

# OBSERVATION Post

MARINE CORPS AIR GROUND COMBAT CENTER

SEPTEMBER 4, 2009    SERVING THE TWENTYNINE PALMS COMMUNITY SINCE 1957    VOL. 52 ISSUE 35

## Night time is the right time — for an ambush

**PFC. MICHAEL T. GAMS**  
*COMBAT CORRESPONDENT*

The ambush was set, the warm night air was quiet and calm until the squad leader's voice pierced the silence. In an instant the silence was obliterated and the darkness came to life as the squads of Company E, 2nd Battalion, 7th Marine Regiment opened fire with their rifles, machine guns and lightweight mortars—leaving the ambush site in ruins.

The live-fire ambush exercise was the culminating event for Co. E's heliborne assault operations Tuesday through Thursday to

train the company's Marines and sailors in night ambush and patrol tactics in the Combat Center's Rainbow Canyon training area, said Capt. Zeb Philpott, the company's commander.

He added that Co. E was chosen as the helicopter assault company for the battalion's upcoming deployment with the 31st Marine Expeditionary Unit.

After two CH-53 Super Stallion helicopters touched down at LZ Ripper, a landing zone northeast of the Combat Center's

**See AMBUSH, A7**



PFC. MICHAEL T. GAMS

Lance Cpl. Tessillo Nunez and Pfc. Eric Flaherty, a mortar team with Company E, 2nd Battalion, 7th Marine Regiment, launch a 60 mm lightweight mortar into the site where their squad set up an ambush Tuesday night in the Combat Center's Rainbow Canyon training area. The company inserted into Rainbow Canyon on CH-53 Super Stallion helicopters and set up patrol bases where they launched security and reconnaissance patrols which culminated in live-fire night ambushes.



CPL. COREY A. BLODGETT

Marines with 1st Tank Battalion bow their heads during a memorial service in honor of Lance Cpl. Adam Lynch, a vehicle commander with 1st Tanks Headquarters and Service Company, at the Combat Center's Catholic Chapel Wednesday.

## 1st Tanks remembers their brother-in-arms

**LANCE CPL. ANDREW D. THORBURN**  
*COMBAT CORRESPONDENT*

A memorial service honoring Lance Cpl. Adam Lynch, a 22-year-old vehicle commander with 1st Tank Battalion's Tube-Launched, Optically-Tracked, Wire-guided Missile Platoon, was attended by more than 200 friends, family members and loved ones Wednesday at the Combat Center's Catholic Chapel.

Lynch, a native of Gardena, Calif., died Aug. 19 due to medical complications resulting from physical training.

The ceremony started with the invocation given by Navy Lt. Russell Hale, the 1st Tanks chaplain, followed by the national anthem. Lt. Col. Thomas Gordon, the commanding officer of 1st Tanks, then addressed the congregation and described Lynch as an invaluable Marine not only to his the shop, to the

lives of his fellow Marines as well.

While looking at Lynch's family, Gordon said "We will not forget your husband and your son."

After the commanding officer's remarks, Lynch's platoon commander, 1st Lt. Scott MacDonald stepped up and talked about how impressed he was with Lynch's leadership skills and personal qualities. He said those qualities led Lynch to become a vehicle chief as a lance corporal – a billet normally reserved for noncommissioned officers.

Cpl. Christopher Corley, a TOW gunner with 1st Tanks' Headquarters and Service Company, and friend of Lynch, gave the eulogy. Corley described Lynch as a great father and well-rounded Marine.

"He was a good Marine and a good

**See MEMORIAL, A10**

## 3/7 sends rounds down range at Hawthorne



Pfc. Christopher Bass, a Tube-launched, Optically-tracked, Wire-guided missile gunner with Weapons Company, 3rd Battalion, 7th Marine Regiment, fires an M-240B medium machine gun, during a live-fire training exercise at Hawthorne Army Ammunition Depot, Nev., Aug. 25.

CPL. R. LOGAN KYLE

**CPL. R. LOGAN KYLE**  
*COMBAT CORRESPONDENT*

HAWTHORNE ARMY AMMUNITION DEPOT, Nev. – Marines and sailors of Weapons Company, 3rd Battalion, 7th Marine Regiment, departed Marine Corps Mountain Warfare Training Center Bridgeport, Calif., Aug. 24 to conduct live fire training exercises at the Hawthorne Army Ammunition Depot, Nev.

The company spent the entire day Aug. 25 firing the M-240B medium machine gun, and the M-2 .50 caliber and MK-19 heavy machine guns.

"The Marines fired at targets anywhere from 900 to 2,000 meters away today," said

Chief Warrant Officer 3 Matt Carpenter, the battalion's gunner. "These weapons can cover a lot of ground, and the Marines should have a lot of confidence in their abilities after this training."

Pfc. Christopher Bass, a Tube-launched, Optically-tracked, Wire-guided missile gunner with Weapons Co., cross trained on the M-240B and said it was nice to get behind a machine gun again.

"With a TOW you pretty much aim and fire one round, and that's it," said Bass, a Slinger, Wis., native. "I like firing machine guns because they move around a lot more and give you a

**See 3/7, A3**



Some like it hot ~ See A3



'If my story can help...' ~ See A9



Glide like an eagle ~ See B1



2009 season kicks off ~ See B1



## Semper Moto

### Another option to consider

Mr. Fleming,

I'd like to inform you of another choice that is available to people who are looking to purchase a motorcycle. It is called the Can-Am Spyder. It is a trike with three wheels: two in the front and a single in the back.

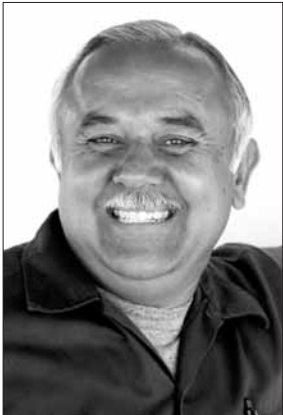
At the age of 49, I have never owned or operated a motorcycle. The Spyder was the right vehicle at the right time. It is a very stable vehicle. When I took my test ride I felt comfortable and did not feel intimidated.

I did not buy it to run with Ninjas, Ducatis or other sport bikes. I like to get out and cruise. With a 1000 cc V-Twin and 106 hp, it has plenty of get up and go. When the wind is blowing, I don't have to fight to stay upright riding down the highway.

There are currently two models available: a manual transmission and a semi-automatic version, with a push button controller. I chose the semi-automatic model. I have ridden it since April and it is a blast.

One more item – the Can-Am Spyder does not require a motorcycle license in the State of California.

