, are creating 1,000 disaster kits that will be distributed to Marines, sailors and their families throughout the base, and to retired military members living in the local community.

The club, which has so far made more than 400 kits, decided to create them to ensure the Marines and their families are prepared in case of a natural disaster ranging from earthquakes to flash-floods.

"We [the American Red Cross] found out that less than two percent of households here have an emergency kit in case something happens," said Kaprece James, the American Red Cross station chair for the base. "They think nothing will happen, but they don't realize how often we have little earthquakes around here."

The emergency kits contain whistles, tissues, toilet paper, water pouches, a flashlight and batteries, glow sticks, notebooks with pens, hand sanitizers, ponchos, an emergency blanket, hand warmers, and a 13-piece first-aid kit.

"Everyone participated to put these kits together," said 14-year-old Elaine Lewis, the president of Let-N-Tomorrow. "This is a nice way to help [Marines] out

when they're on a deployment. If an emergency happens they have the necessities they need."

There is also a brochure

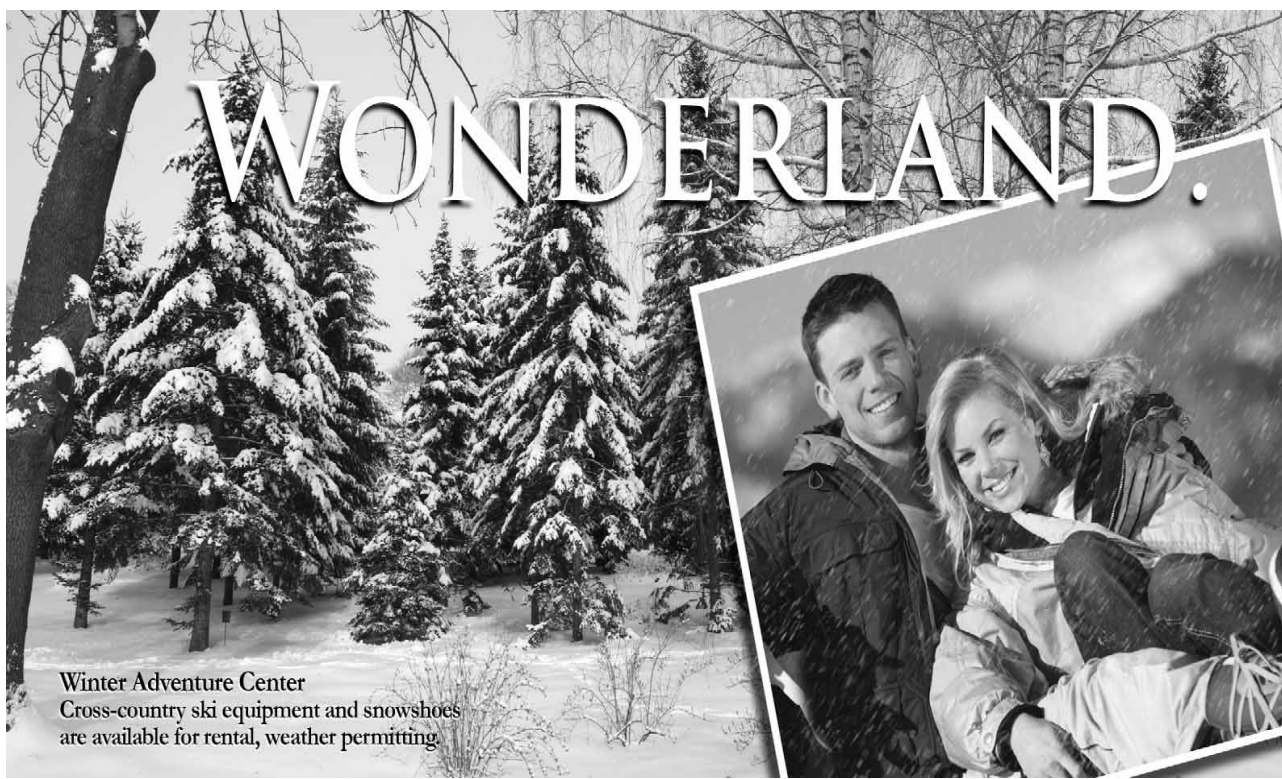
inside every kit that explains the importance of being prepared for an emergency and ties

See RED CROSS, A10



LANCE CPL. MONICA C. ERICKSON

Children, who participate in the American Red Cross club Let-N-Tomorrow, show one out of 1,000 emergency kits they were making Feb. 16 to be passed out to Marines, sailors and family members to help prepare them in case a natural disaster hit the area.



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Tankers prove they can take, throw punches

LANCE CPL. NICHOLAS M. DUNN
COMBAT CORRESPONDENT

"Let it be known that he who wears the Military Order of the Purple Heart has given of his blood in the defense of

his homeland and shall forever be revered by his fellow countrymen."

These words were spoken by Gen. George Washington on Aug. 7, 1782, when he created the Badge of Military Merit, an award

given to service members who were wounded in battle during the Revolutionary War.

Only three of the medals were presented during the Revolutionary War, and the award fell into disuse after the

war ended. It wasn't used again until 1932, when then-President Herbert Hoover reinstated the award for all service members wounded or killed after April 5, 1917.

The decoration is known as the Purple Heart Medal today. The Combat Center's 1st Tank Battalion carried on the tradition Wednesday when two Marines from the unit's Headquarters and Service Company were awarded Purple Hearts.

Cpl. Michael Divirgilio, an antitank missileman, and Lance Cpl. Christopher Scroggins, an assaultman, received the decoration after being wounded by an improvised explosive device Aug. 30. The two Marines were attached to Company A, 1st Tanks, when they were deployed to Iraq from April to November 2008.

"We were both in the lead vehicle on Route Uranium near Al Asad when we hit a pressure plate IED that knocked us both unconscious," said Scroggins.

Both Marines were reportedly treated at the scene. Divirgilio was able to remain with Co. A for the rest of the deployment, but Scroggins had to be sent back to the United States to recover from his wounds.

"Today, we're able to present the most noble of awards to two of our Marines," said Lt. Col. Tom Gordon, the battalion's commanding officer. "We all know we can throw a punch and these two Marines showed we can take a punch too."

In addition to the Purple Heart recipients, four



LANCE CPL. NICHOLAS M. DUNN

Lt. Col. Tom Gordon, the 1st Tank Battalion commanding officer, pins a Navy and Marine Corps Achievement Medal on Pfc. Joseph Lancaster, a tank driver from Company C, 1st Tanks, Wednesday behind the battalion's headquarters. Lancaster and his tank crew earned the battalion's "hot shot" award for their exceptional performance during the battalion's semi-annual gunnery exercise Jan. 12.

Marines from 3rd Platoon, Company C, were also awarded Navy and Marine Corps Achievement Medals for their performance during a battalion gunnery exercise Jan. 12 through Feb. 14 at Combat Center Range 500.

The tank crew, led by 2nd Lt. Denver Bane, received the battalion's "hot shot" award for scoring 926 out of 1,000 during the exercise.

"Gunnery is all about teamwork, and each crew member understanding his responsibilities and executing them," Bane said. "Each position is critical. One mistake and the entire engagement could be lost."

The other three tank crew members were:

Cpl. John Schut, gunner
Lance Cpl. Timothy Crawford, loader

Pfc. Joseph Lancaster, driver

"Our sign out front says 'steel on target,' and we train effectively to do that," Gordon said. "In a tank fight, you're either the hot shot or the first dead. I'm proud of the battalion's performance during the gunnery."

The six newly-decorated Marines were able to walk a little taller Wednesday after the awards ceremony. The rest of the battalion was quick to congratulate them and encourage them to never quit.

The Marines and sailors of 1st Tanks train constantly to prepare for deployments to Iraq and Afghanistan, either to fight on the front lines or provide heavy fire support to other forward deployed ground forces.



LANCE CPL. NICHOLAS M. DUNN

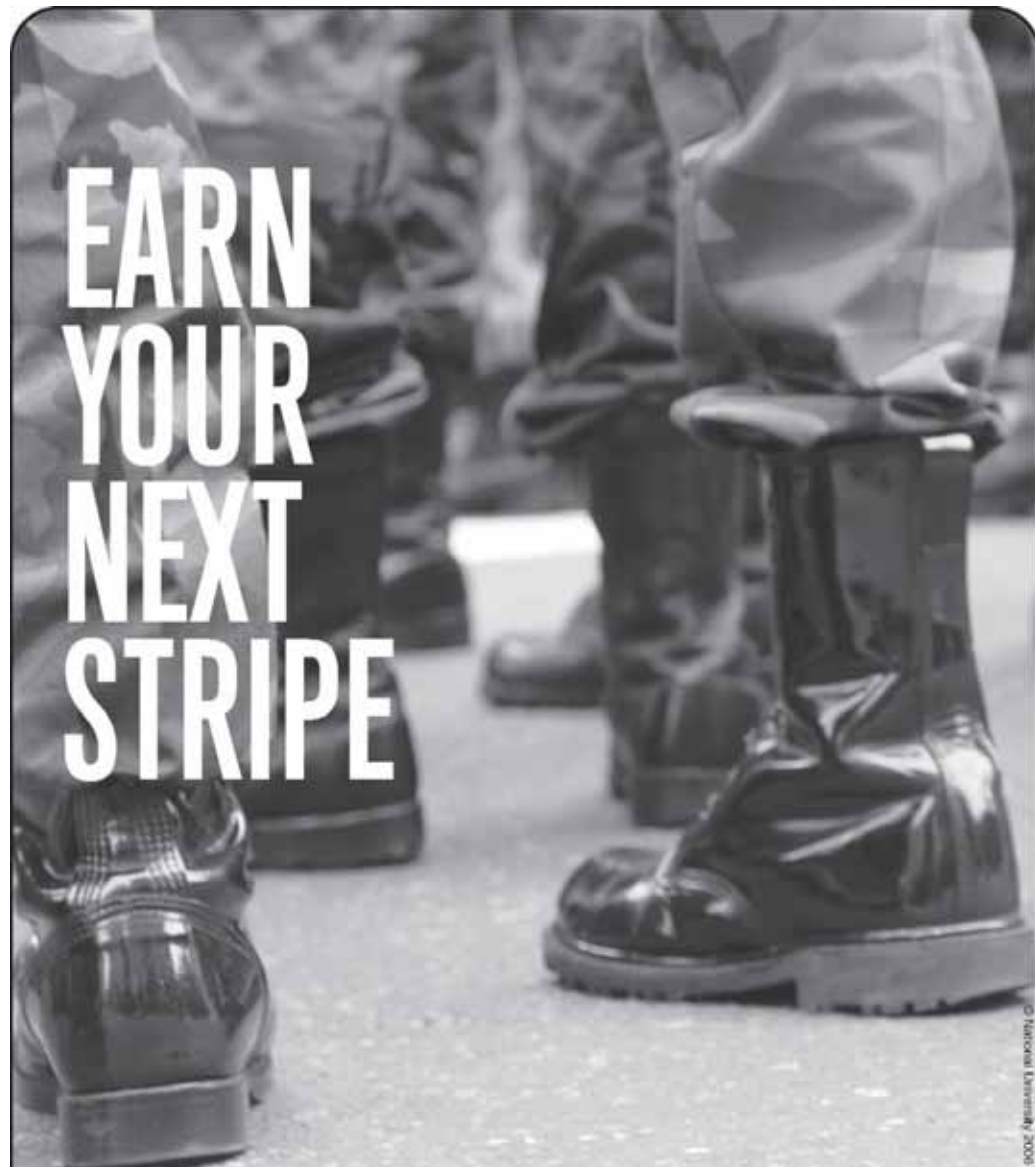
Cpl. Michael Divirgilio, an antitank missileman from Headquarters and Service Company, 1st Tanks, and Lance Cpl. Christopher Scroggins, an assaultman from H and S Co., stand tall and proudly display their newly-awarded Purple Heart Medals Wednesday after a ceremony behind the battalion's headquarters. Both Marines were wounded Aug. 30 while deployed with Company A to Iraq from April to November 2008.

