

OBSERVATION Post

MARINE CORPS AIR GROUND COMBAT CENTER

JUNE 26, 2009

SERVING THE TWENTYNINE PALMS COMMUNITY SINCE 1957

VOL. 52 ISSUE 25

Marine saves gunner from burning tank

Earns medal for bravery

LANCE CPL. MONICA C. ERICKSON

COMBAT CORRESPONDENT

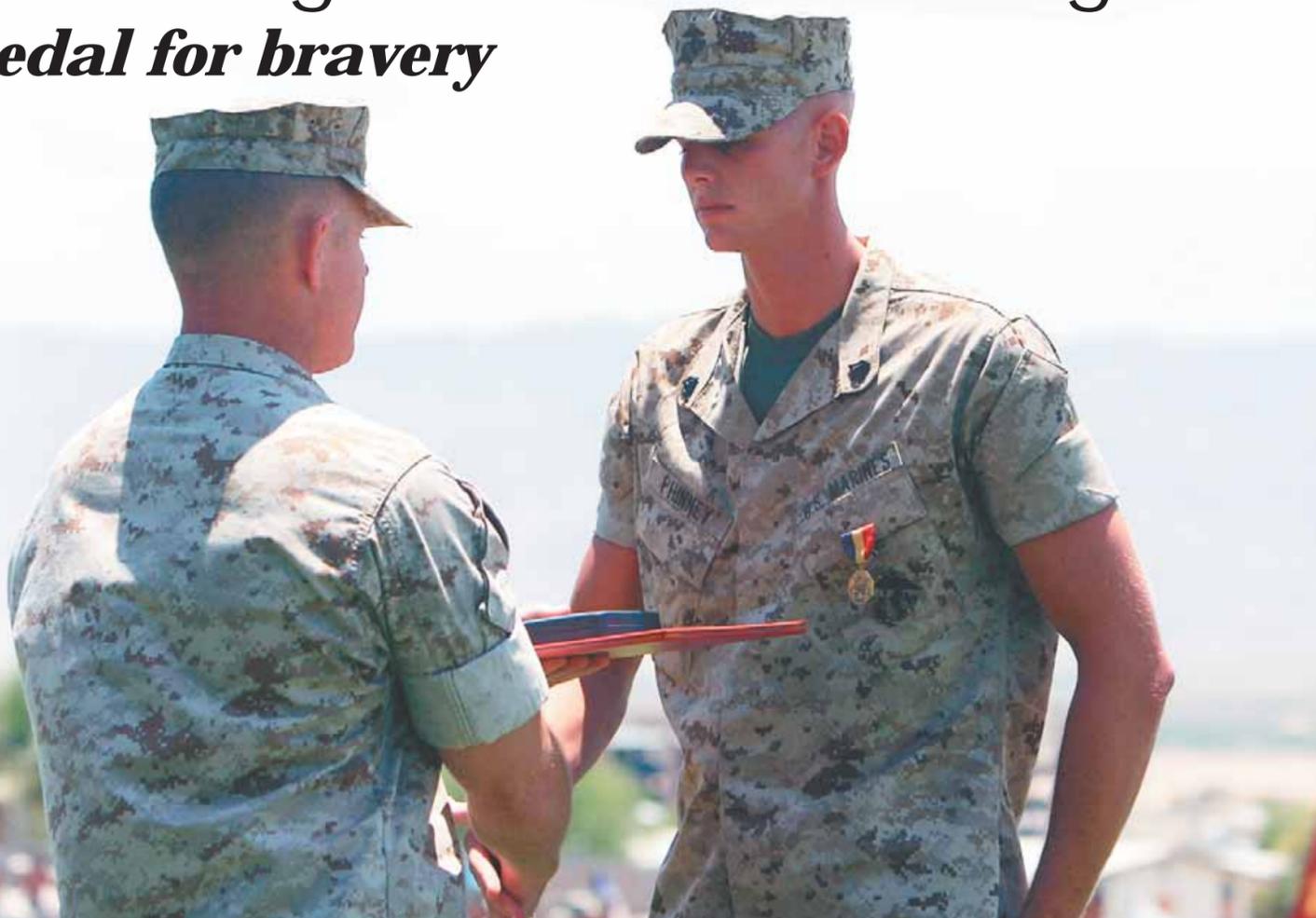
"I heard the round drop to the ground and I knew it was bad news," said Sgt. Christopher Phinney, describing that harrowing night while conducting M1A1 Abrams main battle tank training when things started going bad and years of training kicked in at Range 500 June 19, 2008.

Phinney, 25, was a tank commander with Company B, 1st Tank Battalion, when a charged main-gun round burst and spilled explosive propellant inside his tank endangering him and his team.

Phinney quickly ordered his team to exit the tank before the propellant caught on fire, but within seconds the propellant had ignited, and Phinney realized his gunner, Lance Cpl. Jacob Tabora was trapped inside.

"I just reacted," said the

See BRAVERY, A5



LANCE CPL. MONICA C. ERICKSON

Lt. Col. Thomas Gordon, the commanding officer of 1st Tank Battalion, hands an award citation to Sgt. Christopher Phinney, who served as a tank commander with Company B, 1st Tanks, during an award ceremony June 18 at Lance Cpl. Torrey L. Gray Field. Phinney received the Navy and Marine Corps Medal for saving his gunner from a burning tank during a training exercise at Range 500, June 19, 2008.

Marines adapt to newest pre-deployment training

CPL. NICOLE A. LAVINE

COMBAT CORRESPONDENT

Marines and sailors of 3rd Battalion, 9th Marine Regiment, based out of Marine Corps Base Camp Lejeune, N.C., completed the final stages of a new training evolution here in preparation for an upcoming deployment to Iraq this summer.

3/9 started the Enhanced Mojave Viper training exercise May 29. EMV is a step up from the standard Mojave Viper which prepares service members for deployments to Iraq and Afghanistan. EMV allows two battalions to train at once along side logistics and air units, as opposed to the standard MV, which trains

only one battalion at a time, said Master Sgt. David Flatter, the assistant operations chief at the Tactical Training Exercise Control Group.

During the 28 training days of EMV, units undergo several sub-packages, including Clear Hold and Build exercises, or CHB, combined arms live-fire exercises, fire support coordination exercises, and mission rehearsal exercises.

"Conducting EMV has been extremely valuable for our battalion," said Maj. Richard A. Rosenstein, the battalion's executive officer.

"The terrain, distance and training facilities at Twentynine Palms provides

tremendous opportunities for east coast units."

CHB I, which takes place during the first three days of EMV, required Marines and sailors to clear a mock city at Combat Center Range 220. From there, units then maintain control of the area to ensure order and the safety of those in the city and build rapport with local civilians and security forces.

While Marines and sailors must remain aware of cultural differences, they must still perform missions effectively. To do so, they coordinate with local police

See TRAINING, A7



CPL. NICOLE A. LAVINE

Maj. Richard Rosenstein, the executive officer of 3rd Battalion, 9th Marine Regiment, chats with several female role player linguists during Enhanced Mojave Viper training at Combat Center Range 220, Tuesday.

3/9 attacks simulated enemy in Enhanced Mojave Viper

CPL. MARGARET CLARK HUGHES

COMBAT CORRESPONDENT

Marines and sailors with 3rd Battalion, 9th Marine Regiment defended their position and attacked a simulated enemy during Clear Hold Build Exercise III in the Combat Center's Quackenbush and Gays Pass training areas June 17 and 18.

The exercise is a two-day training event set up as a battalion defense throughout the first night, then transitions into

an offensive counter attack against the enemy the following morning, said Master Sgt. Brian Criley, the assistant operations chief for 3/9.

The exercise is part of Enhanced Mojave Viper, a pre-deployment training package that concentrates on multiple scenarios of warfare, said Capt. David Chin, an instructor controller for Tactical Training Exercise Control Group.

"We are training to give them a full spectrum of operations," said the South Brunswick, N.J., native.

3/9 is one of the first units to train through EMV.

During the exercise, each company set up their defense as the simulated enemies pushed forward. A platoon of tanks and amphibious assault vehicles were attached for the exercise to support the battalion. Artillery and close air support were also provided, with both fixed wing and rotary wing air craft, said Criley, a Butler, Pa., native.

The night was filled with

See VIPER, A9



CPL. MARGARET CLARK HUGHES

Marines with Company I, 3rd Battalion, 9th Marine Regiment, carry a mock casualty to be medically evacuated out of the area during Clear Hold Build Exercise III in the Combat Center's Quackenbush and Gays Pass training areas June 17. The exercise is part of Enhanced Mojave Viper. The battalion is one of the first units to complete EMV.