**Semper Fi,  
Francisco Gomez**



Francisco Gomez

## Hot Topics

### CALL FOR ARTISTS

The Morongo Basin Transit Authority has extended its “Call for Artists” deadline to Sept. 16 to submit for submitting applications to create a public art installation for the Twentynine Palms Transit Center, which is due to begin construction this fall. The new open-air bus loading and transfer station at the corner of Adobe Road and Cactus Avenue will feature desert landscaping, shade trees, bus shelters, and walkways, and will have a prominent area for an outdoor public art installation at the corner. For more information, call Joe Meer at MBTA at 366-2986 or project coordinator Danny Chow at 949-367-2850.

### NAVAL HOSPITAL OFFERS SPORTS PHYSICALS

The Robert E. Bush Naval Hospital here will be offering free sports physicals on a walk-in, first come, first serve basis to all military dependents in school grades 7 through 12 on Saturday from 9 a.m. to 12 p.m. To book a school or sports physical appointment, call Dr. Bidstrup on the appointment line at 830-2752. Contact the customer relations officer at 830-2475 for more information.

### NEW RELIGIOUS SERVICE AVAILABLE

A new inter-denominational and traditional Protestant Christian worship service will be available on base at Christ Chapel, every Sunday at 10:30 a.m. All are welcome. Children's church and child-care are available. For more information, please call 830-6464.

## This Day in Marine Corps History

Sept. 4, 1813

The Marines of the USS Maine assist in the victory over the British ship HMS Boxer off the coast of Maine during the War of 1812.

## Centerspeak

If you could live in any food what would it be?

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



SGT. MATTHEW DOMBROWSKI  
COMBAT LOGISTICS BATTALION 7,  
SUPPORT COMPANY

“Jell-O because it would be like a waterbed and I could do what I want with it.”



LANCE CPL. RICHARD SMITH  
1ST TANK BATTALION, MOTOR  
TRANSPORTATION SECTION

“Spaghetti. It is delicious.”



STAFF SGT. JERRY RODGERS  
COMBAT LOGISTICS BATTALION 7,  
HEADQUARTERS AND SERVICE COMPANY

“Filet mignon. It is expensive and I like it.”

## School Liaison Question of the Week



**Question:** What do I need to do if I want to home school my child?

**Answer:** Home schooling in California is only legal if you have a certified teacher providing the instruction. Otherwise, most “home schooled” students are actually enrolled in a district, chapter, or private school independent study program.

Here are a few links for home-based education programs in our local area:

1. Mojave River Academy: <http://www.mojaveriver.net>
2. MUSD ICEE Program: <http://www.icee-morongousd-ca.schoolloop.com>
3. California Virtual Academy: <http://www.k12.com/cava>

For more information, please contact [smbplmsmccsschooliaison@usmc.mil](mailto:smbplmsmccsschooliaison@usmc.mil) or call 830-1574.



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

## Combat Center Spotlight

**Name:** Petty Officer 3rd Class Erica Murphy

**Job Title:** Staff corpsman at the Robert E. Bush Naval Hospital

**Job Duties:** Check patients and gather medial information on them prior to a doctor's exam.

**What do you like most about your job?**

“Patient interaction. When I can answer a patient's questions or point them in the right direction so they don't even need to see a doctor, I feel like I did my job.”

**Significant achievements:** Picking up her current rank in June.

**Hobbies:** “Reading, hanging out with friends, and talking to family.”

**Military service:** Four years

**Time at Combat Center:** A year-and-a-half



## OBSERVATION POST

**Commanding General Brig. Gen. Charles M. Gurganus**

Public Affairs Officer Jennie E. Haskamp

Deputy Public Affairs Officer 1st Lt. Doy Demsick

Public Affairs Chief Gunnery Sgt. Sergio Jimenez

Press Chief/Editor Cpl. Nicholas M. Dunn

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SUDOKU #1554

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CROSSWORD AND SUDOKU PUZZLES COURTESY OF © 2009 HOMETOWN CONTENT

## HISS MAJESTY

[puzzle Solutions on A5]

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ACROSS

1. Meat stamp inits.
5. One of AAs twelve
9. Shrimp or tuna dish
14. Work-order detail, for short
15. Be a snitch
16. Choreographer Tharp
17. “\_\_ quote you on that?”
18. Rights org.
19. Stared lustfully at
20. Observation after a genetic engineering mishap?
23. Feels regret over
24. Risk a perjury charge
25. Sounds from a flock
28. Sound from a stockyard
30. Letter after epsilon
34. Wing it
35. Iranian's tongue
37. “\_\_ cool!”
38. A family member's duck costume?
41. Clean air org
42. Horizontal line on a graph
43. “Inferiority complex” coiner Alfred
44. Thumbs-down votes
46. Loc. of the UN and MSG
47. Clown's props
48. Top-left PC key
50. Go \_\_ (tussle)
51. Pugilists' post-fight embrace?
58. Astrological Scales
59. Word after “Ye”
60. Baseball's “Sultan of Swat”
62. Place to moor
63. Trot or canter
64. The Bionic Woman's California hometown
65. Calvin with 12 PGA Tour wins
66. Princess born 8/15/1950
67. Dimwit

DOWN

1. Trojans' school, for short
2. E-junk
3. “... which nobody can”
4. Polluted precipitation
5. Puts on, as a play
6. Some Nasdaq stocks
7. “\_\_ Enchanted” (Anne Hathaway movie)
8. “In addition ...”
9. Popular vodka, for short
10. Archie Bunker expletive
11. Grammy winner Lovett
12. One of the Baldwins
13. Florida's Miami-\_\_ county
21. Beat in the ring
22. Heed the dentist's advice
25. When doubled, a German spa area
26. Parkinson's treatment
27. Broncos legend John
28. Wild-eyed and crazy
29. They lack refinement

31. Tom of “The Seven Year Itch”
32. “Be silent,” musically
33. Weather Underground co-founder Bill
35. Super-attractive
36. Headed for overtime
39. 1933-41 veep John \_\_ Garner
40. Willow-to-Nome sled race
45. Not publicly known
47. Tampa neighbor, familiarly
49. Participate in Disney on Ice
50. Introduce to the mix
51. Radar image
52. One of a limerick's five
53. Up to the task
54. Lotus position activity
55. Pizazz
56. Stephen King's scary St. Bernard
57. List-ending abbr.
61. Chart-topper



# Food service Marines serve hot food, increase morale during training

**CPL. NICOLE A. LAVINE**  
*COMBAT CORRESPONDENT*

Marines and sailors of Marine Wing Support Squadron 374 killed two birds with one stone at the Combat Center's Expeditionary Air Field from Aug. 24 to 28 by receiving valuable training while also providing a necessity to fellow Marines.