3/7 advance party comes home



LANCE CPL. NICHOLAS M. DUNN

Lance Cpl. Micahel Oosterkamp, an assaultman from Company L, 3rd Battalion, 7th Marine Regiment, is greeted by his wife, Laura, and his 2-month-old daughter Natalie, who he is meeting for the first time, at the Combat Center's Victory Field Wednesday. Oosterkamp returned from Iraq with the 110 Marines and sailors of 3/7's advanced party.



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Not stranded in the middle of the desert

Local organizations aim to help car-less warriors

LANCE CPL. ZACHARY J. NOLA

COMBAT CORRESPONDENT

When Marines who lack privately owned vehicles check into the Combat Center, they instantly face some tough challenges because of the Combat Center's remote location.

In addition to hitching a ride to facilities on base, car-less warriors also face the daunting task of finding transportation into the local Twentynine Palms area, surrounding towns, and civilian transportation hubs.

While the Combat Center's remote location can not be helped, due to the Marine Corps' need for an expansive training area, the base has not turned a blind eye to this dilemma, and

has implemented some lifelines for its men and women in uniform.

Those devil dogs looking for a free ride on base, need look no further than the Combat Center's Single Marine Program. SMP offers a free shuttle service to active duty Marines.

"It will take Marines anywhere on base they need to go," said LaVonne Lessard, SMP's coordinator.

The shuttle, runs from 5 to 10 p.m. on weekdays and from 10 a.m. into the evening on weekends, and makes regular stops at the Combat Center's barracks complexes, the commissary, the Marine Corps Exchange and the Marine Corps Communications-Electronics School, said the San Diego native.

In addition to transporting Marines to the places they need to go, shuttle drivers also serve as information guides who point out places Marines can go to socialize outside of the barracks, Lessard said. They show Marines where Combat Center amenities such as gyms, mess halls, The Zone, Sunset Cinema and library are located.

Service members looking to visit Twentynine Palms and surrounding areas are encouraged to consider American Cab, a contracted taxi service on base, which offers metered rates. Other reputable taxi services include Top's Taxi, and Yellow Cab in Joshua Tree.

In addition to rides on and around the Combat Center, there are also services which offer rides to more distant locations, like the Morongo Basin Transit Authority.



Erica Stone, the founder of Soldier Organized Services, an organization offering free transportation to service members, poses with Marines before transporting them to the Combat Center in July 2008.

According to its Web site, the MBTA has a route that includes the Combat Center. It makes stops at the Marine Corps Exchange, MCCES and all major areas between the base and the Palm Springs International Airport.

Soldiers Organized Services, a volunteer organization that books reservations online, also offers free transportation to military men and women, according to the organization's founder Erica Stone.

Stone, a native of Joshua Tree, Calif., said the organization's volunteers, which range from individuals with no military service to veterans of Vietnam, Korea and even World War II, not only provide rides to service members but also to other important people in their lives.

"I think it's just as important to transport the Marines as well as their fiancés, wives, and families," said Stone.

Service members looking for rides to and from Palms Springs

International Airport, as well as local Greyhound and Amtrak stations, should visit the service's Web site, follow the instructions for making a reservation and call the night before the scheduled pick up to confirm their reservation.

The Combat Center's car-less warfighters have not been forgotten and shouldn't fear being stranded on base. There are many local organizations willing to help those in uniform. Many of are just a few key strokes or a phone call away.

Combat Center transportation services

Single Marine Program Shuttle:
830-4767

Morongo Basin Transit Authority:
760-366-2395
<http://www.mbtabus.com/>

American Cab:
760-368-1000

Yellow Cab:
760-336-9800

Top's Taxi:
760-361-6748

Soldiers Organized Services:
760-799-5488
<http://sosride.org/>

MCAGCC Tax Center offers free tax return prep

AMY TORYK

TAX MANAGER, COMBAT CENTER

The Tax Center aboard the Combat Center is offering free assistance to active duty military, retirees, reservists on active duty and their families in filing their income taxes as part of the Military Volunteer Income Tax Assistance program. The VITA program is available through April 15.

The Tax Center, located at Building 2080 on 13th Street, can provide clients with a list of items to bring in for tax preparation. For more information about their services or to schedule an appointment, call 830-4829.

Seniors 60 years or older, with low or middle income who are not eligible to have their taxes done on base can get free tax services by the

American Association of Retired Persons. AARP offers tax assistance at the Twentynine Palms Library on Adobe Road or St. Mary's Church, in Yucca Valley. For more information call AARP at 365-3355.

MilitaryOneSource.com offers free online services utilizing the H&R Block Basic TaxCut Program for simple returns. Those with more

complicated returns may incur charges if they upgrade to the Premium TaxCut program.

IRS.gov lists free online services for tax preparation. Visit <http://www.irs.gov> for links to free services. Tax filers can also call the IRS on their public contact line at 800-829-1040, with questions or for more information.

The IRS' Recovery Rebate Credit is a one-time

benefit for people who didn't receive the full economic stimulus payment last year and whose circumstance may have changed, making them eligible now for some or the entire unpaid portion. This includes individuals who did not receive an economic stimulus payment; those who received less than the maximum economic stimulus payment in 2008 because their qualifying or

gross income was either too high or too low; families who gained an additional qualifying child in 2008; individuals who could be claimed as a dependent on someone else's tax return in 2007, but who cannot be claimed as a dependent on another return in 2008; and individuals who did not have a valid social security number in 2007 but who did receive on in 2008.

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Operation Pacifier gives soon-to-be moms a helping hand

LANCE CPL. MONICA C. ERICKSON

COMBAT CORRESPONDENT

Expectant mothers got a chance to speak with experts and receive much needed

baby supplies at the first Operation Pacifier at the Combat Center's Community Center Feb. 19.

The event was hosted by Marine Corps Community Services, and was open to

pregnant military wives and Marines. The event provided information booths for the women to learn more about their pregnancy and how the Marine Corps can help. Participants played various games and won prizes such as clothes and toys.

"It was an event designed for expectant mothers whose husbands are not around as often as needed due to their work," said Kelley Coe, the special events program manager at MCCS. "It was a good experience for new mothers to be able to get out and mingle together, and hopefully make some lasting friendships that will help them throughout their pregnancy."

As the baby shower began, the women began filling their plates with food and checked out the information booths lined across the opposite wall.

The Exceptional Family Member Program and the Child Development Center had booths set up to pass out information about their programs. Speakers from the EFMP and the CDC also addressed the group and outlined what their programs could do to help the wives raise a child.

The Robert E. Bush Naval Hospital and the Marine Corps Exchange also had booths set up during the event. The hospital provided folders of information on staying healthy during pregnancy. The MEX provided information on baby items in their inventory, such as colic-preventing bottles and low-cost digital camouflage baby clothes.

The last booth was set up



LANCE CPL. MONICA C. ERICKSON

Chelsi Miller, an expectant mother who attended Operation Pacifier, speaks with Shannon Frazier, who helped sponsor the event and donated three diaper cakes to be given away as prizes, at the Community Center Feb. 19. This was the first Operation Pacifier, a baby shower hosted by MCCS, and was created to give information and baby supplies to military wives and female Marines.

by Shannon Frazier, who helped sponsor the event by donating three diaper cakes. These were diapers assembled to look like a three-tier cake that were given away as prizes.

Frazier also displayed hooded towels large enough to wrap an infant to keep warm after a bath. The soon-to-be mothers were able to purchase towels throughout the event as well.

"This event should be done every year," Frazier said. "These wives are here supporting their husbands." When their husbands deploy, some are stuck here by themselves without any family. First-time moms can have a difficult life, especially if they don't have family here to help

See PACIFIER, A9



LANCE CPL. MONICA C. ERICKSON

Anastasia McFaden, an expectant mother and wife of Staff Sgt. Stewart McFaden from Marine Corps Communications-Electronics School, makes a face after smelling macaroni and cheese-flavored baby food during the Guess the Gerber game. Soon-to-be mothers had to guess the baby food flavor during Operation Pacifier at the Community Center Feb. 19.