Three, TOW, one, fire!
See A3



Living history
See A4



Freestyle motocross
See B1



Skate park on deck
See B1

It's risky business

JOHN FLEMING

When I arrived at work one day, my boss declared simply, "Five, gentlemen." My jaw dropped as he elaborated, "We had five motorcycle crashes this past week, including one fatality."

It was sobering news, since my company and I are tasked with base-wide motorcycle safety training. Our courses focus on cornering skills, braking technique, hazard avoidance and a variety of life-saving skills. We're confident that we're building better motorcyclists. Our Marines and sailors regularly attest to their improvement at the completion of our courses.

The truth is, motorcycling is risky business. Motorcycles are more vulnerable and less stable than cars. We motorcyclists must be hyper-vigilant, constantly scanning for potential danger. Oncoming vehicles, tailgaters, cross traffic and obstacles in the road are potential trouble. Add inattentive drivers – my favorite being the motorist who is "texting" while driving – and motorcycling becomes genuinely perilous.

Regardless of whether you're a beginning rider or a knee-dragging expert with fabulous control skills, if your head is not totally in the game, sooner or later you're going down.

John Fleming is a rider coach with Cape Fox Professional Services who is providing motorcycle safety training for Marines and sailors aboard the Marine Air Ground Task Force Training Command. To submit your comments or contributions about motorcycling, his email is michael.j.fleming@usmc.mil

Teacher shortage predicted

BOB BARTON

MILITARY TRANSITION RECRUITMENT SPECIALIST, CALIFORNIA TROOPS TO TEACHERS

Currently 47 percent of public school teachers in California have reached the minimum retirement age. The number of new teachers entering the profession has fallen more than 30 percent over the last three years. In a couple of years there will be a mass exodus of teachers retiring and few in the pipeline to replace them. This situation is true across the nation. Learn

how to prepare now to take advantage of these future career opportunities by attending a "Teaching as Your Next Career" presentation being given at the Combat Center July 7 at 1 p.m. by a Troops to Teachers representative. The presentation will be about one hour long and at the Lifelong Learning Education Center. It is free and open to anyone who has ever considered becoming a public school teacher. Those leaving the service in 2011 and later are specifically encouraged to attend.

Hot Topics

5K COYOTE DESERT FUN RUN

The Combat Center's Installation Personnel Administration Center will be hosting the 5K Coyote Desert Fun Run July 2. The cost of entry is \$15. All entries will receive a free T-shirt. Additional shirts can be purchased for \$7.50. Registration forms must be completed and returned to IPAC by July 1. To obtain a registration form or more information, contact Chief Warrant Officer 2 Brian Welty at 830-1818.

PHELPS HALL CLOSURE

Lance Cpl. Chance R. Phelps mess hall will be closed during the Fourth of July holiday period. The last meal served will be lunch on Thursday. Phelps Hall will reopen for breakfast July 6. Littleton mess hall will operate on regular weekend and holiday hours.

MILITARY POLICE REQUESTS

The Provost Marshal's Office is undergoing changes to better support and provide assistance to units with request that require Military Police support such as special events like home comings, blocking off roadways, complaints, patrol or gate request, safety briefs, vehicle registration, towing, K-9 support, etc. If your unit has such a Military Police request, please contact the below personnel so we can better assist you in your needs.

Operations Chief
Gunnery Sgt. Roy C. Buchanan
830-6095, roy.c.buchanan@usmc.mil
Operations Officer
Master Sgt. Brian S. Scamman
830-5456, brian.scamman@usmc.mil

Centerspeak

How can the Marine Corps improve pre-deployment training to better prepare for overseas deployments

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



CPL. DANIEL GONZALEZ
SQUAD LEADER, 3RD BATTALION,
7TH MARINE REGIMENT

"More live-fire ranges with more realistic ranges, and more inconsistent and different training."



SEAMAN ANTHONY CLARK
HOSPITAL CORPSMAN, ADULT MEDICAL
CARE CLINIC

"More focus put on medical knowledge; first aid and buddy aid."



LANCE CPL. GREG GABRIS
COOK, 1ST TANK BATTALION

"Give Marines real-life scenarios so that when we get over there we'll be as prepared as we can."

SUDOKU #1479

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This Day in Marine Corps History

June 26, 1966

While deployed in Vietnam, Sgt. James S. Dodson and Lance Cpl. Walter Eckes, who were captured by the Viet Cong in May, managed to escape and return to friendly forces.

"HEY BUDDY OLE' PAL!!... REMEMBER WHEN I HOOKED YOU UP??... WHAT CHA GOT THERE??... OOOOH... ARE THOSE COOKIES??... I JUST LOVE COOKIES!!"



• BEWARE OF THE CARE PACKAGE VULTURES •

SEMPERTOONS: CREATED BY GUNNERY SGT. CHARLES WOLF, USMC/RET.

Combat Center Spotlight

Name: Petty Officer 3rd Class Mathew Reksid
Unit: 3rd Battalion, 7th Marine Regiment
Job Title: Hospital Corpsman
Job Description: Educating corpsman and coordinating 3/7 Marines to get Combat Lifesaver qualified.
What do you like most about your job? Attaining new knowledge to pass on to other corpsmen.
Hobbies: Basketball and working out at the gym.
Military service: Three years in the Navy with two deployments to Iraq.
Time at the Combat Center: Two years.



OBSERVATION POST

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Public Affairs Officer Jennie E. Haskamp
Deputy Public Affairs Officer 1st Lt. Doy Demisick
Public Affairs Chief Gunnery Sgt. Sergio Jimenez
Press Chief/Editor Lance Cpl. Nicholas M. Dunn
Layout, Design Leslie Shaw

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FIXING A HOLE

[puzzle Solutions on A8]

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American Profile Hometown Content

06/14/2009

ACROSS

- Mattress innards
- Pyramid bottom
- Artsy Big Apple area
- Bovine milk source
- Opera highlight
- Grace ender
- It's found in a crust
- YOU ARE ___
- Politician's goal
- Moth-eaten
- South American plains
- South American plains
- Baylor University city
- Seal in, as a steak's juices
- Aid for one kicking a smoking habit
- Golfer's set
- Word after dog or salad
- Reporter's question
- Tennis great Bjorn
- Sub part
- Flag down
- An end to alcohol?

DOWN

- Pepper dispenser
- Vito Corleone's eldest
- Bit of unabashed self-promotion
- City near Provo, Utah
- Produces cackleberries
- Like a wasteland
- Did a 10K
- Prima donnas' problems
- Where to get off
- Largest of Ireland's 32
- Cinders of old funnies
- Cut and paste
- Rumba or samba
- "Cold one"
- Declare untrue
- Ending with home or bed

DOWN

- Recipe measures
- "Garfield" pooch
- Light bulb, in comics
- Liberal faction
- ___ Lanka
- Something to cast
- Like Death Valley
- Thing to confess
- Keen observer
- Much of North Africa
- Straw in the wind
- Ticker-tape parade honoree, perhaps
- White Monopoly bills
- Plumb crazy
- Miler's quartet, often
- Rm. coolers
- Go bananas
- ___ Jean (Marilyn, originally)
- Worshipped ones
- Country music tone

- Goatee's spot
- Like Toledo?
- Hieroglyphics bird
- ___ Hashanah
- Hushed up
- Skelton's Kadiddle hopper
- Indoor kitty
- "A ___ formality!"
- Like a fox
- Pestle's partner
- Like italic type
- Breathe hard
- English TV channel, with "the"
- Wheel shaft
- Stir up
- Totally destroy
- Sold, to an auctioneer
- Black and white predator
- Depot posting, informally
- Poem of Sappho
- Gridiron divs.

Weapons Co. Marines unload, show clear

LANCE CPL. M. C. NERL
COMBAT CORRESPONDENT

ARMY AMMUNITION DEPOT HAWTHORNE, Nev. – The Marines of Weapons Company, 1st Battalion, 23rd Marine Regiment, shot all of their special weapons June 18 through 20 at Army Ammunition Depot Hawthorne, Nev., as part of the battalion's final weapons firing exercise.

The company trained its Marines in individual and unit skills, and practiced multiple missions with weapons systems associated with their military occupational specialties in order to improve the unit's core competency overall, said Capt. Jeremiah Leibowitz, the company commanding officer, and a native of San Antonio.

"Being reservists, we don't get a lot of time behind our guns, missiles or [mortar] tubes," Leibowitz said. "We like to take the opportunity when we can to make sure the Marines' skill set stays fresh."

The company conducted its weapons training in conjunction with the battalion training at Hawthorne and Mountain Warfare Training Center Bridgeport, Calif., before its build-up for their upcoming deployment next year, Leibowitz said.

"We're slated for a pump around spring of next year," he said. "We've been training for Afghanistan up here in the mountains, but

we're not sure where the battalion is headed yet. Since we've done all the altitude and terrain training, we decided to focus on the basics to finish the training up."