The MWSS-374 Food Services Office set up an expeditionary kitchen called the Field Food Service System to feed fellow MWSS-374 Marines, and those from MWSS-372.

The kitchen was set up in a white, portable shed complete with heating units, utensils and ovens. The FFSS allows food to be prepared fresh on-site instead of having it transported from one location to another.

Gunnery Sgt. Cocheta L. Cavers, the MWSS-374 mess chief, said the overall mission of the FFSS

was to provide the best quality of food possible to Marines training in a field environment.

MWSS-374 is at the EAF preparing for the Weapons and Tactics Instructors Course at Marine Corps Air Station Yuma, Ariz., where they are scheduled to train from Sept. 21 to the first week of November along side a squadron they will deploy with later this year. Cavers said the FSO group expects to feed at least 500 Marines and sailors twice a day for the month-and-a-half course.

"My Marines work very hard," said Cavers, a Brooklyn, N.Y., native. "They provide restaurant-quality food and the best service they can. Food is morale out here."

Lance Cpl. Nicole Yager, an administrative clerk with MWSS-374, said having something as simple

See CHOW, A5



CPL. NICOLE A. LAVINE

Pfc. Ronal Pacheco, an engineer equipment operator with Marine Wing Support Squadron 374, serves food to fellow squadron Marines from inside the Field Food Service System at Camp Wilson Aug. 27.

### 3/7, from A1

lot more feedback."

The Marines fired from high and low angles of at least 30 degrees, maximizing the efficiency of the exercise, Carpenter said.

"Being high above or well below a target makes it harder to determine how far away it is," said Carpenter, a Loysville, Penn., native. "On flat ground you can use the football field method to determine how far away a target is, but when you're firing from high or low, you have to use other methods to put rounds on target and that's what it's all about."

He said the mountainous desert environment Hawthorne provides is crucial in giving Marines the most realistic training possible.

"This area, based on its terrain, is an excellent site for machine gunners to train," he said. "There are only a few units in the Marine Corps that have the opportunity to train in an area like this."

The training was especially important to Cpl. Omar Salazar, a former administrative clerk, who lateral moved into infantry earlier this year.

"I'm taking a lot away from this training, not only from today but everything we've been doing here and in Bridgeport," said Salazar, a Rosemont, Calif., native.

"I'm just taking it all in and learning as much as I can."

MCMWTC personnel also used the training to gather data to possibly put together a mountain machine gunner's course in the future.

The unit returned to MCMWTC Aug. 26 and is currently engaged in the battalion's final exercise.



CPL. R. LOGAN KYLE

Marines with Weapons Company, 3rd Battalion, 7th Marine Regiment, fire the M-2 .50 caliber heavy machine gun during a live-fire training exercise at the Hawthorne Army Ammunition Depot, Nev., Aug. 25. The unit traveled to Hawthorne from MCMWTC, to conduct operations as part of the mountain warfare training evolution the battalion is taking part in at MWTC.

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You may bring submissions to The Desert Trail office, 6396 Adobe Road, Twentynine Palms, or the Hi-Desert Star office at 56445 Twentynine Palms Highway, Yucca Valley or e-mail them to [osullivan@deserttrail.com](mailto:osullivan@deserttrail.com). If you have questions or need help writing your story, call Kelly O'Sullivan at (760) 367-3577.

Photographs courtesy of the Library of Congress

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**Observation Post**

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## Special Reaction Team scopes out unknown distance training



LANCE CPL. KELSEY J. GREEN

Cpl. Thomas R. Hammond, a member of the Combat Center's Provost Marshal's Office Special Reaction Team, fires an M-40A1 sniper rifle with the help of Sgt. Gordon J. Moreau, an SRT team leader, during an unknown distance training exercise at Combat Center Range 1A Aug. 21.



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**TIFFANY ANDERSON**  
*TriWest Healthcare Alliance*

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change on behalf of the Department of Defense.

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CPL. NICOLE A. LAVINE

Gunnery Sgt. Cocheta L. Cavers, the Marine Wing Support Squadron 374 mess chief, serves up shredded beef to Marines and sailors from inside the Field Food Service System at Camp Wilson Aug. 27. The FFSS was set up for the week to serve hot food to squadron Marines training there.

## CHOW, from A3

as hot chow twice a day made a difference in her daily performance.

"Food is a great motivator to work hard," said the Muskegon, Mich., native.

Staff Sgt. Korey Evans, the squadron's communication wire chief, agreed.

"Hot chow always tastes better," said the Detroit native. "MREs [Meals Ready to Eat] just don't do much for you sometimes when you're in the field. It's definitely a morale booster."

Cavers said it's gratifying for her and her Marines to continue providing quality service when they get as much positive feedback from their Marine consumers as they do.

"It's nice hearing Marines say 'thank you' and 'that was delicious chow' or asking what's on the menu for today," Cavers said. "We love getting the feedback."

Gunnery Sgt. David Winners, the MWSS-374 Engineer Company first sergeant, returned to the FFSS window for seconds and said even in the summer heat of Twentynine Palms, hot chow still hits the spot for him.

"I don't care if it's 30 degrees or 100 degrees," said Winners, a Forest Hill, La., native. "Hot chow is satisfying no matter what."

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## TOUGH MINDED OPTIMISM

by Lou Gerhardt

Every farmer is a tough minded optimist. Farmers work long hours every day, they work hard every day, always in anticipation of excellent results. When good results are achieved, farmers enjoy great satisfaction and sometimes even delight in the accomplishments of their tireless efforts. That's why I enjoy visiting the Joshua Tree Certified Farmers' Market. All the many vendors are happy and they show it. They are proud of their accomplishments and enjoy showing and sharing their wares with the many visitors who stroll the spacious and cheerful market.

The entire market just exudes happiness, joy, a spirit of optimism, and a love of life and of all God's creation.

The proprietor of the market is my friend Lori Herbel. Lori is real. She is honest, fair, outspoken, and caring in every aspect of her personal and public life. She has true love of all God's creation and is a strong advocate of sustainable growth, the preservation of the night sky, nature's plants, wild life, and an effort to maintain the rural character of her home town.

Lori is a dedicated member of the Yucca Valley Town Council and also serves on the board of the MBTA and the Mojave Desert Air Quality Management District.

You should know that Lori was a farmer for 15 years. During those years, she was a vendor at more than 2,300 markets, sometimes three or four a week.