LANCE CPL. MONICA C. ERICKSON

Stephanie Whittenbaugh, an expectant mother who attended the event, tastes apples and ham-flavored baby food in a tie-breaker for Guess the Gerber.

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'A hell of a way to enter the war'

A history of Condor Field and the Army Air Force glider program

LANCE CPL. NICHOLAS M. DUNN
COMBAT CORRESPONDENT

Since its creation in 1952, the Combat Center has been known throughout the Marine Corps for its insufferable heat, desolate landscape, but most importantly, its vast stretches of training area.

However, a lesser known fact about the base is that it was formerly home to Army Air Forces glider pilots training for combat in World War II.

Throughout the 1920s and 1930s, America's glider program was slowly taking form, but not widely accepted as a viable means of troop transportation, said John P. Hale, a Natural Resources and Environmental Affairs Division cultural resources specialist and archaeologist. Gliders were also considered for use in aerial reconnaissance and as airborne gunnery targets.

By May 1940, the world had begun bracing itself for war. Germany had already invaded Poland and was rapidly conquering other Western European nations. However, before the German army could invade Belgium, they had to overrun Fort Eben-Emael, which was supposedly impregnable from ground assaults.

"In order to maintain as complete a surprise as possible, [Adolf] Hitler turned to Luftwaffe [German Air Force] Col. Kurt Student, who had been studying the Russian experiments with military gliders with great interest," Hale said. "Under Col. Student, the Luftwaffe had developed several troop gliders that were capable of carrying the necessary troops into combat.

"Towed by Junkers Ju-52 aircraft, the DFS-230 [glider] could carry nine fully loaded troops or 2,800 pounds," he added. "More importantly, it could easily land silently within the 1,000-by-300-meter grassy area on the roof of Fort Eben Emael."

On the morning of May 10, 1940, German gliderborne infantry landed atop the fort, taking the garrisoned troops by complete surprise. Within half an hour, the Germans had seized the fort and several strategic bridges along the Meuse River.

The Luftwaffe continued its use of gliders in several more major operations with great success, but it wasn't until February 1941 that the Army Air Forces finally began recognizing the legitimacy of the program, Hale said.

Finally, in July 1941, Gen. Henry H. Arnold, the Chief of the Army Air Force, ordered the immediate training of 150 glider pilots. This action began the legacy of Condor Field and the Twentynine Palms Air Academy.

The first glider pilot class began training Jan. 18, 1942 at Condor Field, in the vicinity of what is now the



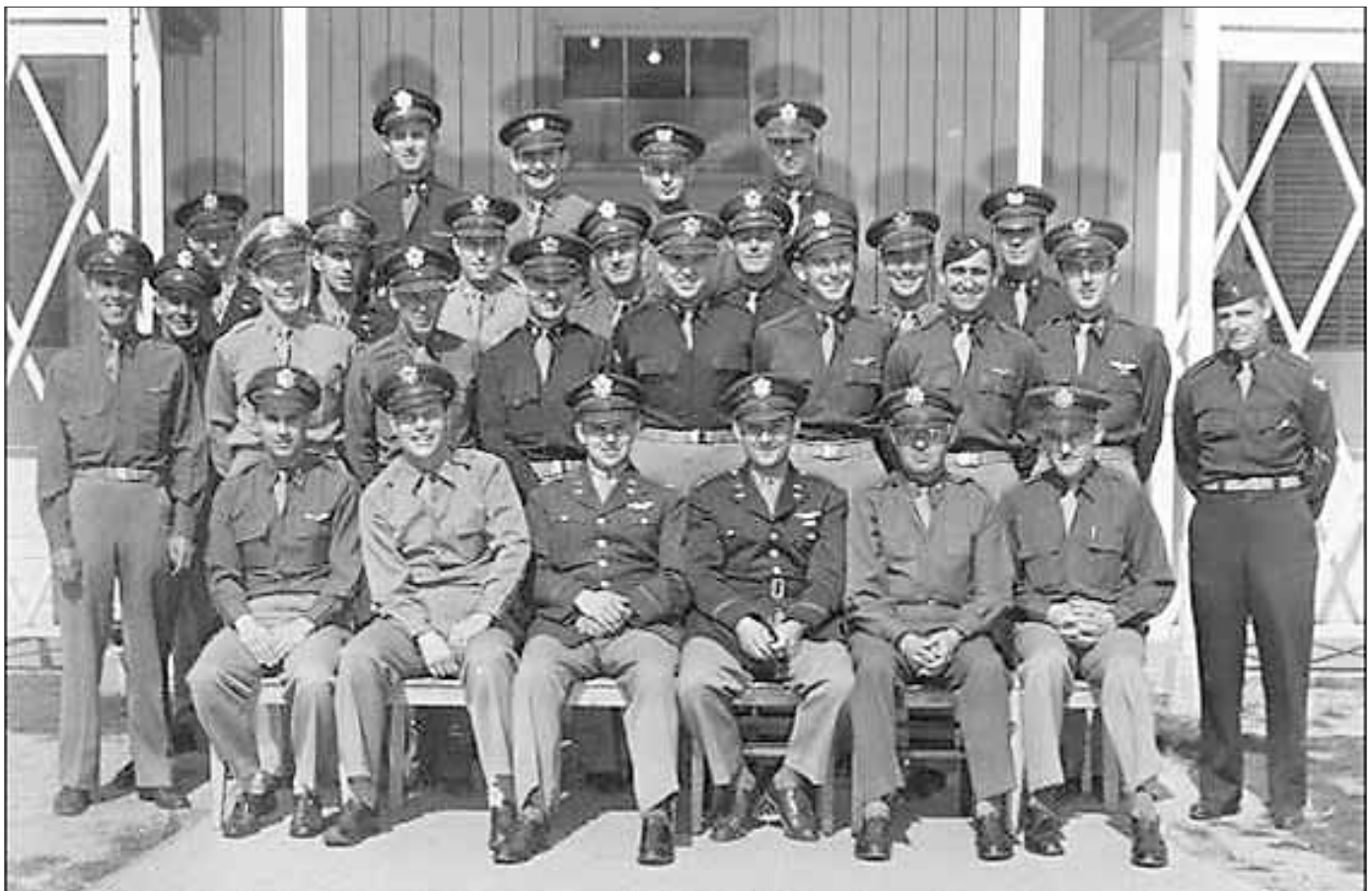
A CG-4A combat glider sitting on the tarmac that was once dubbed Condor Field. The airstrip was located in the vicinity of what is now the Combat Center's main gate. These gliders saw action in every theater of World War II.

Combat Center's main gate, Hale said. The Army's original goal was to train 150 officers to serve as glider pilots. Each student was required to complete at least 30 hours of flight time during the four-week course.

"Following the attack on Pearl Harbor, however, the plans for all aspects of military planning and logistics took on a whole new sense of urgency," he said. "Gen. Arnold accordingly ramped up the glider pilot program a total of three times until finally in June of 1942, the program called for 6,000 pilots to be trained by December 1942."

The glider program continued to evolve rapidly, Hale added. Throughout the early half of 1942, more equipment and personnel funneled

See HISTORY, A10



A group of Army Air Force glider pilots pose for a photo at the Twentynine Palms Air Academy. In July 1941, Gen. Henry H. Arnold, the Chief of the Army Air Forces, ordered the training for 150 glider pilots to serve in all theaters of World War II. By the end of the war, more than 6,000 glider pilots had been trained; 1,654 of them were trained at the Twentynine Palms Air Academy.



A TG-1A glider lands at what was once dubbed Condor Field. The gliders were soon replaced with more up-to-date models, and eventually, new aircraft.

CHRISTIAN WORSHIP

Sunday

Immaculate Heart of Mary Chapel Roman Catholic Services

8 a.m. Faith Formation / CCD
Sept. - May building 1551
8:45 a.m. Confessions+
9 a.m. Rosary
9:30 a.m. Catholic Mass*
9:30 a.m. Children's Liturgy of the Word
4:15 p.m. Confessions+
4 p.m. Choir Practice
4:30 p.m. Rosary
5 p.m. Catholic Mass

Christ Chapel
Lay-Led Independent Baptist Breakfast, 8 a.m. West Wing

Non-Denominational Christian Service
9 a.m. Worship*
9 a.m. Children's Church
10:15 a.m. Sunday School*
6 p.m. Youth Group

Lay-led Gospel Service
11:30 a.m. Worship Protestant Chapel

Assemblies of God Fellowship
9:30 a.m. Sunday School
10:30 a.m. Morning Service building 1707, room G

Legend
* Indicates Child Care Provided
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Weekday Events

Immaculate Heart of Mary
Mon-Fri 11:45 a.m. Catholic Mass (except holidays)

Monday

Immaculate Heart of Mary
Mon-Fri 11:45 a.m. Catholic Mass (except holidays)

Tuesday

Christ Chapel
9 a.m. Christian Women's Fellowship* Sept. to May
Evening service at 7 p.m. - Protestant Chapel west wing

Immaculate Heart of Mary
4-5:30 p.m. Children's RCIA
5-8 p.m. Catechist Meeting (Second Tuesday each month)
6-7:30 p.m. Baptism Class (First Tuesday each month)

Wednesday

Christ Chapel
6 p.m. Praise Band Rehearsal
6:30 p.m. Food/Fellowship
7 p.m. Non-Denomination Bible Study
7 p.m. Lay-led Gospel Bible Study

Immaculate Heart of Mary
9:30 a.m. Military Council of Catholic Women* Sept. to May
6 p.m. Youth Teen
7 p.m. Knights of Columbus (1st Wednesday each month)

Thursday

Immaculate Heart of Mary
6-7:30 p.m. RCIA Resumes Sept 11
C&E Barracks building 1666
11:30 a.m. Bible Study
Chaplain Moran 830-6187

Friday

Christ Chapel
5 p.m. Gospel Rehearsal

Immaculate Heart of Mary
12:15 p.m. 4:30 p.m. Exposition/Adoration Most Blessed Sacrament (First Friday each month)

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How to exercise safety while running

LANCE CPL. MONICA C. ERICKSON

COMBAT CORRESPONDENT

Marines must stay in top physical shape because their lives may depend on it during deployments. But how do these Marines stay safe while training their bodies to go to war?