The company fired their Tube-launched Optically-tracked Wire-guided missiles, and other systems in an all-out exercise to test its capabilities.

"This exercise is going to include everything," Leibowitz said. "We're going to be using the 81mm mortars, TOW missiles, .50 caliber machine guns, and 40mm grenade launchers. Any day is a good day when you're putting rounds down range."

The Marines of the company who were performing the exercise enjoyed the chance to dust-off their skills and get behind their machine guns and other weapon systems again.

"Shooting a TOW is always a good time. I haven't done it in a while so it's something to look forward to," said Lance Cpl. Garrett Babb, an antitank missileman with the company, and a native of Enid, Okla.

Babb said training at extreme elevation with their normal weapon systems will prove useful when his battalion goes overseas.

The elevation is tough to deal with and nothing like the flat lands of his home state, Babb said. "You never feel like you're going forward, just straight up."

"It's good to go doing



LANCE CPL. M. C. NERL

Pfc. Ry Delacerda, an antitank missileman with Weapons Company, 1st Battalion, 23rd Marine Regiment, fires off a Tube-launched Optically-tracked Wire-guided missile June 19 at Hawthorne Army Ammunition Depot, Nev.

the weapons training out here," he said. "It's like getting everything at once – high altitude conditioning and old school weapons shoots, which is what Marines live for."

Having completed their training, 1/23 is headed home, but will return to active duty soon to deploy in support of Operation Iraqi Freedom or Operation Enduring Freedom.



LANCE CPL. M. C. NERL

Lance Cpl. Chris Cartwright, a rifleman with Weapons Co., 1/23, sends .50 caliber rounds down range July 19 at Hawthorne Army Ammunition Depot, Nev.



LANCE CPL. M. C. NERL

Spent .50 caliber shell casings lay on the ground as Lance Cpl. Chris Cartwright, a rifleman with Weapons Co., 1/23 fires rounds down range July 19 at Hawthorne Army Ammunition Depot, Nev.

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Mountain Medicine in every 'climb' and place

LANCE CPL. M. C. NERL
COMBAT CORRESPONDENT

MOUNTAIN WARFARE TRAINING CENTER BRIDGEPORT, Calif. – Sailors with Mountain Medicine class 1-09 negotiated rugged, mountainous terrain, crossed streams, and traversed through thick woods during very challenging training at Mountain Warfare Training Center Bridgeport, Calif., Monday.

The students took the lessons they learned in the classroom and applied them in the field, said Chief Petty Officer Ralph Zastrow, a chief instructor with the course, and a native of Camano Island, Wash.

"They learned the basics of medicine and sicknesses at the extreme altitudes," Zastrow said. "But more importantly, they learned how to navigate and overcome the complex, compartmentalized terrain we have up

here at Bridgeport." The students will be using knowledge they received to move casualties, and themselves over terrain while dealing with extra baggage, he said. "They'll have their packs with a sustained load, as well as a notional casualty partway through their movement."

The students in the class learned that providing medical care in rough terrain requires a whole different set of skills and procedures.

"We're only going to use some of these techniques if we have to," said Petty Officer 3rd Class Nicholas Teeman, a Mountain Medicine student and corpsman with 2nd Battalion, 2nd Marine Regiment, from Marine Corps Base Camp Lejeune, N.C. "When I go back to my unit I know I will be able to pass this on to all the other sailors in the aid station."

Teeman said the medicine portion is good and is very important.

"Knowledge is power. The more we know about the medicine, the elevation and the terrain will help us," he said. "It's tough to maneuver from place to place, so we need to be prepared. This is just one more thing to help me get that edge I'm going to need in combat in the mountains."

Teeman said the training at MWTC is going to be vital to the environment he will be in overseas.

"Our battalion is getting ready to add to our collection of battle streamers on the flag next year," Teeman said. "The training areas we're in now are very similar to the area we might be occupying in Afghanistan. We can't learn enough from our time here."

The class graduates today and the students will be returning to their various parent units to continue to prepare for their upcoming deployments.



LANCE CPL. M. C. NERL

Sailors with the Mountain Medicine 1-09 class help Petty Officer 2nd Class Zachary James cross a canyon at Mountain Warfare Training Center Bridgeport, Calif. James is a corpsman with 1st Marine Special Operations Battalion, based out of Marine Corps Base Camp Pendleton, Calif., Monday.



LANCE CPL. M. C. NERL

Students from Mountain Medicine Class 1-09 carry a notional casualty to their bivouac site after administering treatment during their field exercise at Mountain Warfare Training Center Bridgeport, Calif., Monday.

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BRAVERY, from A1

Auburn, Maine native. "We rehearsed scenarios like that often. I just did my job."

Phinney, without thought of his own safety, reached through the flames to help free his trapped gunner from the blaze. Phinney received severe injuries from the burning tank, but still picked himself up and led his team, including Tabora, to safety. Tabora, who sustained third

degree burns over the majority of his body and underwent one of many reconstructive surgeries the morning of the award ceremony, is recovering from his burns at Brooke Army Medical Center in San Antonio, Texas.

Phinney's father, David Phinney traveled from Maine to attend the award ceremony.

"This was a tough situation for the family," said David Phinney. "That was the worst phone call I had

ever received at home; hearing that your son was injured in a training accident."

For his bravery and quick actions during the training accident, Phinney was awarded the Navy and Marine Corps Medal, the second highest non-combatative medal awarded by the Department of the Navy for sailors or Marines who distinguish themselves through heroism and bravery during an act of lifesaving

"I was shocked, but very proud of my son," David said. "He deserved this recognition. He has accomplished so much while in the Marines."

After presenting the award, Lt. Col. Thomas Gordon, the 1st Tank Battalion commanding officer, emphasized Phinney's accomplishments in addition to saving Tabora's life last June.

"When there is a fire people will run away," Gordon said. "But if required,

Marines will run in. I hope that we all would have Sgt. Phinney's courage and run into the fire.

"He recovered from his injuries, deployed to Iraq, received two Navy and Marine Corps Achievement

Medals during and after this last deployment," Gordon said. "He had one NAM when he arrived at the battalion—four personal awards in one enlistment; Sgt. Phinney is just an outstanding Marine!"



LANCE CPL. MONICA C. ERICKSON

Sgt. Christopher Phinney shakes hands with Marines and sailors from his battalion during an awards ceremony June 18 at Gray Field.



LANCE CPL. CLAIRE A. PRINDABLE

Sgt. Christopher Phinney, who served as a tank commander with Company B, 1st Tank Battalion, stands at parade rest after being awarded the Navy and Marine Corps Medal June 18 at Lance Cpl. Torrey L. Gray Field.



LANCE CPL. CLAIRE A. PRINDABLE

Sgt. Christopher Phinney, who served as a tank commander with Company B, 1st Tank Battalion, receives the Navy and Marine Corps Medal June 18 at Lance Cpl. Torrey L. Gray Field. Phinney saved his gunner, Lance Cpl. Jacob Tabora, from a burning M1A1 Abrams main battle tank during a training exercise at Range 500, June 19, 2008.

CHRISTIAN WORSHIP**Sundays****Immaculate Heart of Mary Chapel Roman Catholic Services**

8 a.m.-Faith Formation/CCD
September through 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
8:30 a.m.-West Wing

Non-denominational:

Calvary Chapel-AGC
9 a.m.-Worship*
9 a.m.-Children's Church
10:30 a.m.-Sunday School*
6 p.m.-Youth Group

Lay-led Gospel Service

11:30 a.m.-Worship building 1707

Pastor-led Assemblies of God worship

9:30 a.m.-Sunday School
10:30 a.m.-Worship

Legend

* Indicates Child Care Provided
+ Appointments can be made for Confessions by calling 830-6456/6482

Weekday Events**Monday-Friday**

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

Tuesday

Christ Chapel 9 a.m.-Christian Women's Fellowship*
September through May

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 7 p.m.-Lay-led Gospel Bible Study

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

Thursday

Christ Chapel 6 p.m.-Praise Band Rehearsal

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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Has Fourth of July lost its meaning?