Lori feels called to use her knowledge and abilities to serve God and her community. She tries to follow the advice the Apostle Paul gave young Timothy "Study to show thyself approved, a workman that needth not be ashamed."

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## Marines encouraged to use social media appropriately

## MARINE CORPS LOGISTICS BASE ALBANY

According to the Marine Corps' official response on social media from the Division of Public Affairs, Headquarters Marine Corps, which was posted on the

“Social media is important to every Marine and sailor out there,” said Flores. “When you are a long way from home, your family is on your mind. These days, Marines are used to communicating with Facebook and MySpace, and when they

## CFC message from the CG

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Capt. Stephen Kelley	HQBN	830-7083	stephen.kelley@usmc.mil
Niki Mcbain	MCCS	830-8106	jennifer.mcbain@usmc.mil
Master Gunnery Sgt. Ronald Mercer	MCTOG	830-3494	ronald.mercer@usmc.mil
Warrant Officer Brian Walker	MVSD	830-1786	brian.walker@usmc.mil
1st Lt. Kasisi Harris	MCCES	830-1092	kasisi.harris@usmc.mil
Capt. Ethan Astor	7th Marines	830-5800	ethan.astor@usmc.mil
2nd Lt. Kevin Canning	2/7	830-8400	kevin.canning@usmc.mil
1st Lt. Daniel Kirkman	3/4	830-3550	daniel.kirkman@usmc.mil
Capt. Jayson Welihan	1st Tank Bn	830-7397	jayson.welihan@usmc.mil
Gunnery Sgt. Robert Kruppe	3/11	830-7969	robert.kruppe@usmc.mil
2nd Lt. Cody Denton	3rd AAB	830-7196	cody.denton@usmc.mil
1st Lt. Justine Whipple	CLB-7	830-1902	justine.whipple@usmc.mil
Master Sgt. Shawn Tate	MWSS-374	830-5074	shawn.tate@usmc.mil
Staff Sgt. Brad Alston	VMU-1	830-6034	brad.alston@usmc.mil
1st Lt. David Thomas II	VMU-3	830-9372	david.thomas2@usmc.mil
Lt. Cmdr. Gloria Garner	NHTP	830-2135	gloria.garner@med.navy.mil
Petty Officer 2nd Class Tysen Klafke	23rd Dental Co.	830-7054	tysen.klafke@usmc.mil
1st Sgt. Brian O'Toole	Co. D, 4th Tanks	830-0968	brian.otoole@usmc.mil
Gunnery Sgt. Marco Lozano	3rd CEB	830-7585	marco.lozano@usmc.mil
Allen Hyde	G-1 Adjutant	830-7426	allen.hyde@usmc.mil



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After the defensive positions were set and the local area scoped out, four squads sent reconnaissance patrols out before dark to observe the ambush site they would assault separately with squad-sized elements that night.

The pattern of recon patrols during the day and ambushes at night continued for the remaining squads through Wednesday night.

With new experiences, comes new knowledge, which is what Lance Cpl. James Grimes, the machine gun section leader with 1st Platoon, stressed during the excercise. He said anytime he goes to the

Co. E will continue to rehearse heliborne assaults, patrolling techniques and ambush skills to prepare for their upcoming deployment to Southeastern Asia with the 31st MEU.



First Lt. George Fenton, the executive officer of Co. E, 2/7, hikes toward the company's combat operations center after flying to the Combat Center's Rainbow Canyon Training Area Tuesday.



Lance Cpl. Herman Prieto, a mortarman with Company E, 2nd Battalion, 7th Marine Regiment, cautiously maneuvers his way down a hill toward the company's combat operations center Tuesday, after hiking nearly two kilometers from where he was dropped off by a CH-53 Super Stallion in the Combat Center's Rainbow Canyon.

“Even before this message, sites such as YouTube, Facebook, MySpace and Twitter could not be accessed by Marines using the Marine Corps Enterprise Network in accordance with Marine Corps and Department of the Navy policies,” according to the official response. Reasons for the general prohibition on system networks include high risk for viruses and malicious intent, as well as the fact that certain social media use a great deal of bandwidth that

According to the Marine Corps' Web site, other units

“Marines also need to know that they represent their organization at all times, even through social media, and that operational security should always be remem-

bered when posting information online," said Colie Young, deputy public affairs officer, Public Affairs Office, Operations and Training Division, MCLB Albany.

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Dean*



# Retired Marine officer describes personal battle with alcohol

**PFC. MICHAEL T. GAMS**  
*COMBAT CORRESPONDENT*

Traveling through the airport one day nearly five years ago, Dr. Jack “Blackjack” Matthews, a retired Marine Corps lieutenant colonel, was stopped by a lance corporal wearing his Service A uniform who said, “Thank you, your story really helped me out.”

Matthews recalled many moments like this as the reason he travels around the Marine Corps, and speaks to service members about his battle with alcohol and his recovery.

Matthews spoke to Combat Center Marines and sailors Aug. 24 and 25 at the Sunset Cinema in hopes his story could help another fellow Marine start on the road to recovery.

Matthews said he has spent the last 13 years traveling everywhere from Okinawa to North Carolina and has told his story to approximately 300,000 Marines. He plans to continue to speak anywhere he is invited.

Matthews opened his talks by telling personal stories of how his drinking got him in trouble in his personal life and professional career.

He spoke of a time when he was a first lieutenant and got “blackout” drunk in a hospital after being wounded in Vietnam. How he told

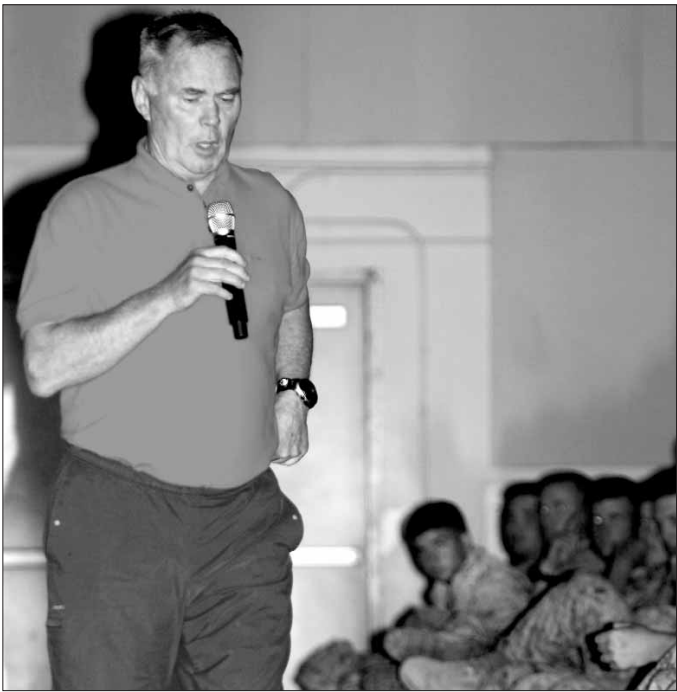
visiting retired Marine Corps Gen. Harry Schmidt, the commanding general of 4th Marine Division during the World War II island hopping campaign in the Pacific, he didn’t think the landing on Iwo Jima was handled correctly.