Combat Center Order 1630.8D has been published, and explains the rules and regulations runners must follow to stay safe while exercising on base.

The order states that pedestrians, other than military formations, shall walk, run and jog on the left side of the roadway facing oncoming traffic. Pedestrians will run or jog with no more than two individuals next to each other, and always move off

the road when vehicles approach them.

The order continues to state that formation are unauthorized to run on First, Third, Fifth, Sixth, Eighth and Tenth Street from 5:30-8 a.m., 11 a.m. to 1 p.m., and 3:30 to 5:30 p.m., which are considered heavy traffic times.

"Over the last few months we have had an increase in vehicles aboard the base due to the increase in manpower," said Dave Horn, the deputy director of the Combat Center's Safety Division. "Because of this increase, Marines and sailors who are out running need to be even more aware of their surroundings."

Horn said the larger number of runners, the safer the group will be from getting hit by a motor vehicle.

"We see squads, platoons, companies and even battalions out running, and they are perfectly safe if they use glow belts and road guards," Horn said. "It is the smaller groups that are a problem and they are the ones we have to worry about."

When people run in smaller groups they have a higher tendency to cut across the street and not wear reflective belts, especially during the designated times they are required to wear one, Horn said.

"There has to be some sort of organization to their PT [physical training]," Horn said. "They need to stay in formation the best that they can and use caution when crossing the street. Wear reflective belts and [use] road guards regardless of how many people you are running with."

Horn said there was one sure way to get hit by a car, and that is by running from behind a parked car into a busy street.

"Nearly every day, I witness someone having to slam on their brakes to keep from hitting someone who ran out from behind a parked car," Horn said. "It is only a matter of time before someone gets hit and is killed. I say we take the proactive route and come up with a solution before this happens."

Besides motor vehicles, runners should also be aware of other dangers that can cause them injury. Exercising too much can also cause a multitude of problems for a constant runner.

Lt. Robert M. Nosek, a physical therapist at Robert E. Bush Naval Hospital

explained that if someone does not take a few minutes to stretch properly they can injure themselves, which can take months to recover.

Each muscle should be stretched for at least 30 seconds at minimum, Nosek said. When stretching, the muscle will first tighten and then begin to relax. If a runner doesn't stretch the muscle long enough, they will begin exercising on a tightened muscle, which can cause minor injuries.

The most common injuries are regular strains and sprains and the Patella Femoral Syndrome and Iliotibial Band Syndrome, which are common knee injuries, can be prevented by stretching and proper care while running.

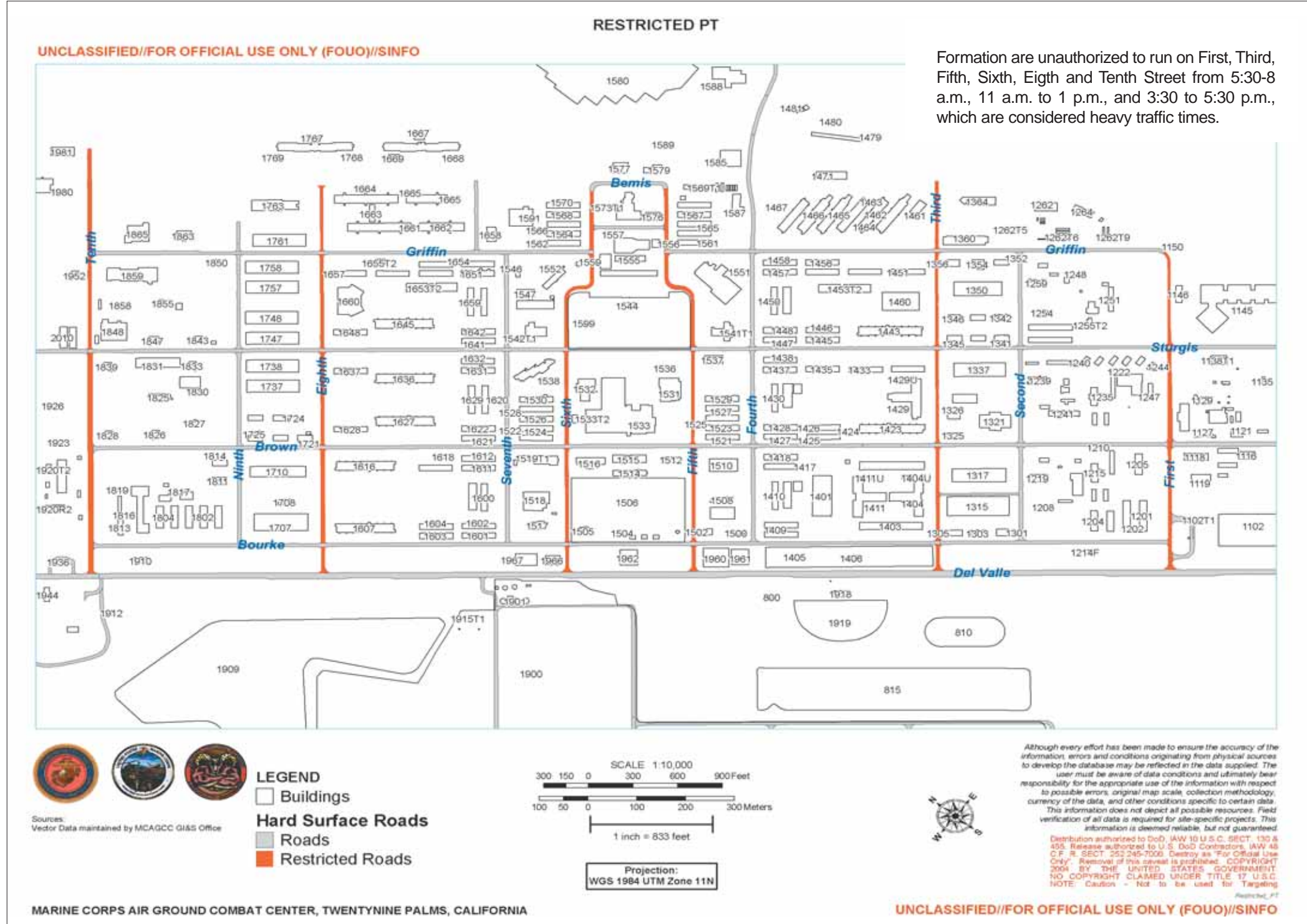
"There are so many vari-

ables out there," Nosek said. "You won't know what you have until you go to the doctor and get checked."

Nosek said when a runner begins to feel pain, they should stop what they are doing and rest the area that is in pain.

"Rest it, ice it and gradually come back," Nosek said. "Some pain is normal for athletic activity, but if it becomes chronic [lasting for 48 to 72 hours] they should see a doctor immediately."

For more information regarding the rules and regulations while running aboard the base, look up Combat Center Order 1630.8D, which is located on the base Web site, <http://www.29palms.usmc.mil>, under directorates, G-1 Manpower, Center Orders.



Formation are unauthorized to run on First, Third, Fifth, Sixth, Eighth and Tenth Street from 5:30-8 a.m., 11 a.m. to 1 p.m., and 3:30 to 5:30 p.m., which are considered heavy traffic times.

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RE-JOIN, from A1

up-to-date rifle qualifications and PFTs [Physical Fitness Test] can cause all kinds of stops when someone is trying to come back to the Marine Corps," he said.

The issue of dealing with prior service is too large in some areas to handle at the level of the normal recruiter.

"Local recruiters out here send all prior service people down to recruiting station San Diego to be processed," said Staff Sgt. John Bettenhausen, a recruiter in Yucca Valley, Calif., and a native of Greeley, Colo. "A lot of other recruiting stations just do their prior service right there, but we send our prior service down to San Diego."

According to Marine Administrative Message 253/06, Marines who have ended their active service and wish to transfer and work in a Selected Marine Corps Reserve unit are not required to deploy with that unit if they were deployed within 12 months of their End of Active Service date.

MARADMIN 253/06 states its purpose is to allow Marines who have deployed within 12 months of their EAS date to have time to find a job or go to school after they get out. SMCR units may be activated in support of the Global War on Terrorism, which may cause the Marine to be deployed again shortly after their EAS.

For more information on getting back into the Marine Corps, and to get paperwork together and properly prepare to re-enlist, contact White at 725-9669.

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VMU-1 is eye in the sky

LANCE CPL. ZACHARY J. NOLA

COMBAT CORRESPONDENT

Marine Unmanned Aerial Vehicle Squadron 1 refined their skills, educated some of their newer Marines while supporting multiple training exercises at the Combat Center's Expeditionary Airfield this week.

A primary objective of the exercises was to help the squadron fine tune their intelligence gathering, surveillance and reconnaissance tactics techniques and procedures, said Staff Sgt. Charles Cook, an unmanned aerial vehicle operator and instructor with VMU-1.

To achieve this goal the Marines of VMU-1 practiced operating their UAVs Tuesday in support of 2nd

Reconnaissance Battalion from Marine Corps Base Camp Lejeune, N.C.

While Tuesday's operation was geared toward experienced Marine, the exercises throughout the week were aimed at bringing some of the squadrons newer Marines up to speed with the unit's equipment and capabilities, said Cook.

"We've got a lot of information to pass to the new-joins," said the Oklahoma City native.

Sgt. David Baez, a UAV operator with VMU-1, said the unit's Marines learn the basics in their military occupation specialty school but it is exercises like the ones held this week that prepare them for deployments.

"We get to work with the

units and help them out," said Baez. "This helps us learn how to operate during combat."

Baez a native of Long Island, N.Y., said training exercises allow him to expand his knowledge of his occupation and make him feel good about his job because it lets him know how much of an asset he is.

In addition to educating new Marines, the exercises also prepared the Marines for upcoming deployments.

"We're training operators, mission commanders and maintainers to be ready to detach to theater to support units on the ground," said Capt. Rich Rybolt, an operations officer with VMU-1, who was also acting as the mission commander during Tuesday's exercise.