Opinion / Editorial

CPL. MARGARET CLARK HUGHES
COMBAT CORRESPONDENT

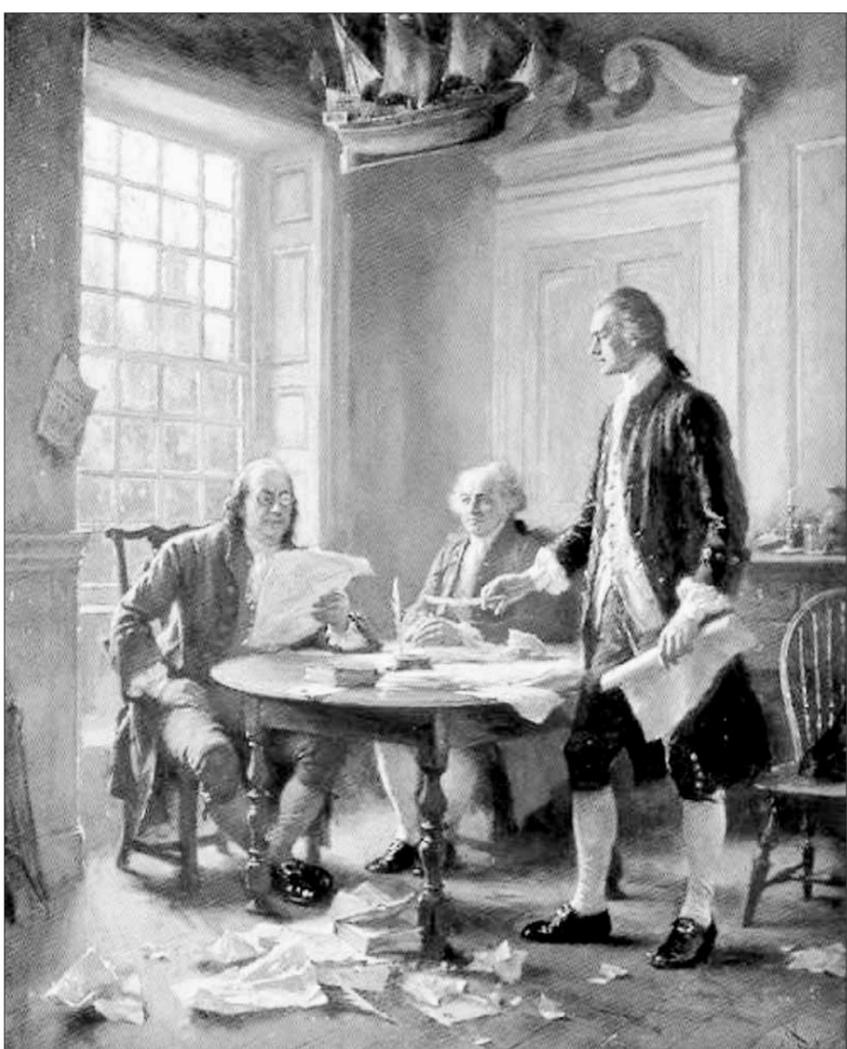
Independence Day, as we all know from history class in grade school, is the day our founding fathers declared our independence from Great Britain. With the next fireworks display right around the corner, it seems as if many of us are looking forward to the long weekend more so for fun in the sun than

reflecting on what is important – the true meaning of this day. According to The Declaration of Independence: A Study in the History of Political Ideas by Carl L. Becker, the legal separation from Great Britain occurred on July 2, 1776. Congress revised the declaration of independence and finally approved it on July 4, 1776, a holiday now known as the Fourth of July. More than 230 years ago, idealists of the original 13

Colonies banded together through the Second Continental Congress to fight for their freedom and the freedom of future Americans. This is not a history lesson of this country's independence, just a gentle reminder of what, for many of us, has become just a distant grade school memory. Many of us do not put into perspective the magnitude of what happened those many years ago. Though time has changed our society, fashion, and technology, amongst other things, it has also changed the value we place on this Federal holiday.

Most of us forget that Americans of the newly formed United States of America shed their blood during the War of Independence so we could live how we do today. For service members and families, the Fourth of July not only commemorates our country, but it also commemorates the warriors that gave their limbs, their sight, their hearing, and their lives so that our children and grandchildren can live in a country that continues to be free.

From the wars fought for independence and unity, to those fought on foreign soil in Germany, Korea, and Vietnam, and those we continue to fight today in Iraq and Afghanistan, service members have put themselves



COURTESY PHOTO
Thomas Jefferson, Benjamin Franklin and John Adams are depicted writing the Declaration of Independence before it was shown to Congress July 2, 1776. The revised draft passed July 4, 1776, the day we celebrate from Great Britain.

in harms way. They have done, and continue to do, so our country will continue to grow and flourish, and so future generations can have the opportunities

we never had. Have a fun and exciting Independence Day this year. Be with family and friends. Barbeque and watch fireworks, but remember when those blasts of light glisten overhead in the night sky, take a

moment to remember those who went before us. Remember we would not be here today without the men and women who fought for our country. We would not have the opportunities we have today without those who have sacrificed before us. Celebrate not only our independence, but all of those who came after that historic day in 1776 who helped make this country what it is today.



COURTESY PHOTO
Fireworks light up the night sky during the Combat Center's Fourth of July Celebration last year.

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TRAINING, from A1

and military forces to create a collaborative atmosphere.

"These exercises would not be possible in Lejeune," Rosenstein said. "The challenges our young Marines faced during CHB I and MRX [Mission Rehearsal Exercise] provided an opportunity to develop and test individual rifleman and small unit leaders' decision making abilities in a dynamic COIN [Counterinsurgency] environment."

After completing CHB I, 3/9 then moved on to the live-fire exercise series at the platoon and company levels. Meanwhile, the fire support coordination exercises trained artillery and aviation elements to coordinate and communicate with each other during target assessment.

The battalion then moved on to CHB II and CHB III, kinetic exercises which took place at the Quackenbush training area, Gay's Pass, Emerson Lake and Maumee Mine training areas.

From there, the unit returned to Range 220 where they conducted the final days of MRX, which once again forced Marines and sailors to work with police and military role players.

Rosenstein said although the battalion could conduct live-fire maneuver and combined arms exercises at a variety of other alternate training venues, many authentic elements like the ones found in EMV better prepare war fighters for deployments in desert terrain.

In addition to the training venues themselves, Rosenstein explained the use of hundreds of role players at MRX, gives the scenarios a very realistic feel.

"Our young lance corpo-

als and sergeants are forced to make rational decisions quickly when dealing with people," he said. "Everything you do out here has the potential to build on the following day. For instance, if you catch the right guy at the right time, it could mean that three IEDs [improved explosive devices] are never emplaced."

Sgt. Anthony Silva, squad leader of 1st Squad, 3rd Platoon, Company K, 3/9, said training for EMV felt both foreign and familiar to him since he used to be an instructor with TTECG before transferring to his current unit about nine months ago.

Silva, said through his two-and-a-half years of experience training Marines here, he has a better idea of what to expect and how to instruct his squad prior to an exercise.

"I don't know what's coming, but I understand body language and how people may move," he said. "I think the first three days and the last three days of this training pay off the biggest dividends. You have the chance to react to people vice just running around and shooting at targets. I've been looking forward to this type of training since I left here."

1st Lt. Ted German, the battalion adjutant, said he sees a considerable amount of change in training since he conducted pre-deployment training here three years ago.

"We didn't have Range 220 the last time I was here," said German. "This training is much more involved. Three days are supposed to represent seven months, so we are



CPL. NICOLE A. LAVINE

Marines of 3rd Battalion, 9th Marine Regiment, and local police role players control an agitated crowd during Enhanced Mojave Viper training at Combat Center Range 220, Tuesday.

focusing on more conventional warfare to tailor the expectations of what these Marines may really see in Iraq or Afghanistan."

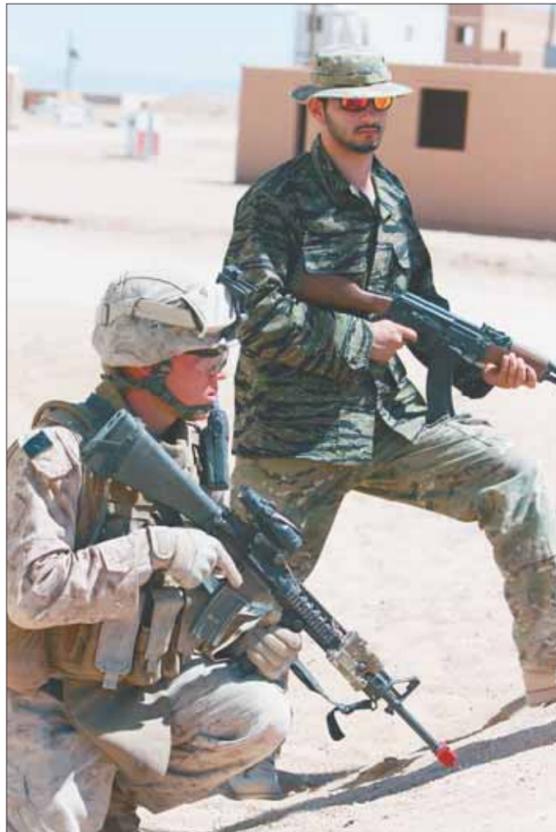
Lt. Col. Daniel Q. Greenwood, the battalion commanding officer, agreed. "TTECG and EMV paint these scenarios for the exercise forces and maximize each unit's preparation for their future operating environment," Greenwood said.