After Matthews was told about the comments he made by the admiral in charge of the hospital the next day, Matthews revealed he knew little about the actual invasion on Iwo Jima.

Throughout his story, Matthews told how he slowly lost control of his life, how knew he couldn’t drink anymore, yet was unable to go a single day without a drink.

That vicious cycle is why he and alcoholics like him keep drinking for so long

See **ALCOHOL, A10**



PFC. MICHAEL T. GAMS

Dr. Jack Matthews, a retired Marine Corps lieutenant colonel, speaks to a gathering of Combat Center Marines and sailors Aug. 25 at the Sunset Cinema about his personal battle with alcoholism. Matthews has spent the last 13 years telling his story to service members across the globe.

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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.

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

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**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

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.





LANCE CPL. ANDREW D. THORBURN

The Marines and sailors of 1st Tank Battalion give their condolences to Charlotte Lynch, the mother of Lance Cpl. Adam Lynch, a vehicle commander with 1st Tanks who passed Aug. 19 during a memorial service held Wednesday at the Combat Center's Catholic Chapel.



CPL. COREY A. BLODGETT

Jany Wasdin (right), the family readiness officer for 1st Tanks, consoles Viviana Lynch, the spouse of the late Lance Cpl. Adam Lynch, during his memorial service.

MEMORIAL, from A1

friend," Corley said. "He would never let anyone be alone in the barracks on the holidays."

After the eulogy, a few of Lynch's friends came forward and spoke about their personal experiences with him.

Those attending then sang the Navy Hymn and were followed by 1st Sgt. Joseph Gray, the company first sergeant, performing roll call. Gray stood up in front of the assembly and called out the names of Marines. One by one they responded with "present." He then called out for Lynch. There was no response-taps began to play to fill the silence in the chapel.

The memorial service ended with Hale delivering the benediction and inviting everyone to pay their final respects to Lynch and his family.

ALCOHOL, from A9

— even after they have lost everything important to them, Matthews explained.

However, his story was not one of all woe and despair.

Matthews told his audience after one night of particularly hard drinking around his chain of command, he again made a foolhardy comment in a blackout, and it was then he was told to seek help for his alcohol problem.

He chose to see a military psychologist who immediately sent him to Bethesda Naval Hospital in Maryland for rehabilitation, which he says, coupled with regularly attending 12-step meetings, saved his life.

Matthews said his experience can serve as an inspiration to anyone struggling with a problem with alcohol, because the best time to quit is before the problem gets out of control.

"I recently attended a rehab program in San Diego," said a Marine who asked to remain anonymous. "Hearing stories like Mathews' just reinforces what I learned. I just hope people who are starting to struggle with addiction who hear his story get help before it is too late and they ruin their lives."

Matthews' story is only one of many of alcoholics who have overcome their disease.

"If my story can help even one Marine, then my trip is worth it," Matthews said. "Even though I've retired, it's a 'Semper Fi' kind of thing."

If you think you may have a problem with alcohol or for more information on substance abuse, call your unit's substance abuse counselor or the Combat Center's Substance Abuse Center at 830-6376.

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## Wednesday night lights

### Combat Center football teams begin 2009 season

LANCE CPL. ANDREW D. THORBURN  
*COMBAT CORRESPONDENT*

As the sun set and the lights on Felix Field turned on, the sound of the roaring crowd and football pads crunching together filled the desert air Wednesday night during the opening preseason game of the Commanding General's Intramural Football League.

The teams were getting ready for their season by holding 20-minute preseason games.

The teams, which have been training for the past couple of months, have until Wednesday before the first game and the start of the regular season.

The training regimen for each team is different and each team faces unique challenges due to operational requirements.

Alan Gilly, the 1st Tanks team coach, said his players are very committed to the team and preparing for the season. Some of his players have come to practice even after spending

See FOOTBALL, B3



CPL. COREY A. BLODGETT

Marines with CLB-7's football team wait for their game to begin at Felix Field Wednesday night during the Commanding General's Intramural Football League's preseason opener. The 2009 season is scheduled to begin Wednesday at Felix Field. The opening game has VMU-1 facing off against the reigning champions, HQBN, who claimed the Combat Center's championship title and moved on to trounce the top team from Marine Corps Base Camp Pendleton, Calif., in the Best of the West tournament.

## ‘Once a Marine’ tells tale of combat, family, courage

SGT. JENNIFER BROFER  
*1ST MLC PUBLIC AFFAIRS*

‘Once a Marine’  
by Gunnery Sgt. Nick Popaditch

I try not to judge a book by it's cover, but this one is pretty hard not to judge. Looking at the cover of the book, “Once a Marine: An Iraq War Tank Commander's Inspirational Memoir of Combat, Courage and

Recovery,” the reader sees Gunnery Sgt. Nick Popaditch, a salty-looking Marine smoking a victory cigar as he sits atop a tank with the faded image of a Saddam Hussein statue hovering in the background. Although he is in the middle of a war zone, the “Cigar Marine” smiles and laughs. This is a Marine who looks like he has one helluva story to tell – and he does.

In his 288-page memoir,

“Gunny Pop” tells his story about the fateful day in April 2004 in Iraq during Operation Iraqi Freedom II, a year after the famous “Cigar Marine” photograph was taken, when an Iraqi insurgent fires the rocket-propelled grenade that changes his life forever.

Reading the book, I can almost see the white flash of light that Popaditch sees as the RPG explodes inches from his face, causing him to nearly go blind after doctors later remove his right eye, barely saving the other. And this is just Chapter One. What follows is a moving story of the docs who save his life, then struggle to save his sight, and the effects his injuries have on him and his family.

Popaditch, from East Chicago, Ind., co-wrote his memoir with Mike Steere, and takes the reader on a journey starting from just moments before the RPG explodes, to the hospital where he calls his beloved wife, April, which just happens to be the same day as their wedding anniversary. In the many hospitals where Popaditch recovers, he shares camaraderie with the Marines who are also combat wounded, and they motivate each other through humor and stories, never letting each other feel sorry for themselves, because they are Marines.