LANCE CPL. ZACHARY J. NOLA

Marines from Marine Unmanned Aerial Vehicle Squadron 1 prepare a UAV before supporting a training exercise by 2nd Reconnaissance Battalion from Marine Corps Base Camp Lejeune, N.C., at the Combat Center's Expeditionary Airfield Tuesday.

As the squadron's systems evolve and their close relationship with the Combat Center's Tactical Training Exercise Control Group's operations center

allows for joint training ventures between the VMU-1 and other units, more and more of those units become aware of how the warriors of VMU-1 can aid their mission, said Rybolt, a native of Clinton, Ill.

Such training exercises

are an essential tool for helping the squadron produce the highest quality intelligence, surveillance and reconnaissance for their fellow warfighters on the ground, keeping them safe and ensuring mission success, said Cook.



LANCE CPL. ZACHARY J. NOLA

An unmanned aerial vehicle from Marine Unmanned Aerial Vehicle Squadron 1 takes off from its launcher to support a training exercise by 2nd Reconnaissance Battalion from Marine Corps Base Camp Lejeune, N.C., at the Combat Center's Expeditionary Airfield Tuesday.

PACIFIER, from A6

support them.

When the baby shower moved into full swing, each table of expectant mothers began competing against each other in various games. In one game, mothers had to guess the number of baby decorations inside a giant baby bottle. In another, they had to list baby names A through Z. One of the most popular games was a baby food taste-testing contest.

Guess the Gerber became a big hit among the wives as they tried to figure out the taste of each baby food. The flavors, which ranged from macaroni and cheese to apples and ham, had different effects on all the women present.

"The baby-food tasting game was the funniest game I have ever seen," said Coe, a Brooks, Ga., native. "Their facial expressions when tasting some of the food were hilarious."

One woman from each table received a prize at the end of the games. They had a

choice between a bag of baby clothes and toys or an MCCS gift certificate.

Each mother-to-be also received their own camouflage diaper bag filled with various baby items like toys and teething rings.

"I wish they would hold this event semi-annually," said Chelsi Miller, an expectant mother who attended the event with friends. "It was a great opportunity for wives, especially if they just got here, to get out and meet new people who are going through the same things they are."

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TOUGH MINDED OPTIMISM

by Lou Gerhardt

Two weeks ago I wrote of how much I enjoy officiating at weddings here in the High Desert. Since then five of you have asked me whether or not I marry people who have been divorced. My strong and positive answer is yes.

In 1964 I wrote a widely circulated magazine article on that very subject. (If you contact me, I'll send it to you.)

As a tough minded optimist I have complete confidence in the possibility of individuals who have experienced extremely troubling personal difficulties in their past having beautiful and lasting relationships in their future.

I am aware that there are those who disagree with me. These people are almost always very legalistic in their interpretations of what is right and what is wrong. They offer quotes from the Bible and other documents to justify their opinion. However, I have always maintained that we should be ever mindful of these perceptive words from the Bible. "The written code kills, but the spirit gives life."

My dear friends, please know that I do not take this subject lightly. As I stated two weeks ago, every marriage is precious and should be maintained. However, sometimes failed marriages become a reality. It is then we must respond as tough minded optimists.

Here is a Biblical paraphrase that should apply to people entering into a new commitment:

Forgetting what lies behind, we are straining forward to what lies ahead as we face life together.

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Trader Ad Forms are available at the Public Affairs Office and may be filled out during normal working hours at Bldg. 1417.

Ads may also be submitted through e-mail, but will only be accepted from those with an @usmc.mil address. If you are active duty, retired military or a family member and do not have an @usmc.mil address you can go to the PAO page of the base

Web site at: <http://www.29palms.usmc.mil/dirs/pao/> and complete a request to publish an ad.

The limitations for ads are: 15-word limit, limit of two ads per household and the Trader may be used only for

noncommercial classified ads containing items of personal property offered by and for individuals authorized to use this service. Such ads must represent incidental exchanged not of sustained business nature.

Ads for housing rentals will not be considered for the Combat Center Trader.

To have a "House For Sale" ad run in the Observation Post, applicants must provide Permanent Change of Station orders and have the ad

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Ads are run on a first-come, first-serve, space available basis. If you have questions please call 830-3762.

SNOW, from A1

maintain inter-unit and tactical air operation center communication, fill in "radar gaps" with foot patrols and defend convoys, he said.

"Our mission is to provide close-in air defense in support of the MAGTF (Marine Air-Ground Task Force)," Robertson said. "We have to memorize a list of about 90 types of aircrafts. That includes all U.S., current ally forces and enemy aircrafts."

Muntzer said he believes since the battery's ground base air defense and air field security training normally takes place at Camp Pendleton or Marine Corps Air Station Yuma, Ariz., the change of terrain will help his Marines be better prepared for overseas operations.

"This environment is best for the small unit training," said Muntzer, a Philadelphia, Pa., native. "It strengthens esprit de corps and unit cohesion."

He said he believes the cold weather environment at MWTC forces Marines to pay closer attention to details, such as the dangers of dehydration in high-altitude, cold weather terrain.

"It was negative 12 when we did our ops [operations] yesterday," Muntzer said. "You have to work as a team in hostile environments like this. Every Marine, from a captain down to a private, has to take initiative to maintain mission readiness and success."

Lance Cpl. Daniel T. Mesner, a LAAD gunner with the 11th Marine Expeditionary Unit out of Camp Pendleton, said he appreciated what the change in scenery did for him and his fellow Marines.

"I like this," said the Slayton, Mn., native about the training. "It's defiantly a new experience. I think this will give us an edge on cold environments since we have already done the desert scene."

Cpl. Andrew J. Mamone, a fellow gunner with the 11th MEU, said he agreed about the advantage afforded by the mountains and snow.

"This will give us a wider area we can operate in," said Mamone, a Oviedo, Fla., native. "We've learned how to prep four-man tents and other basic cold-weather survival tips."

Although the battery does not have plans to deploy in the near future, their voluntary training conducted at MWTC may serve as a reminder to Marines everywhere that the Corps is above all else, a force in readiness.



CPL. NICOLE A. LAVINE
Lance Cpl. David M. Ogle, a low altitude air defense gunner with Battery B, 3rd Low Altitude Air Defense Battalion out of Marine Corps Base Camp Pendleton, Calif., is followed by fellow gunner Sgt. Nathan Zatezalo, as the team climbs a hill to engage notional aviation targets during training at landing zone Falcon at Marine Corps Mountain Warfare Training Center Bridgeport, Calif., Feb. 12.

RED CROSS, from A3

things family members should add to the kit if a loved one requires extra care.

"These kits are only designed for one person," said James, a Conway, S.C., native. "There is room in every kit for a family to add extra supplies."

By creating the kits, the American Red Cross youth volunteers have made a difference on the base, said James, the founder of Let-N-Tomorrow.

"They are giving back to the community and this is their opportunity to educate the base about why having a plan is important," James said. "They are stepping up into that leadership role and have become role models for the other youth on the base. They are showing others that children can make a difference in the life of a Marine."

The American Red Cross youth club focuses on youth leadership skills, professionalism and life skills to help the children prepare for the future. The club is also run by the youth volunteers, with little influence and leadership from the adults who work at the American Red Cross.

"Even though we are young we still want to get out and make a difference," Lewis said. "And that is what we do."

The children participating with Let-N-Tomorrow are in charge of setting up meetings and planning fundraisers. They meet every other Saturday at the American Red Cross office located at the Village Center.

For more information regarding the emergency kits or Let-N-Tomorrow, contact the American Red Cross at 830-6685.

HISTORY, from A7

through the area.

On April 14, 1942, the school was also opened to enlisted soldiers in order to meet the increasing demand for glider pilots, he said. The enlisted volunteers were guaranteed the flight training, plus a meritorious promotion to staff sergeant upon completion of the course.

The school also began to incorporate combat training, since pilots were expected to defend their gliders once they landed and make their way back to friendly lines quickly so they could fly again, Hale said.

Allied glider pilots first saw action during the invasion of Sicily in June 1943. Although the glider operation was botched due to high winds and inexperienced tow plane pilots, Sicily was eventually captured by Allied forces.

Glider pilots participated in every theater of the war, notably during the D-Day invasion on June 6, 1944, and during Operation Market Garden several months later. The final glider mission took place in the Philippines on June 23, 1945 during Operation Gypsy, and airborne assault on an airstrip.

"At the close of the war, the glider was already becoming phased out," Hale said. "Glanders were never used again in combat after Operation Gypsy, and the last Army training exercise utilizing gliders was conducted at Fort Bragg [N.C.] in 1949.

"What finally and certainly sealed the fate of the military glider, however, was the development of the helicopter," he added. "Vertical envelopment took on a whole new meaning with the speed, versatility and cost-effectiveness of the helicopter over the combat glider."

By the end of World War II, the U.S. Army Air Forces had trained over 6,000 glider pilots, and procured 14,612 gliders, he said. At Condor Field, between January 1942 and March 1943, the school trained 1,654 students in 27 classes.

According to the Marine Corps History Division at Marine Corps Base Quantico, Va., the base became inactive for seven years after the Army dismantled its glider program, until the Marine Corps needed a new place to train tank and artillery crews.

Originally dubbed Marine Corps Training Center Twentynine Palms, the Combat Center officially became a Marine Corps installation Aug. 20, 1952 when Marine Corps Base Camp Pendleton, Calif., issued Post Order 343 and transferred 120 Marines to support the growth of the Corps' newest post.