As the battalion completes its final days of EMV training this week, final critiques and lessons learned may not only prepare the Marines and sailors involved, but will also give them knowledge to pass on to fellow service members preparing for deployments to Iraq and Afghanistan.



CPL. NICOLE A. LAVINE

Lance Cpl. James Gray (left), a radio operator with 3/9, stands by as his platoon commander, 2nd Lt. Devin Carlson, and maintains communication with another platoon during a meeting between Marines, and local police and military officials in a nearby building at Combat Center Range 220, Tuesday.



CPL. NICOLE A. LAVINE

Lance Cpl. Michael Coolidge (left), a team leader with Company I, 3rd Battalion, 9th Marine Regiment, sets up security alongside a role player soldier of the fictional People's Liberation Army of Zahara during Enhanced Mojave Viper training at Combat Center Range 220, Tuesday.

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Three wars and 90 years later

CPL. NICOLE A. LAVINE
COMBAT CORRESPONDENT

If a stranger were to ever watch Ray Wilburn stroll down any street aboard the Combat Center, he or she may be inclined to think Wilburn is some sort of celebrity. As this aged man wearing clean, creased clothes and thick rimmed glasses makes his way down any hall of any building on base, Marines, sailors and civilians of all ranks and ages approach him and shake his hand.

If strangers knew the history behind retired Sgt Maj. Ray V. Wilburn, they might do the same thing.

Wilburn, who turns 90 years old Wednesday, has more than 31 years of Marine Corps experience under his

belt and has lived to tell tales of three major wars in the 20th Century.

When Wilburn is not meeting and greeting Combat Center personnel, you can find him, well, almost anywhere. He rises early each day to take a walk around his half-acre property in Twentynine Palms. He claims weeds are not allowed to grow on his lot, and if there is anything on his car that can shine, it will shine.

Wilburn is a southern-bred man born in a small cotton farm near Wolfe City, Texas. He said despite the dignity surrounding the identity of being a Marine, his initial reason for joining the Corps was a little more primal.

"I was hungry," he said. "I joined in the mid 30s when there were no jobs, no money,

no nothing."

At the ripe young age of 20, he hitchhiked nearly 70 miles southwest to Dallas to enlist in the Corps on Oct. 19, 1939. Between his experiences playing softball and boxing in the Civilian Conservation Corps, and earning less than 25 cents a day working on farms prior to his enlistment, physical fitness was no obstacle for him.

Wilburn recalls how, after his arrival to Marine Corps Recruit Depot San Diego, Calif., his drill instructors used to carry 30-inch sticks with them during drill practice to "measure" distances between recruits.

"If the drill instructor couldn't march between squads without touching you, he would introduce that 30-

inch stick to your shins," Wilburn said. "We just took things like that as corrections and we carried on. We didn't give them a second thought."

After graduating boot camp, he was promptly assigned to 2nd battalion, 10th Marine Regiment, 2nd Marine Brigade, as an artilleryman.

It wasn't long before the satisfaction he felt in the Corps surpassed that of having a full belly.

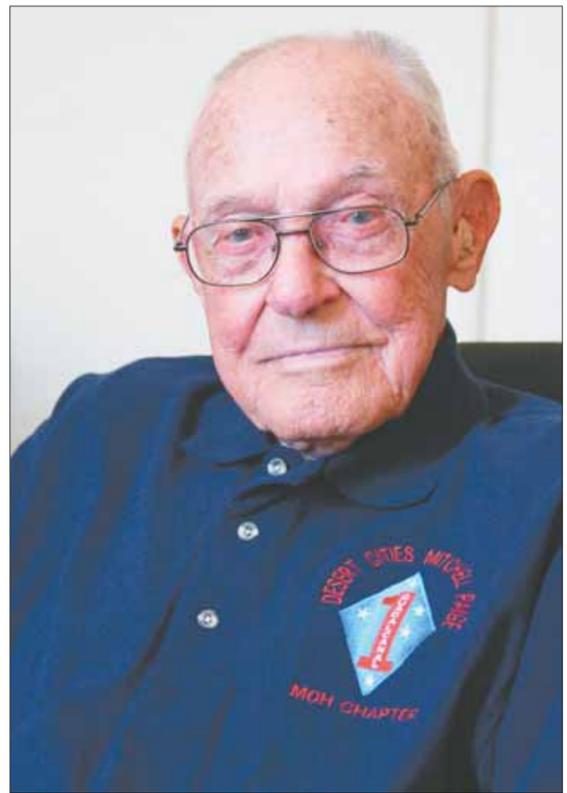
"I liked the regimentation," he said. "I liked being a part of something. It also gave me an education since I had to quit school early in life. What I lacked in formal education the Marine Corps let me make up in determination and drive."

Wilburn saw his share of bloodshed and turmoil in the next couple years after transferring to India battery, 3rd Battalion, 10th Marine Regiment, at the outbreak of World War II.

On Oct. 25, 1942, Wilburn's boat traveling from Tulagi to Guadalcanal was sunk by a Japanese destroyer. Wilburn and the rest of the crew had to spend three hours in the water before being rescued by a Higgins boat.

By the end of the war, Wilburn completed nine landings over 38 months with his battalion, which was redesignated as the 2nd 155 Howitzer Battalion, 3rd Corps Artillery.

In 1950 during the Korean Conflict, Wilburn served as a troop trainer for the Supporting Arms Battalion of the 11th Marines Artillery. He



CPL. NICOLE A. LAVINE

Retired Sgt. Maj. Ray V. Wilburn turns 90 years old Wednesday. After spending more than 30 years active duty in the Marine Corps, he is glad to still be in the company of warfighters today.

eventually returned to the states in 1952 and was then sent to Japan.

Wilburn entered the Vietnam War in 1967 attached to 1st Medical Battalion. The commanding officer of the battalion asked Wilburn to shoulder the responsibilities of a commanding officer since he was too busy performing surgeries. The request put Wilburn in charge of escorting high-ranking visitors around the hospital and acting as "the commanding officer's mouth" until he returned to

the states in 1968.

Although the wars have been long over for Wilburn, he continues to pay respects to his brothers in arms by honoring their memory.

The 2nd 155 Howitzer Battalion was sent overseas and left there until the end of the war, he said. Because of that, they were given the nickname "The Forgotten Battalion."

The battalion now hosts veteran reunions each year that Wilburn and his wife Irma never miss.

Wilburn married his wife, Irma Kojundzich, at the Combat Center's Protestant Chapel on Dec. 21, 1957. Since then, they have had a daughter, two grandchildren and two great grandchildren born here at the Combat Center, said Irma.

"I'm very proud of my husband," she said. "He's unbelievable. He's like a Timex watch - just keeps on ticking."

"We have had a good life in the Marine Corps and we cherish all the friends we have made," she said. "It was a

See WILBURN, A10



COURTESY PHOTO

Here, retired Sgt. Maj. Ray V. Wilburn stands tall as a corporal at the Marine Corps Recruit Depot San Diego, Calif., in 1940. Wilburn served more than 30 years of honorable service and plans on celebrating his 90th birthday Wednesday at the Combat Center.

JULY 1, 1919

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SHARI LOPATIN

TriWest Healthcare Alliance

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PCM—as “a civilian network provider or military treatment facility provider who provides primary care services to TRICARE beneficiaries.”

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Actually, a PCM may be a certified medical professional who practices within the state's rules and regulations and has signed a contract to be a TRICARE PCM. That could be anyone from a pediatrician to a nurse practitioner. Either way, the medical professional must be within the beneficiary's prime service area.

For more information visit the TRICARE provider directory at <http://www.triwest.com>.

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Put TRICARE on your pre-deployment checklist

TYLER PATTERSON

TriWest Healthcare Alliance

If there's one universal rule in the military, it's that your pre-deployment days can be hectic.

There's a lot on your plate that needs taking care of, like getting your finances and legal documents in order and making arrangements for your family while you're gone. If you are deploying from a reserve component, you may also need to square things away with your civilian employer before you leave.

With so much going on, it can be easy to overlook your TRICARE benefit—but don't worry! Making sure your family has health-care coverage while you are deployed is as easy as it is important.

Know the “What”

First, make sure your spouse has access to all necessary records. This includes a copy of your orders at the bare minimum. If your spouse will need access to your medical records, you will need to prepare an “authorization to disclose” form. You can download this form at www.triwest.com, from the “Find a Form” page.

Next, make sure the records for you and each family member are current in the Defense Enrollment Eligibility Reporting System. Additionally, show your spouse how to make changes in DEERS at a nearby ID card issuing office, by phone at 1-800-538-9552, or online at <http://www.tricare.osd.mil/deers>.