Even after losing an eye, Gunny Pop never seems to lose his fighting spirit, or his

See BOOK, B3

## Gliders still being flown in desert area after 60 years



CPL. NICOLE A. LAVINE

A Cessna Schweitzer 175 airplane tows a glider behind it after taking off from the Twentynine Palms Airport Sunday. This is one of three ways to launch a glider into the sky.

CPL. NICOLE A. LAVINE  
*COMBAT CORRESPONDENT*

TWENTYNINE PALMS – For some, the idea of flying thousands of feet in the air in a plane that has no gas, no engine, no communication with a flight tower and is barely moving more than 30 miles per hour might be terrifying. But for a small group of Twentynine Palms glider enthusiasts, the idea is utterly liberating.

This group, called 29 Soaring Club, gathers at the Twentynine Palms Airport every Sunday to spend a few hours soaring through the desert skies with no sounds of engines or headphone chatter to distract from the serene cruise in a one or two-person glider airplane.

Unlike a conventional airplane, gliders do not have any gear powered by gasoline, electricity or batteries. Instead, they

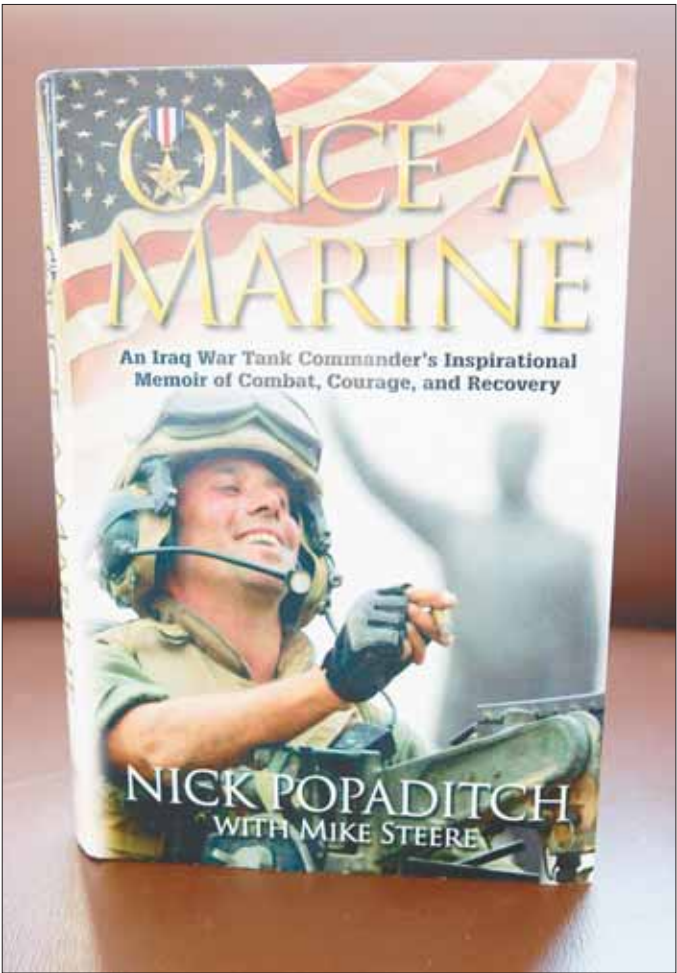
rely solely on air currents and thermal pockets to catch and lift them up to 12,000 feet in the air.

“A good pilot can stay up all day,” said Ronald Renfro, the 29 Soaring Club president, and club member for 10 years. Renfro said he felt overjoyed to meet others who share his long-standing enthusiasm for gliders.

“They’re very low maintenance and fairly inexpensive,” he said. “Just about anyone could fly and stay up in the air this time of year.”

Gliders can be launched by one of three means at the Twentynine Palms Airport. The most inexpensive way to launch a glider is by using a winch – a large, stationary machine which uses 4,000 feet of plasma rope and a powerful system of pulleys to drag the glider from one

See GLIDER, B4



COURTESY PHOTO

In his 288-page memoir, “Gunny Pop” tells his story about the fateful day in April 2004 in Iraq during Operation Iraqi Freedom II when his life changed forever.





**Local Events**

**Theater: “Nunsensations!”**  
Description: A hysterical musical show  
When: Friday, Sept. 4 through Saturday, Oct. 3, Friday and Saturday shows at 7 p.m. with a Sunday matinee at 2:30 p.m. on Sept. 27  
Where: Theatre 29, 73637 Sullivan Road  
Twentynine Palms. For more information call 361-4151 or visit <http://www.theatre29.com>

**Music: Whispering Pines**  
Description: Featuring country, folk and rock music  
When: 7:30 p.m., Saturday, Sept. 5  
Where: Pappy and Harriet's  
53688 Pioneertown Road, Pioneertown  
For more information call 365-5956 or visit <http://www.pappyandharriets.com>

**Art show reception: Desert Diversity III**  
Description: A group exhibit with more than 45 artists  
When: noon to 3 p.m., Sunday, Sept. 6  
Where: 29 Palms Art Gallery  
74055 Cottonwood Drive, Twentynine Palms  
For more information call 367-7819 or visit <http://www.29palmsartgallery.com>

**Karaoke Night at PJ's hosted by Troy Michaels**  
Description: A sophisticated computerized system  
When: 8 p.m., every Tuesday and Saturday nights  
Where: PJ's Pub, 57564 Twentynine Palms Highway  
Yucca Valley. In the Von's Shopping Center  
For more information call 228-1199

**Music: The Blah Blah Blues Band**  
Description: A blend of raw and refined energy  
When: 7:30 p.m., Thursday, Sept. 10  
Where: Pappy and Harriet's  
53688 Pioneertown Road, Pioneertown  
For more information call 365-5956 or visit <http://www.pappyandharriets.com>

**Lower Desert**

**Music: Tribute to Led Zeppelin**  
Description: They sound just like to original band  
When: 8 p.m., Friday, Sept. 11  
Where: Fantasy Springs Resort Casino  
84-245 Indio Springs Parkway, Indio  
For more info call 800-827-2946 or visit <http://www.fantasyspringsresort.com>

**Music: Lynyrd Skynyrd**  
Description: The definitive Southern rock band  
When: 8 p.m., Saturday, Sept. 12  
Where: Fantasy Springs Resort Casino  
84-245 Indio Springs Parkway, Indio  
For more info call 800-827-2946 or visit <http://www.fantasyspringsresort.com>