The newly-formed training center grew rapidly, and in just five years, was designated as a full-fledged Marine Corps base. Throughout time, and several name

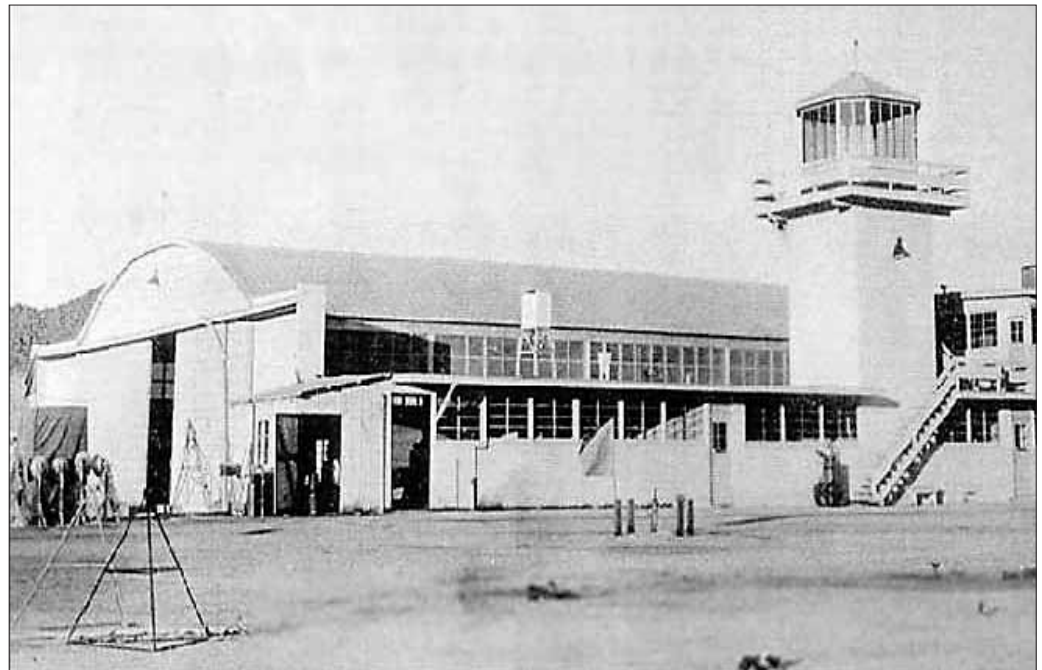
changes, training aboard the base grew to accommodate Marine Air-Ground Task Force-sized units deploying overseas.

The base, now known as the Marine Corps Air Ground Combat Center, is currently the home of Mojave Viper, a 30-day pre-deployment training package specifically geared toward urban operations similar to those conducted in Iraq and Afghanistan.

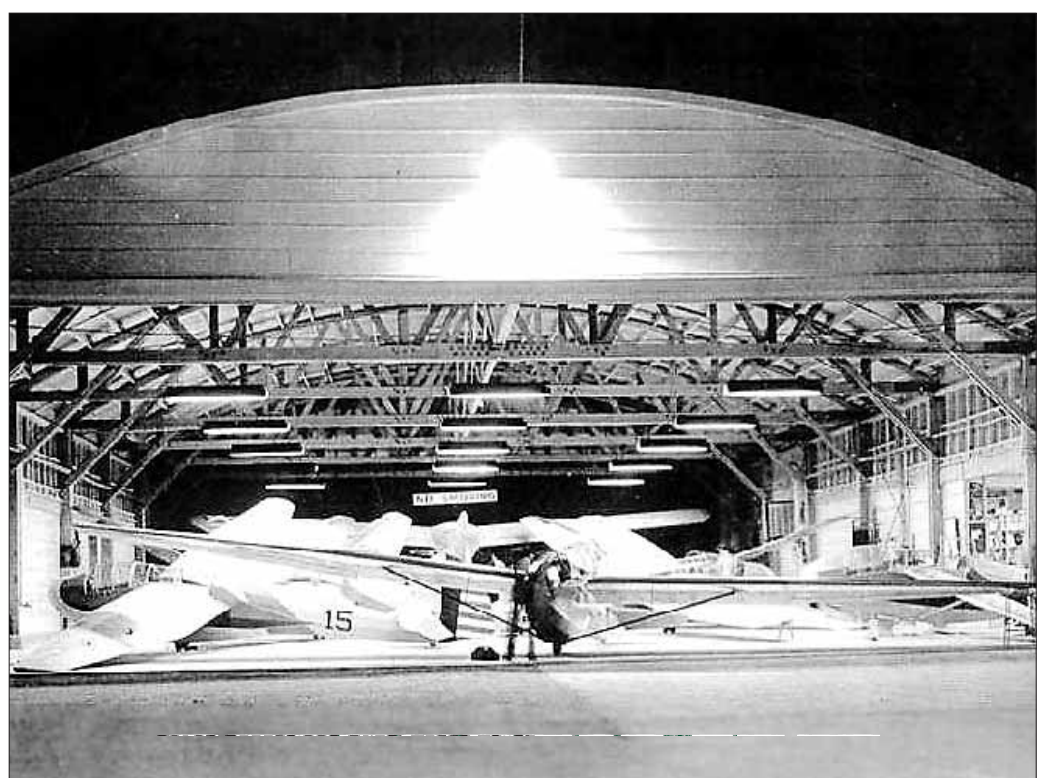
In order to increase the size and effectiveness of Mojave Viper, the goal is to incorporate all elements of a Marine Air-Ground Task Force in the training by constructing more ranges.

"This is really the only place where the Marine Corps can train a full MAGTF in a live fire training venue," said Maj. Andy Watson, the TTECG Maneuver Section officer in charge. "Ultimately, we want to go back to being able to train a MAGTF. With the increase in ranges, we'll be able to exercise two full battalions at the same time. All elements of the MAGTF will have the opportunity to train simultaneously."

Since Mojave Viper's creation in 2005, between 12,000 and 20,000 Marines have gone through the training each year. Marines will continue to train at the Combat Center, even as the scope of the Long War shifts toward counter-insurgency operations in Afghanistan.



COURTESY PHOTO
A snapshot of the original glider hangar and air traffic control tower. Air traffic controllers in the tower had the ability to oversee runway operations and communicate with the glider pilots and tow-plane pilots.



COURTESY PHOTO
Glanders parked in a hangar at the Twentynine Palms Air Academy overnight. Each glider pilot was required to perform a minimum of 30 flight hours in the gliders during the four-week training course. The classes later evolved to include combat training, since pilots were expected to secure their gliders once they landed and return to friendly lines as soon as possible to participate in the assault.

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B1

Varsity basketball team ends season with hard-fought win

60-57 victory avenges last month's loss to L.A. AFB

LANCE CPL. ZACHARY J. NOLA
COMBAT CORRESPONDENT

In an awesome display of hard work, persistence and team cohesion, the Combat Center's men's varsity basketball team wrapped up their regular season of league play with a well-earned 60-57 victory over Los Angeles Air Force Base Saturday at the Combat Center's East Gym.

Before the game, the team's coach, Michael B. Gray, said the team started off the season well, but had suffered some losses recently because permanent changes of station and deployments had taken away some of the team's starters.

These unfortunate factors are all part of competing in a military league Gray said. However, he said he was still very confident about his team's chances in next weekend's playoffs at Marine Corps Base Camp Pendleton, Calif.

"If we don't lose any ball players, I think we'll do pretty well," said the St. Louis native. "I'm confident nobody wants to play us."

Jerome McCray, a player on the varsity team, said the regular season was a growing process for the young team, and he took their regular-season losses in stride.

"We have taken a couple of losses but they were needed to humble us and to teach us to play as a team instead of individuals," McCray said.

Immediately after

See VARSITY, B4



LANCE CPL. ZACHARY J. NOLA

Reggie Lomax, a member of the Combat Center's varsity basketball team, battles members of the Los Angeles Air Force Base varsity team for a rebound during the team's 60-57 victory over L.A., in their last regular season game Feb. 21 at the Combat Center's East Gym.



LANCE CPL. NICOLAS M. DUNN

Boy scout Taylor Hale, 16, and senior patrol leader Cody Hughes, 13, prepare chili for the rest of Troop 78 during a cold weather camping trip near Big Bear City, Calif., Feb. 20 through Sunday. During the excursion, the attending Scouts learned several techniques for surviving in cold weather, including cooking proper meals, building shelter and keeping warm to avoid hypothermia.

Base Boy Scout troop braves Big Bear elements

LANCE CPL. NICHOLAS M. DUNN

COMBAT CORRESPONDENT

Since the creation of the Boy Scouts of America in 1910, millions of young Americans have lived up to the Boy Scouts' motto, 'Be prepared,' by learning a wide variety of life skills to keep themselves and others alive in any situation.

Five members of the Combat Center's Boy Scout Troop 78, accompanied by Clint Blaul, the Troop 78 Scoutmaster, and Chris Byers, a Troop 78 assistant Scoutmaster, lived up to the motto over the weekend during a cold weather camping trip to the San Bernardino National Forest near Big Bear City, Calif.

The trip began the afternoon of Feb. 20 when the group departed the Combat Center from the Scout Hut, next to the base Thrift Shop on Del Valle Road, for the Holcomb Valley campground. The intent of the trip was to teach the attending Scouts a few cold-weather survival techniques.

"Once a month, we try to do some sort of activity so the Scouts can practice what they've already learned," Byers said. "We also try to teach them something new during these events."

Darkness fell as the two-vehicle convoy made its way slowly into the mountains. Once they left the main road for the campground – a four-mile journey – the terrain became much more arduous.

Several feet of snow had accumulated on much of the trail and had begun turning to ice. The troop's vehicles slowly trudged their way up the hill and were caught in slushy tracks several times.

After approximately two miles, the vehicles could climb no higher. Although they were only halfway up the trail to the Holcomb Valley campground, the Scouts were

See SCOUTS, B2

Joshua Tree National Park beckons to bloom

CPL. MARGARET HUGHES

COMBAT CORRESPONDENT

The natural beauty of wildflowers blooming and

encompassing the vast majority of the ground in the spring is a rare sight to see in the desert.

Many people from all over the world travel to

Joshua Tree National Park in Southern California to see the wide variety of wildflowers bloom annually.

According to the National Park Service Web site, the timing of spring wildflower blooms may vary from one year to the next. Fall and winter precipitation, and spring temperatures are key factors affecting the spring blooming period.