After that, check your family's identification cards. If any will expire while you're deployed, be sure to replace them before you leave. Current ID cards are required for accessing health care through your TRICARE benefit.

Know the “How”

Finally, make sure your spouse knows the basics of your TRICARE coverage.

- Encourage your spouse or child's guardian to attend a mobilization briefing or Family Readiness Group meeting in their area. Benefit videos and information are also available at TriWest's “TRICARE 2 You Online Library,” at <http://www.triwest.com/t2u>.
- Make a list of contact numbers:
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- A nearby emergency room
- A beneficiary counseling and assistance coordinator
- TriWest, your regional contractor
- Online at <http://www.triwest.com>: Registered users can find answers, check status of claims, authorizations and referrals and track expenses.
- 1-888-TRIWEST (874-9378)
- Review your family's TRICARE plan so they know how to properly access care and fill prescriptions.

For more pre-deployment tips covering everything from automobile storage to legal resources, visit the “Force Health Protection and Readiness Pre-Deployment” page at <http://fhp.osd.mil/preDeployment.jsp>. Members of the reserve component can also visit <http://www.triwest.com/ngp> for additional pre- and post-deployment advice.

VIPER, from A1

explosions in the distance from tanks, close air support and artillery attacking the simulated enemy.

As the fight progressed late into the night, the enemy started their dismounted assault when the companies in the defense were able to

attack with the final protective fire.

“The PFP is a mass of fire power that stops the enemy from progressing,” said Capt. Nathan Dmochowski, the assistant operations officer for the battalion. “It's basically a wall of lead.”

Mortars, grenade launchers and all weapons com-

monly used in an infantry battalion were fired down range to stop the simulated enemy in their tracks.

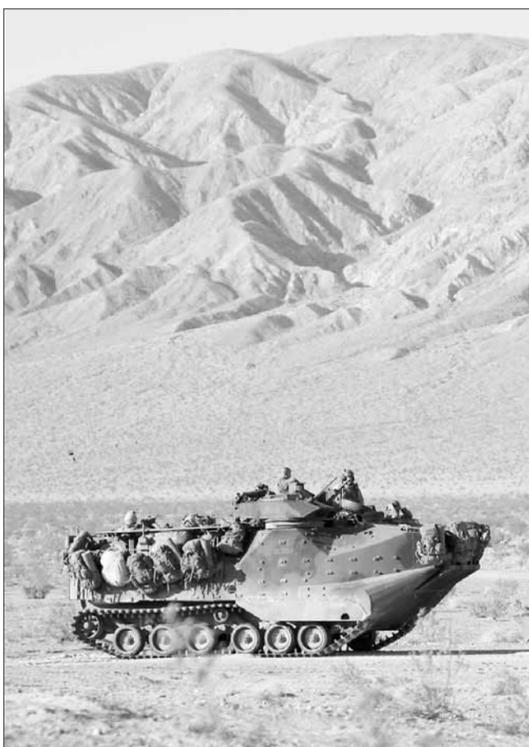
Early the next morning, the battalion and supporting units changed from defense to an offensive counter attack to eliminate the enemy.

The tanks initiated the attack as each company ‘leap frogged’ one another after each objective point, Criley said.

“The overall goal is to kill the enemy,” said Gunnery Sgt. Carroll Williams, the company gunnery sergeant for Company I. “But we want our Marines to take a lot away from this.”

This exercise will teach the Marines and sailors a lot of different skills, said the Pomona, Calif., native. They will learn how to set up a battalion defense, what it takes to sustain a detailed operation for over 24 hours and how to transfer from the defense to the offense.

Clear Hold Build Exercise III is one of the many training events 3/9 has endured over a month of pre-deployment training aboard the Combat Center. Each event will teach the Marines how to fight and make quick decisions in any situation or environment, Williams said.



CPL. MARGARET CLARK HUGHES

Marines with Company I, 3rd Battalion, 9th Marine Regiment, maneuver into position during an offensive counter attack against a simulated enemy during Clear Hold Build Exercise III in the Combat Center's Quackenbush and Gays Pass training areas June 18.



Reprint 4-4-09

TOUGH MINDED OPTIMISM

by Lou Gerhardt

One of the best local examples of a tough minded optimist is my friend Doreen Chamberlin of Twentynine Palms.

Born in England in 1925 Doreen joined the British Army at 16. It was a terrible time in England's history as the Germans bombed her beloved county.

Doreen was not only a stalwart soldier during that conflict but a courageous leader and after eleven years of heroic service she retired as a Sgt. Major.

After she married Doreen moved to Twentynine Palms. Her husband died in 1987. Since that time Doreen has had several physical challenges. She not only had open heart surgery but in 1992 her right leg was amputated just below the knee. Doreen has her automobile specially equipped and continues to drive to this day.

Doreen has been a tough minded optimist in every aspect of her life. She is past president of her Kiwanis Club, her local Republican Women's Club, and the Emblem Club. She continues to serve on the board of several non-profit organizations where she is always a level-headed yet positive participant in all discussions. Doreen has just completed 15 years as the Bishop's Warden of her local Episcopal Church where she has always been a loyal, devout and faithful member.

I spoke with Doreen the other day and she said “I'm a tough old bird.” I replied “You are a tough minded optimist.”

My last telephone conversation with Doreen two days before her death closed with my words “Good-by, friend” and her reply “Good-by, Luv”

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The deadline for submitting Trader ads is noon Wednesday, for the upcoming Friday's paper.

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

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

approved by Base Housing. This ensures the Combat Center Trader is not used for commercial real estate endeavors.

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

WILBURN, from A8

good environment to raise our children in."

Larry Stratton, the personal readiness and community support branch head for Marine Corps Community Services here, is considered a close friend by both the Wilburns.

Stratton first met Wilburn here in the 1990s before he retired as a



COURTESY PHOTO

This photo from New Zealand in 1943 shows now-retired Sgt. Maj. Ray V. Wilburn at his prime during World War II. Wilburn also served in the Korean War and Vietnam War, and now plans on celebrating his 90th birthday on Wednesday at the Combat Center with friends and family.

master sergeant. Since the first time he met the retired sergeant major, Stratton said he has felt a deep respect for the man.

"I think he is just an awesome individual," Stratton said. "One thing I have to say about his character that's hard to say about anybody is that I have never heard him say a bad word about anyone. He has a very positive outlook on life."

Stratton continued, saying Wilburn has never lost sight of how to lead by example and the importance of taking care of your own.

"You will never see that man drink or hear him say a foul word," Stratton said. "He is a true southern gentleman. And at 90 years old, he still fits into his dress blues. Young Marines are always approaching him, and I have yet to see him turn away a Marine who wants to talk. If it is God's will to keep me alive as long as him, I just hope I can stay as active as he is."

"I could talk for hours about how much respect I have for this man," Stratton said. "Not only for the service he has done for this country, but also just for the man he is."

Wilburn said the Corps greatly attributed to his health and wellness today, and there was no way he could give up that lifestyle after he retired.

"All I know and everything I have I owe to the Marine Corps," he said. "I feel that although I've been long retired, I still have some-



CPL. NICOLE A. LAVINE

Retired Sgt. Maj. Ray V. Wilburn reads the inscription on the 1940 memorial column at the Combat Center's Heritage Memorial Park Wednesday. Wilburn joined the Marine Corps in 1939 and served 31 honorable years. He now plans on celebrating his 90th birthday with friends and family at the Combat Center this week.

thing to offer young Marines. If the information I give them about my experiences and background is enough to keep even one young Marine alive, then it's well worth the while. Besides, I'm not one who can spend 31 years in the Corps and then just pack all my memora-

bilia away in a trunk in a garage."

He continued, saying he hopes his words of advice can break through generations and inspire modern-day warriors to keep the Marine Corps title pristine and honored.

"Set an example not only for the Marines now, but as a person in

general," he said. "Be proud of yourself and be thoughtful, trustworthy and dependable."

Wilburn said he looks forward to celebrating his 90th birthday at the Combat Center with friends and relatives before the Independence Day holiday.

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B1

Freestyle Motocross event flies through Combat Center



LANCE CPL. MONICA C. ERICKSON

Pro Freestyle Motocross rider Beau Bamberg chills on his handlebars and makes the trick look easy as he soars 45 feet in the air during the FMX event at Victory Field, Sunday.

LANCE CPL. MONICA C. ERICKSON

COMBAT CORRESPONDENT

"What's going on here?" asked a passing Marine, trying to find out what was causing the large audience at Victory Field, Sunday.

"Oh my God, that's awesome!" he exclaimed after watching a freestyle motocross rider launch 45 feet in the air and upside down while hanging onto his bike with one hand.