**Music: The Sing in Swing**  
Diane Schuur and Bobby Caldwell and “The Big Band”  
When: 8 p.m., Saturday, Sept. 12  
Where: Agua Caliente  
32-250 Bob Hope Drive, Rancho Mirage  
For more info call 888-999-1995 or visit <http://hotwatercasino.com>

**Comedy: Cheech and Chong**  
Description: The hippie comedy duo is coming to town  
When: 9 p.m., Friday, Sept. 18  
Where: Morongo Casino Resort and Spa  
49500 Seminole Drive, Cabazon  
For more info call 800-252-4499 or visit <http://www.morongocasinoresort.com>

**Music: Crosby, Stills and Nash**  
Description: Classic rock and roll  
When: 8 p.m., Friday, Sept. 25  
Where: Fantasy Springs Resort Casino  
84-245 Indio Springs Parkway, Indio  
For more info call 800-827-2946 or visit <http://www.fantasyspringsresort.com>

**Sunset Cinema**

**Friday, Sept. 4**  
6 p.m. – I love you, Beth Cooper, Rated PG  
9 p.m. – The Ugly Truth, Rated R  
Midnight – Away We Go, Rated R

**Saturday, Sept. 5**  
11 a.m. Free Matinee – Monsters vs Aliens, Rated PG  
2 p.m. – G-Force, Rated PG  
6 p.m. – Harry Potter and the Half-Blood Prince, Rated PG  
9 p.m. – Orphan, Rated R  
Midnight – Funny People, Rated R

**Sunday, Sept. 6**  
2 p.m. – Aliens in the Attic, Rated PG  
6 p.m. – I Love You, Beth Cooper, Rated PG-13  
9 p.m. – The Ugly Truth, Rated R

**Monday, Sept. 7**  
2 p.m. – G-Force, Rated PG  
6 p.m. – Harry Potter and the Half-Blood Prince, Rated PG  
9 p.m. – Orphan, Rated R

**Tuesday, Sept. 8**  
7 p.m. – Funny People, Rated R

**Wednesday, Sept. 9**  
7 p.m. – I Love You, Beth Cooper, Rated PG-13

**Thursday, Sept. 10**  
7 p.m. – Away We Go, Rated R

## ‘Basterds’ re-imagines the ending of World War II

**NEIL POND**  
*AMERICAN PROFILE*

**Inglourious Basterds**  
Starring Brad Pitt  
Rated R

Set during the 1940s in Nazi-occupied France, “Inglourious Basterds” re-imagines what might have happened to end World War II, given a certain fantastical mix of fictitious characters on a collision course of coincidence and circumstance. But though the setting is a very real time and place, writer-director Quentin Tarantino isn’t really interested in history. He’s interested in movies.

“Inglourious Basterds” is a movie so infused with movie references, it’s difficult to keep count. Characters discuss movies, movie dialogue, movie slang, movie characters and movie directors. A movie theater becomes crucial to the plot, along with its owner and projectionist. A daring espionage plan involves a British film critic, a German movie star and characters that impersonate Italian moviemakers.

And a mountainous pile of reel-to-reel film – highly flammable, as you’ll learn – becomes a weapon of mass destruction.



COURTESY PHOTO

“Inglourious Basterds,” starring Brad Pitt as Lt. Aldo Raine and Eli Roth as Sgt. “Donny” Donowitz, who lead a rag-tag team of Jewish-American soldiers on bloody, Nazi-hunting sabotage mission through war-torn France during World War II.

Tarantino, a professed film geek, has made a career out of lovingly de- and then re-constructing the movie formats he grew up watching, adoring and absorbing, including kung-fu imports (“Kill Bill”), ’70s blaxploitation (“Jackie Brown”), bloody crime capers (“Pulp Fiction”) vampire fang fests (“From Dusk to Dawn”) and drive-in hot-rod gristle (“Death Proof”).

“Inglourious Basterds” is Tarantino’s explosively enter-

taining homage to war movies, with Brad Pitt as a U.S. Army lieutenant in charge of an elite crew of fearsome “Dirty Dozen”-ish Nazi hunters. The movie’s doubly misspelled title is in itself a nod to the movies, paying off-kilter tribute to one of Tarantino’s favorite films: 1978’s “The Inglorious Bastards,” about a daring commando raid...during World War II...behind enemy lines...in France.

Pitt’s character is fervent in his mission to eliminate the Nazis one by one, scalping his victims Apache-style (or carving swastikas into the foreheads of those he lets survive, to mark them forever). But that’s only one of three separate plotlines, all of which eventually converge in the spectacular finale.

German actor Christoph

Waltz, who plays a scheming Nazi colonel whose evil is masked with snake-oil charm and a dazzling smile, steals practically every scene.

But all the performances, like the rest of the movie, bear Tarantino’s unmistakable maestro’s stamp from start to finish. The last line spoken comes out of Brad Pitt’s mouth, but it was written by Tarantino and likely it sums up his feelings about this sprawling, gloriously bloody good time of a movie that’s really, behind its WWII theme, a movie about movies, the love of movies and the power of movies.

“I think I’ve made my masterpiece,” says Pitt’s Lt. Aldo Raine, looking into the camera before the credits roll. Time will tell, but “Inglourious Basterds” may very well turn out to be just that.



COURTESY PHOTO

Pitt displays his Swastika-carving knife, which he uses to mark the one Nazi he leaves alive from each killing.

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5:00	5:25	5:30	5:40	5:45	6:00	6:10	7:00	

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

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


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

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PFC. MICHAEL T. GAMS

MCCES receiver Dwane McGeachy skirts the edge of the field as he powers passed 1st Tanks corner Thomas Jackson during Wednesday nights preseason Commanding General's Intramural Football League. MCCES dominated Tanks 12-0.

Retail site operation hours for the Labor Day Holiday

	SEPT. 6	SEPT. 7	SEPT. 8
C&E EXCHANGE:	Closed	Closed	6:30 a.m.–5:30 p.m.
CAMP WILSON EXCHANGE:	8 a.m.–10 p.m.	8 a.m.–10 p.m.	8 a.m.–10 p.m.
HOME STORE:	10 a.m.–6 p.m.	10 a.m.–6 p.m.	10 a.m.–8 p.m.
MARINE PALMS EXCHANGE:	9 a.m.–9 p.m.	9 a.m.–9 p.m.	9 a.m.–9 p.m.
HOSPITAL SHIP STORE:	7 a.m.–5 p.m.	Closed	Closed
MILITARY CLOTHING:	Closed	Closed	10 a.m.–6 p.m.
(Military Clothing will close at 2 p.m. Friday, Sept. 4)			
OCOTILLO EXCHANGE:	Closed	Closed	8 a.m.–8 p.m.
MAIN STORE:	10 a.m.–6 p.m.	10 a.m.–6 p.m.	8 a.m.–6 p.m.
ADMINISTRATION:	Closed	Closed	7:30 a.m.–4:30 p.m.
SEVEN DAY STORE:	7 a.m.–11 p.m.	7 a.m.–11 p.m.	7 a.m.–Midnight
(Seven Day Store will close at 11 p.m. on Saturday, Sept. 5)			
GAS STATION:	8:30 a.m.–4 p.m.	Closed	7 a.m.–6 p.m.