"With the recent snow, we expect the blooming is going to be huge this year," said Joshua Pelham, a park ranger interpreter at Joshua Tree National Park. With more than six



REBECCA UNGER

Desert Chicory



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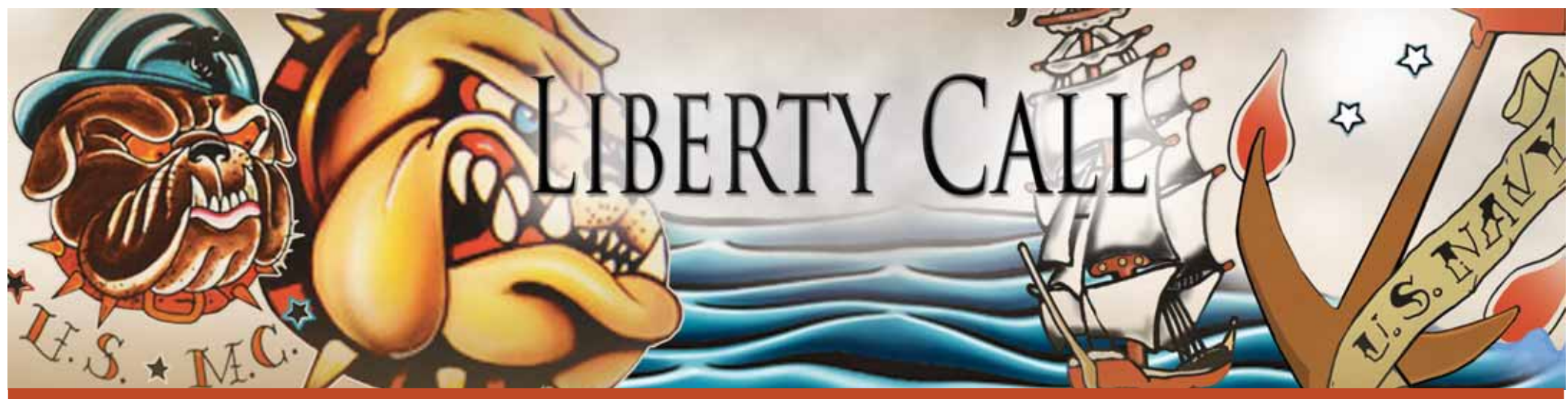
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Yucca in bloom

See FLOWERS, B4



FRI. 2/27 Tommy Tune and the Manhattan Rhythm Kings Time: 8 p.m. Where: McCallum Theatre 73000 Fred Waring Dr. Palm Desert For more info call 340-ARTS or visit http://www.mccallumtheatre.com .	FRI. 2/27 & SAT. 2/28 Improv Comedy Club Time: 8 and 10 p.m. Where: Fantasy Springs Resort Casino 84-245 Indio Springs Pkwy. Indio. For more info call (800) 827-2946 or visit http://www.fantasyspringsresort.com	SAT. 2/28 Explore 29 Palms Tours Time: 11 a.m. Where: 29 Palms Chamber of Commerce 73660 Civic Center Dr. Twentynine Palms For more info call 367-3445 or visit http://www.29chamber.com	SAT. 2/28 Wildflower Celebration 2009 Time: 9 a.m. - 3 p.m. Where: Santa Rosa & San Jacinto National Monument Visitor Center 51-500 Hwy. 74 (four miles south off Hwy. 111), Palm Desert For more info call 862-9984	SAT. 2/28 Wildflower Photography Workshops Time: All day event Where: Santa Rosa & San Jacinto National Monument Visitor Center 51-500 Hwy. 74 (four miles south off Hwy.111), Palm Desert For more info call 862-9984
SAT. 2/28 Joshua Tree National Park Volunteer Weed Pulls Time: 8 a.m. Where: Oasis Visitor Center Joshua Tree National Park 74485 National Park Dr. Twentynine Palms. For more info call 367-5579 or visit http://www.mbconservation.org/mustard.html	SAT. 2/28 Premiere: Watchmen Time: 9 p.m. Where: The Combat Center Sunset Cinema "R" rated. Contains graphic violence, pervasive language and disturbing images.	WED. 3/4 First Wednesday History Program: Willie Boy Time: 5:30 p.m. Where: Hi-Desert Nature Museum 57090 29 Palms Hwy. Yucca Valley. For more info call 369-7212 or visit http://www.hidesertnaturemuseum.org	THURS. 3/5 Songwriting Poetry & Rhythm Club Time: 7 p.m. Where: Water Canyon Coffee Co. 55844 29 Palms Hwy. Yucca Valley For more info call 365-7771 or visit http://www.myspace.com/watercanyon	FRI. 3/27 The Moody Blues Time: 9 p.m. Where: Agua Caliente Casino 32-250 Bob Hope Drive Rancho Mirage For more info call (888) 999-1995 or visit http://www.hotwatercasino.com/theshow



LANCE CPL. BRYAN G. CARFREY

Army Capt. Isaac Rademacher answers a question while his brother Jake Rademacher and actor Gary Sinise look on after the premiere of 'Brothers at War' Feb. 20 at the National Press Club. Jake made the documentary while he was embedded with four different combat units in Iraq.

Documentary receives standing ovation

LANCE CPL. BRYAN G. CARFREY
HEADQUARTERS MARINE CORPS

WASHINGTON — Filmmaker Jake Rademacher has two brothers in the Army, and both have deployed multiple times to Iraq and once to Afghanistan. This left Jake feeling out of the loop, so he decided to do something to close the growing gap between himself and his brothers. He founded Metanoia Films, raised a few million dollars, then embedded with four different combat units in Iraq.

"I began to feel a distance for the first time between myself and my two brothers," said Rademacher, a native of Decatur, Ill. "I want to know what's going on in Iraq because I have two brothers serving there. These guys are putting their lives on the line. Why are they doing that? I need to know."

After six years and shooting more than 320 hours of footage, Jake's documentary, "Brothers at War," made its premiere at the National Press Club in the nation's capital Feb.20

Co-executive producer and actor Gary Sinise was on hand for the event.

"I'm here to support a film I very, very much believe in," said Gary Sinise, who recently received the Presidential Citizens Medal for his work with the military.

Rademacher explained the goal of the documentary is to show the American people what is going on in Iraq.

"We wanted to bring America right to the frontlines of the war," said Rademacher.

Rademacher also said the film doesn't just focus on the deployed service members but

See FILM, B4

SCOUTS, from B1

forced to set up their camp on the road.

The next morning, the Scouts arose early and cooked a hearty breakfast before making another attempt at reaching the Holcomb Valley camp-

ground. The second attempt proved just as challenging; the vehicles couldn't advance up the hill.

Throughout the day, with brief instruction from Blaul, several of the Scouts practiced digging snow caves, which can provide shelter from inclement weather.

"Ideally, you want to dig your snow caves on a flat surface, but a hill works just as well," he said. "The goal is to dig down first, then dig back up and scoop out your cavern."

The ultimate goal of the snow cave is to have room for yourself and your gear, and to dig deep enough to keep out wind and weather, Blaul said.

During the day, two separate groups of off-road

enthusiasts attempted to bypass the camp and go further up the hill in their jeeps and sport utility vehicles, but even those equipped with snow chains and all-terrain tires failed. The trail was just too brutal.

As darkness approached, the Scouts began preparing their dinner. Using several Dutch ovens and a camping stove, they were able to cook a feast of chili, pepperoni pizza, beef stew and biscuits.

Once the sun had set, the Scouts took the opportunity to dry their socks before heading to their tents to sleep.

Sunday morning, the Scouts woke up and prepared another meal. After breakfast, they began taking down their tents and packing up their gear to leave.

As soon as all the gear was packed and the vehicles were dug out of the snow, the Scouts began their journey back to the Combat Center. Although the trip suffered a few hitches, the troop still acquired a wealth of new knowledge on how to survive in a cold, snowy environment.

"I think the biggest thing they learned was how to camp in a different environment," Byers said. "It's not always going to be fair weather camping."

"The Boy Scout motto is 'Be prepared,' and I think that's exactly what they learned," he added. "You have to be prepared for that type of environment."

Austin Hughes, an 11-year-old Boy Scout,

summed up the trip with a few simple words.


Snow is fun, except when you get stuck in it, he said.

However, the Boy Scouts don't just go on camping trips. They also learn life skills that can be applied in many situations, and build a strong moral foundation through education, community service and self-reliance.

Tonight, Troop 78 will present Joseph Kappus with the Medal of Merit, one of the association's highest honors. Kappus earned the medal for saving his mother's life during a medical emergency, using first aid training he received in the Scouts.

The Scouts will also journey to Lake Perris, in between Moreno Valley and Perris, Calif., to work on an environmental service project next month.

Boy Scout Troop 78 is always looking for new members and volunteers. To learn about how to become a Boy Scout or Scoutmaster, contact Blaul at 660-3091, or e-mail him at troop78palms@yahoo.com.



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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 WallMart	MCAGCC			
12:00	12:10	12:15	12:50	1:35			
*6:00	*6:10	*6:15	*6:50	*7:35			

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March 4.....	Milt Rasmussen Band
March 11.....	Touch of Class
March 18.....	Joe Nutter & His Sophisticated Swing
March 25.....	Milt Rasmussen Band

Admission Prices: CD Night - \$5/Person
Spring 2009 - \$8/Person

Combat Center sports standings



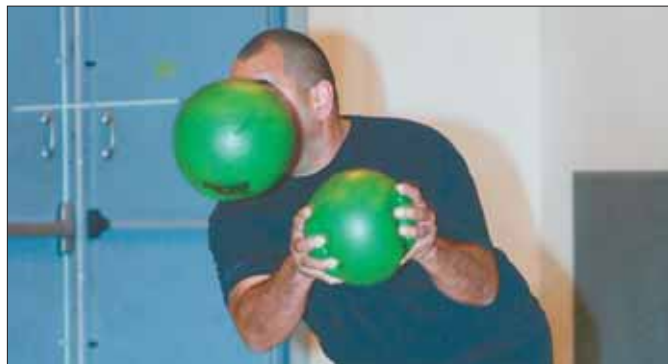
LANCE CPL. ZACHARY J. NOLA

Christopher Spurgeon, a member of intramural dodgeball team Justice League, reacts to being hit by a shot during his teams 3-0 defeat at the hands of MCCES A Co. during regular season league action at the Combat Center's East Gym Tuesday.