The free Pro Freestyle Motocross event, sponsored by Monster Energy and hosted by Marine Corps Community Services, held three different shows which drew more than 300 spectators throughout the day. After each show, Combat Center personnel and their families were invited to meet with the riders and receive an autographed FMX poster.

The FMX event was designed to show support for the military while giving service members and their families a chance to enjoy a day outside with free food provided by MCCS.

"Events like these make us feel appreciated and wanted," said Lance Cpl. Patrick Manchego, a student with Company B, Marine Corps Communications-Electronics School and a Burleson, Texas native. "It is good for morale to be able to get away from work and school, and enjoy your weekend."

Lance Cpl. Jeff Rollo, a fellow student and friend of Manchego, agreed saying these events are perfect for the Marines and sailors who don't have cars and can't get off base easily.

"It's great these guys come out here and show us that they care for all the Marines," said the Fort Lauderdale, Fla., native. "This is a great way to break up the monotony and daily routine of our week."

The riders, Julian D'Usseau, Beau Bamberg and John Distler, dazzled the audience with a wide range of tricks, whips and stunts that included back flips, superman seat grabs, cliff hangers, nac-nacs and cordovas.

Each rider started out slow, testing the wind and ensuring it was safe enough to launch 45 feet into the air. The riders revved things up and soon had the audience cheering and chanting for more tricks.

"The crowd was a good size," said Bamberg, a Gresham, Ore., native. "It was windy at first and it made us nervous. Wind is our worst enemy, it is like our Taliban."

This was their first time performing for the military, but each rider was excited for the opportunity to give the Marines a free show and give them a chance to have fun in between their busy schedules.

"It was a big privilege to be able to come out here and ride for the Marines," said Distler, a Phoenix, native. "The Marines here are way more amped out than other people we've ridden for."

Every year, MCCS hosts various freestyle motocross events for the troops. For

more information on upcoming events, visit the MCCS Web site at <http://www.mccs29palms.com>.

Pushing up



LANCE CPL. MONICA C. ERICKSON

Carlos Rivera, (left) with MCCES, smashes the ball past a defenseman toward the opponent's goal-keeper during the first game of the Commanding General's Intramural Soccer League playoffs Tuesday at Felix Field.

For full story and more photos see page B3

New skate park ramps up excitement at Combat Center

CPL. NICOLE A. LAVINE

COMBAT CORRESPONDENT

After nearly a month of construction, the dusty, fenced-in compound on Bourke Street became a skater's paradise when the new skate park opened to base personnel and their families June 12.

Construction for the skate park project began May 13 and was completed June 11.

The greatest challenge of the project was laying the large, concrete foundation in a way that would prevent cracks and buckles in the concrete from desert thermal cycles, said Ensign Benjamin D. Queener, the assistant residential officer in charge of construction and ROICC construction manager.

After the foundation was laid, contractors with Allen Engineering Corp. erected a modular skate park design which left plenty of room for future changes or added equipment, said Queener, a native of Oneida, Tenn.

"Toward the end of the project, the biggest issue was keeping the kids off the lot until the project was complete," he said. "You would

see them standing by the fence with their skateboards like kids waiting to open their Christmas presents."

This project, which cost more than \$367,000, was one of many initiated by the Combat Center command to improve quality of life aboard the Combat Center. The funds came from a govern-

ment grant to the Combat Center for winning the 2006 Commander in Chief's Annual Award for Installation Excellence, said Queener.

The other quality of life-based projects include the Heritage Memorial Park, a new dog run, hockey rink, Amphitheater Park, and the soon-to-be-completed chil-

dren's water squirt park at the intersection of 4th and Bourke Street.

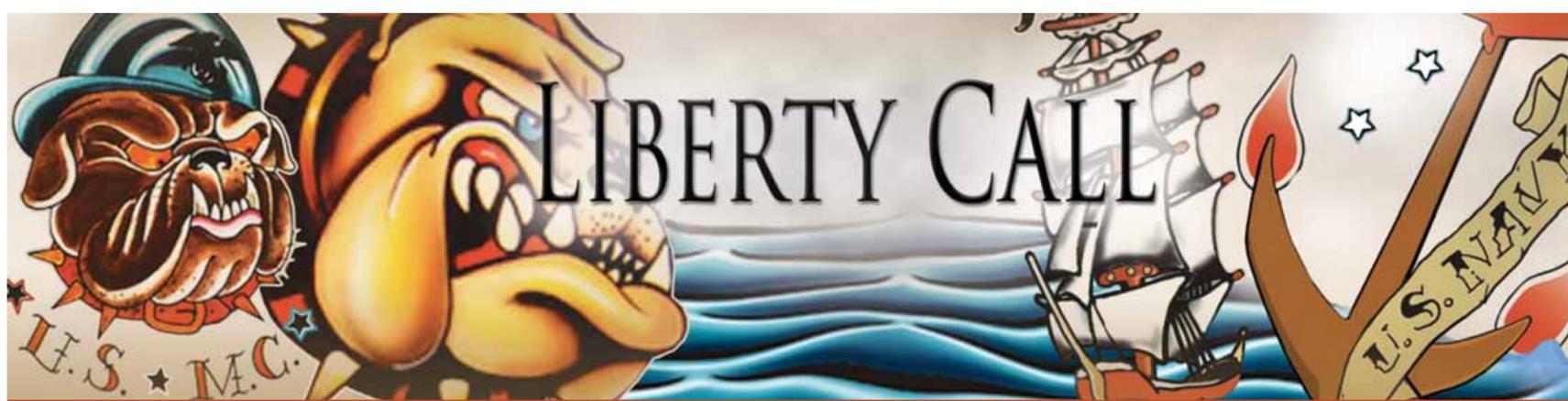
Combat Center installation and logistics leaders have been aggressively pushing for the completion of these projects, Queener said. "As a former Marine, I

See SKATE, B2



CPL. NICOLE A. LAVINE

Lance Cpl. Jake Farquhar, a loader with 1st Platoon, Company B, 1st Tank Battalion, tail grinds down a railing at the new Combat Center skate park that opened June 12.



<p>FRI. 6/26</p> <p>The comedy of Mike Epps Time: 9 p.m. Where: Morongo Casino Resort and Spa 49500 Seminole Drive, Cabazon For more info call (800) 252-4499 or visit http://www.morongocasinosort.com</p>	<p>FRI. 6/26</p> <p>Rock Yard Tribute Bands Time: 9 p.m. Where: Fantasy Springs Resort Casino 84-245 Indio Springs Parkway Indio. For more info call (800) 827-2946 or visit http://www.fantasyspringsresort.com</p>	<p>SAT. 6/27</p> <p>Encore Performance of "Vincent van Gogh" One Night Only, Time: 7 p.m. Where: Blak Box Theatre 61231 29 Palms Highway Joshua Tree For information call 366-3777 or visit http://www.hidesertplayhouse.com</p>	<p>SAT. 6/27</p> <p>15th annual Yucca Valley Summer Music Festival Time: 7 - 9 p.m. Where: Yucca Valley Community Center Complex 57090 29 Palms Highway Yucca Valley For more information call 369-7211</p>	<p>FRI. 7/3</p> <p>Kelly Clarkson Time: 8 p.m. Where: Fantasy Springs Resort Casino 84-245 Indio Springs Parkway Indio. For more info call (800) 827-2946 or visit http://www.fantasyspringsresort.com</p>
<p>FRI. 7/10</p> <p>First Fridays This week, Country Theme Time: 8:30 p.m. Where: Hashmarks SNCO Club Building 1531 Call 830-5035 for more info, or visit http://www.mccs29palms.com</p>	<p>FRI. 7/17</p> <p>The comedy of Frank Caliendo Time: 9 p.m. Where: Agua Caliente 32-250 Bob Hope Drive Rancho Mirage For more info call (888) 999-1995</p>	<p>SAT. 7/18</p> <p>Texas Hold 'em Tournament Time: 2 p.m. Where: Hashmarks SNCO Club Building 1531 Call 830-5035 for more info, or visit http://www.mccs29palms.com</p>	<p>FRI. 7/31</p> <p>Huey Lewis and the News Time: 9 p.m. Where: Agua Caliente 32-250 Bob Hope Drive Rancho Mirage For more info call (888) 999-1995</p>	<p>SAT. 8/22</p> <p>An evening with ZZ Top Time: 8 p.m. Where: Agua Caliente 32-250 Bob Hope Drive Rancho Mirage For more info call (888) 999-1995</p>

Buckle up for a bumpy ride on 'Pelham 123'

NEIL POND
AMERICAN PROFILE

The Taking of Pelham 1-2-3 - Rated R
Starring John Travolta & Denzel Washington

When a New York City subway car is hijacked, the

Metropolitan Transit Authority dispatcher on duty finds himself in the middle of a major hostage crisis. In this third cinematic version of a novel previously made into both a theatrical (1974) and television movie (1998) with the same title, John Travolta plays the ruth-

less, cold-hearted leader of the hijackers. Denzel Washington is the MTA employee who happens to be at the command center's switchboard when his otherwise ordinary workday takes a major detour.

Travolta's tough and tattooed triggerman, known only as Ryder, gives Washington's bespectacled civil servant, Walter Garber, a message to pass along to the city of New York: Come up with \$10 million in exactly one hour, and don't be late—because for every minute over the deadline, a passenger is going to die.

As the clock ticks down, Garber becomes even more involved in the escalating

drama. Director Tony Scott's slam-bang, staccato style keeps the adrenaline pumping with jarring cuts and jittery, constantly moving camera shots that heighten the aura of unstable, claustrophobic urgency. But the action-y scenes are far less interesting than the pressure-cooker interplay of wits and will between Travolta and Washington, and the director wisely keeps the focus there.

Travolta once again demonstrates that he's one of Hollywood's few leading men unafraid of getting into the skin of really, really bad guys. Washington gives a gripping, gutsy performance as a dutiful Everyman suddenly thrust outside his comfort zone.

James Gandolfini has a colorful post-"Sopranos" turn as the Big Apple's lame-duck mayor, whose countdown to retirement is interrupted by the emergency unfolding underneath his streets.

Both Ryder and Gerber, it turns out, have secrets that take the movie to another level of psychodrama. But things start to derail when they start spouting lines about religion, redemption and retribution that you have a hard time believing characters in their situations would actually say.

But "Pelham" barges ahead anyway, through an eventual pile-up of action-



COURTESY PHOTO
John Travolta plays Ryder, the leader of a group of hijackers who have taken control of a New York City subway car filled with passengers.

movie cliches and plotline implausibilities. The wheels fall completely off when the action leaves the dark, sinister confines of the subway tunnel and takes to the bright streets of the city with a symphony of mayhem—car chases, slow-mo crashes, swooping helicopters and a flamboyant, unrealistically orchestrated face-

to-face standoff. This is a guy's movie start to finish, coarse and vulgar and proudly, loudly unsubtle in most every way. And when the bullets aren't flying, the f-bombs are. If you've got sensitive ears, you probably need to pick another flick. Otherwise, buckle up and hold on to your popcorn. It's a bumpy ride.

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SKATE, from B1

love building projects like this," he said. "I appreciate what the Corps is doing to make life at Twentynine Palms just a little bit better. An active Marine is a happy Marine. We've all heard that there's nothing more dangerous than a bored Marine. Maybe this will keep a few Marines from getting bored."

Lance Cpl. Jake Farquhar, a loader with 1st Platoon, Company B, 1st Tank Battalion, has been skateboarding for 12 years. He heard rumors about the construction of the park prior to his deployment to Afghanistan last October. When he returned to the

Combat Center in May, Farquhar said he was overjoyed to find the rumors were true.

"It's important that the base gives troops some kind of recreation," said Farquhar, a San Diego native. "It shows they care about more than our work. After a long, hard day, you need a release like this."

Pfc. Jonathan O. Rosa, a student with Company A, Marine Corps Communications-Electronics School, could also be found rolling across the concrete landscape of the new skate park any given night of the week.

Rosa, a Miami native, said he has been hitting up the

park after class every evening since the official opening.

"Skating gives you more of a rush than most other sports," Rosa said. "I think it has to do with the risk. It definitely helps get rid of a lot of stress and is a good work out."

"Since I've starting skating again, I've lost 10 pounds and improved my PFT [Physical Fitness Test] score," he said. "I spend about two hours here every night and it's time well spent."

Farquhar agreed, saying he believes skating is more than a simple hobby that kills the time.

"I consider this more of a lifestyle than a sport," Farquhar said. "The biggest lesson I've learned from skating is the more you fall, the more you learn. It correlates with everyday life; no matter how hard the hits are, you keep on going because you love it."

As skating enthusiasts flock to the new park, they are urged to follow safety regulations posted near the park, as well as wear all necessary personal protective equipment.

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Imagine That (PG) Fri-Tues: 12:30, 6:30	The Hangover (R) Fri-Tues: 12:30, 3:30, 6:30, 9:30	STARTING 7/1 Ice Age (PG) 12:30, 3:30, 6:30, 9:30 Public Enemy (R) 12:00, 3:00, 6:00, 9:00

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Combat Center sports



PFC MICHAEL T. GAMS

Hospital's second baseman Darryl Sol smacks one down the first-base line during a Commanding General's Intramural Softball League game against PMO at Felix Field Wednesday night.



PFC MICHAEL T. GAMS

Hospital's third baseman Devin Fleming prepares to run to second as his teammate catcher Seth Bryan gets ready to hit during league play Wednesday night at Felix Field.

Intramural Softball League

Standings as of Thursday

Team	Wins	Losses
Scrappers	13	1
MWSS-374	11	2
Tanks	13	3
ESD Warriors	12	4
3/11	10	4
CLB-7	11	5
VMU-3	11	5
7th Marines	10	6
3rd CEB	9	7
NAV PERS	8	7
Hospital	9	9
PMO	8	8
MCCES HQBN	8	9
IPAC	6	9
ESD Hooligans	6	9
CMA	5	12
G-6	4	11
PMO K-9	4	11
Dirty Dozen	4	12
2/7	3	16
Dental	0	15



Hospital's pitcher Phillip Miller warms up his arm before pitching the ball during a league game against PMO at Felix Field Wednesday night.



PFC MICHAEL T. GAMS



PFC MICHAEL T. GAMS

Hospital's left fielder Mark Maxwell prepares to run to second base during a league game against PMO at Felix Field Wednesday night.

Soccer playoffs kick into action

LANCE CPL. MONICA C. ERICKSON

COMBAT CORRESPONDENT

Six teams competing in the Commanding General's Intramural Soccer League will be participating in the

playoffs to determine the champion aboard the Combat Center from Tuesday through Monday.

The soccer season ended with Headquarters Battalion in first place and 3rd Combat Engineer Battalion

in second place.

"[The playoffs] are going great because it seems like all the teams are trying to bring their game to a higher level," said George R. Velasquez, a defenseman and captain for the Naval

Hospital team. "Although, I think Headquarters Battalion might win the playoffs because of their skill level and time practicing together."

Two games were played Tuesday night; Naval Hospital versus Marine Wing Support Squadron 374, and 1st Tank Battalion versus Marine Corps Communications-Electronics School. MWSS-374 and MCCES won the games, and moved ahead into the winners brackets, competing against 3rd CEB and Headquarters Battalion Wednesday night.

Headquarters Battalion and 3rd CEB defeated MWSS-374 and MCCES. This moved those two teams into the losers bracket with 1st Tanks and the Naval Hospital teams.

Thursday night the Naval Hospital took on MCCES, and 1st Tanks battled against MWSS-374.

The teams are competing in a double-elimination tournament, which means a team has to lose twice before being disqualified from the playoffs.

The double-elimination was designed to give teams an extra chance to win the championship, and give players more time on the field.

"I like the double elimination because it gives teams a second chance to see what went wrong with their game," Velasquez said.

Many of the players wish the season was longer, but most understand it was difficult due to conflicting schedules and operational commitments of the deploying units, Velasquez explained.

"We haven't had any incidents in soccer and everybody has been doing a great job staying in control," said Skip Best, the Marine Corps Community Services athletics director. "It has been so great; the guys want to continue playing so they requested a second season."



LANCE CPL. MONICA C. ERICKSON

Carlos Rivera and Rafael Toboda, players with MCCES, play it safe while making the easy passes to one another during the first game of the Commanding General's Intramural Soccer League playoffs Tuesday at Felix Field.



LANCE CPL. MONICA C. ERICKSON

Francisco Reyes, (front) with Marine Corps Communications-Electronics School, keeps complete control of the ball while defending 1st Tank Battalion player, Anthony Hamilton during the first game of the Commanding General's Intramural Soccer League playoffs Tuesday at Felix Field.

Athlete of the Week



Name: Cpl. Isaac Solorio

Age: 25

Job title: Warehouse clerk with Company A, 1st Tank Battalion

Recognition: Solorio's coach recognized him as an excellent player.

Major sports accomplishments: All Marine Base Soccer Team

Favorite aspect about sport: Everything, giving assists.

Advice for aspiring athletes: "Give it all you've got—with heart and passion for a sport, you can do anything."



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Base Post Exchange	Building 1664	Subway	29 Palms Community Center	29 Palms Staters	Joshua Tree Park Blvd.	YVTC	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)			YVTC	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.	YVTC	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)			YVTC	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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