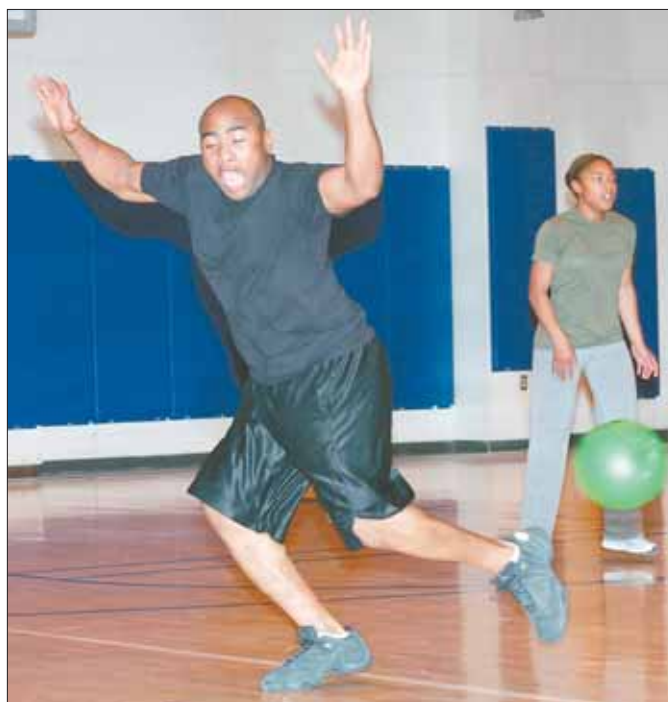
LANCE CPL. ZACHARY J. NOLA

Alex Ramirez, a member of intramural dodgeball team MTU, leap frogs a shot during intramural dodgeball league action.



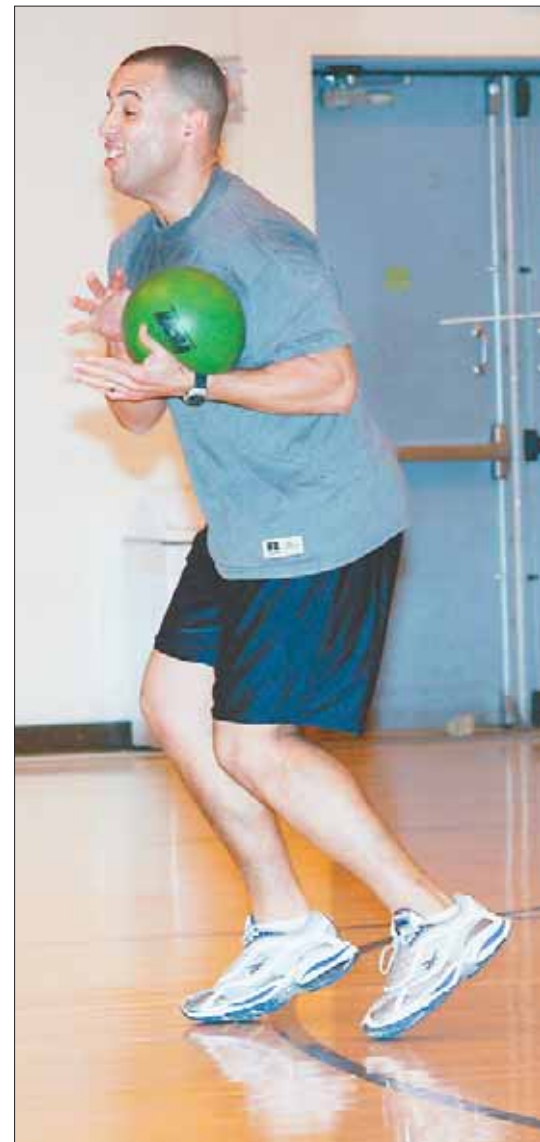
LANCE CPL. ZACHARY J. NOLA

A shot flies by the head of Steven Santana, a member with Tanks #4 dodgeball team, during his team's 3-1 loss to the Fainting Goats during intramural dodgeball action.



LANCE CPL. ZACHARY J. NOLA

Maurice Goode of Justice League dodges a shot during his teams 3-0 defeat at the hands of MCCES A Co.



LANCE CPL. ZACHARY J. NOLA

Edwin Nunez, a member of the Tanks #4 dodgeball team, manages to hold onto a hard thrown shot during his team's 3-1 loss to the Fainting Goats.

Intramural Dodgeball league standings as of Wednesday

Team	Wins	Losses
Fainting Goats	7	0
MCCES A Co.	6	1
Jive Turkeys	5	2
Sapper	4	2
MTU	4	3
4 Horsemen (boot's)	4	3
Tanks #4	3	4
Dental	1	6
Hospital	1	6
Justice League	0	7

Tuesday's scores

MCCES A Co.	3	Justice League	0
Fainting Goats	3	Tanks #4	1
4 Horsemen	3	Dental	0
MTU	3	Sapper	0
Jive Turkeys	3	Hospital	0



LANCE CPL. MONICA C. ERICKSON

Colt Dalsing, a player for the CLB-7 team, passes the ball to a teammate during a basketball game at the East Gym Feb. 25.



LANCE CPL. MONICA C. ERICKSON

Jesus Estevis, with 1/7, leaps through the air, passing players from the CLB-7 team during a shot.



LANCE CPL. MONICA C. ERICKSON

Carlos Beltran, a player for Robert E. Bush Naval Hospital, flies through the air as he pushes past MCCES' defense to make his shot.

2009 Intramural Basketball Standings as of Thursday

Team	Wins	Losses	%
NHTP	6	0	1000
MCCES All-Stars	5	0	1000
Ole School Plus	3	1	750
1/7	4	2	667
1st Tanks	4	2	667
IPAC	3	3	500
MCCES A	2	3	400
MWSS-374 (B)	2	3	400
MWSS-374 (A)	2	4	333
MCCES Party	1	4	200
CLB-7	0	5	0
3rd CEB	0	5	0



LANCE CPL. MONICA C. ERICKSON

Frankie Uraje, the head coach and a player for 1/7, gets pushed out of bounds by players from the CLB-7, while trying to make a basket during the Commanding General's Intramural Basketball League game at the East Gym Feb. 25.

FILM, from B2

also takes a look at the families left behind.

"The film is an honest portrayal of what families go through," said David Scantling, co-executive producer of the documentary. "People need to see this film."

Sinise said the film is a positive reflection on our military families and the dedication our troops exhibit.

"When they asked me if I would get involved with the film I was humbled, honored and it was a privilege for me just to support the movie," Sinise said.

Gunnery Sgt. Edward Allier, who was a staff sergeant when Jake shot

the documentary, was an Iraqi infantry company advisor on his third deployment to Iraq. Jake was embedded with Allier and some Iraqi soldiers when a firefight in the Sunni Triangle broke out.

"Initially, I was uneasy with the cameras being there," said Allier. "You're never certain of a journalist's agenda. But over time Jake won my trust. It became clear that he was indeed there to simply document the stresses of being away from those we love."

As the documentary came to a close, roughly 150 people in the audience rose to their feet, giving a standing ovation. "I was totally blown

away," Allier said. "I found that although the documentary told the story of one specific American family, if you were to substitute the names it would easily reflect the story of any American family with a loved one deployed. It's an emotionally powerful story. No spin. No agenda. Just how our military families deal with not only the stresses of not knowing how a loved one is doing, but of the stresses and trials of reuniting with each other."

The documentary opens March 13 in theatres near military installations, including Marine Corps Base Camp Lejeune in Jacksonville, N.C.

BASKET BALL, from B1

tip off, both teams tried to pull away and build a solid lead over the other. L.A. took advantage of the Combat Center's struggle to find cohesion and jumped out to an early lead.

However, the strong offensive play of Lamar Townsend and the defensive tenacity of McCray prevented L.A. from ever gaining a solid point spread over the Combat Center.

The team's overall defensive effort kept them in the fight, forcing turnovers and at times frustrating the L.A. players, who despite their lead could not run away with the game.

Even with time winding down in the first half, the Combat Center remained defiant. McCray sank a deep three-point shot in the final seconds of the half to narrow L.A.'s lead to a mere four points.

After using halftime to regroup, the Combat Center came back confident and ready to play.

The team's defense remained strong forcing multiple turnovers and blocking shots with physical and fast paced action. They were also supported by a much stronger offensive performance.

The Combat Center's Brendon Dobbs provided essential points while Reggie Lomax dominated under the basket, winning multiple

rebounds on both the defensive and offensive end.

In the end, L.A., who defeated the Combat Center 48-47 in the base's Desert Classic Tournament in January, could not match the Twentynine Palms' effort, and the warriors of the varsity team inflicted revenge on the L.A. team.

After the win, McCray said he felt the team is pretty well

rounded and was optimistic about their chances in next week's playoffs.

"Our team stands a good chance of winning it this year," said the native of Poughkeepsie, N.Y. "We're looking forward to the challenge and the competition."

For information about the varsity basketball team call 830-4092.



LANCE CPL. ZACHARY J. NOLA
Shaun Weeks, a member of the Combat Center's Varsity Basketball team, jumps to evade the defensive reach Los Angeles Air Force Base, Calif., players during the last regular season game.

FLOWER, from B1

dozen species of wildflowers throughout the park, one could have a day full of exploring and finding a different flower right around each corner.

The park also provides other activities and events to enjoy every aspect it has to offer.

From camping under the stars at night and bird watching during the day, to mountain biking and rock climbing, there are activities for all ages and adventurers.

For rock climbers and nature

enthusiasts alike, the park has two distinct rock formations that are perfect for climbing, Pelham said.

Geographically, the park is very unique. It is the meeting point for the Mojave Desert, the Little San Bernardino Mountains and the Colorado Desert. Visitors get to see two completely different habitats, Pelham said.

The park offers annual passes for \$30 per vehicle or \$15 for a week pass.

For more information on wildflowers, call the Joshua Tree National Park Oasis Visitor Center at 367-5500.

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