BOOK, from B1

sense of humor. Talking on the phone with his young son after being flown to a hospital, his son asks him what he looks like after his injuries, fearing the worst. The Gunny nonchalantly tells his son “to think back to that scene in The Terminator, (one of his favorite movies), where the robot cuts his own eye out.”

After doctors remove Gunny Pop’s damaged right eye, he later replaces it with a glass one, bearing the Eagle, Globe and Anchor, which, among his other prosthetic eyes, he considers his “favorite.”

Throughout the book, Gunny Pop not only fights to recover from his combat wounds, but fights to remain the “Gunny” he was before his injury, never allowing himself to appear weak in front of other Marines, never complaining about the unfortunate situation he is in. He’s still a Gunny, and damnit if he’s going to appear otherwise.

When Popaditch first wrote his story, it was more of an “after action” type report that he passed along to a Marine major, who suggested he turn it into a book, said Popaditch in a phone interview. One of the reasons he wrote the book, he said, was to say “thank you” to the people who helped him along the way – the Marines who pulled him from the burning tank, the corpsman who gave up his own body armor to shield the wounded Gunny, the doctors who gave him hope, his wife and children who stayed by his side through everything, and the countless others who made his recovery possible.

In addition to giving thanks, Popaditch said writing the book also proved to be “therapeutic,” having to relive experiences that many people in his situation might try to forget.

Reading the book proved to be therapeutic for me, too. I’d be lying if I said I breezed through all 288 pages in one sitting. But whenever I did crack open the book, it was

as if I was stepping into the shoes of Gunny Pop, hearing the voice of the salty Gunny who so badly wants to get back on a tank and into the fight.

Whenever he receives bad news from doctors, my heart sinks. When his son Nick Jr. helps win the basketball championship, it’s as if I’m also there cheering him on. When Popaditch is told he might have to leave the Marine Corps if found “unfit for service” by the Physical Evaluation Board, I cross my fingers and hope for the best, but expect the worst.

But all the while, Gunny Pop never loses sight of his core values of honor, courage and commitment, which he says can be applied on and off the battlefield and will “always get you through adversity.”

This book should be read by not only all Marines, but all Americans, to help them gain an understanding and appreciation of what injured service members have to go through and the physical and mental wounds they are left with. The scars of war go deeper than just the surface, and this book is a powerful reminder of the sacrifices men and women on the battlefield are making every day.

“Once a Marine” can be found online at <http://www.onceamarine.com>.

*“My hand touches nothing but goo on the right-hand upper quadrant of my forehead and face, and the blood gushes fast enough that I know I’ll bleed out pretty soon without expert medical attention. Dying is not authorized, though. I won’t even consider it...I can’t believe one of those bozos actually hit me.”*

-Gunnery Sgt. Nick Popaditch

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FOOTBALL, from B1

their work day going out to the field for training.

According to Gilly, 1st Tanks focused heavily on physical conditioning then focused on their plays three weeks before the preseason games.

“The game is won in the fourth quarter,” Gilly said. “We want to be able to keep going when the other teams are worn out.”

CLB-7, which has been practicing five days a week, has been hampered by players missing practices due to operational commitments. Even with this disadvantage, their coach, Saba Safiari, says they have a good shot at winning the championship.

The talk on the field during the preseason games focused on HQBN being the team to beat this year. As the defending champions, HQBN not only won

the Combat Center’s championship last year, they also beat Camp Pendleton in the “Best of the West” game.

This year the number of teams has jumped from four to six, and they are split into two, three-team divisions.

Teams will play one game a week until the championship game Nov. 25, the day before Thanksgiving.

The teams focused on perfecting their plays against an opponent and getting used to high school football rules Wednesday, said Skip Best, the Marine Corps Community Services athletic director.

The standings at the end of the preseason matches had VMU-1 besting 3rd CEB 6-0, MCCES shutting down 1st Tanks 12-0, and HQBN tying with CLB-7 0-0.

With the preseason games over, the teams are evaluating what went right or wrong to improve their game and get them one step closer to the championship title.

Athlete of the Week



**Name:** Daniel Witts  
**Age:** 21  
**Hometown:** Auburn, N.J.  
**Job Title:** Motor transport operator, Combat Logistics Battalion 7  
**Recognition:** Dedicated to his football team and shows up to practices on his own time despite working long hours.  
**Major sports accomplishments:** Was the top runner in his high school football team.  
**Favorite aspect of the sport:** “It’s good conditioning and has a strong brotherhood.”  
**Advice for aspiring players:** “Just stay with it.”

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GLIDER, from B1

end of the landing strip to the other. As the glider is pulled along, it becomes airborne and releases the cable once it reaches a safe altitude. Pilots can also take off by means of a ground vehicle leading the way using a cable connected to the glider's nose. Even though gliders become airborne at only 30 miles per hour, the vehicle accelerates to 60 miles per hour to



CPL. NICOLE A. LAVINE  
The Combat Center looks as small as a stamp from the aerial view of a glider airplane flying more than 10,000 feet above sea level.

ensure the glider may safely disconnect the cable and get enough height to let the thermal pockets do its part. The more commonly used technique for the club is to tow the gliders behind a Cessna Schweitzer 175 airplane using a cable which releases the gliders at 2,000 feet. The advantage to using a tow plane lies in its ability to direct a glider to a heat pocket area before releasing it, Renfro said.

Van Goyne, the club's tow plane pilot, said he believes gliders epitomize the most basic essence of flying. "These are good skills for any pilot to have," he said. "A lot of power pilots can't cope if that propeller in front of the plane stops spinning." Renfro agreed, saying a pilot who flies "by the seat of his pants" and follows thermals in the sky can understand what true flight feels like. "Thermals are created by irregular heating of the ground," Renfro explained. "You'll see when you take off that the ground is different colors. Those dark spots of land attract more heat from the sun and that heat can lift gliders thousands of feet in the air. The conditions out here are absolutely stellar – the best in the world." These stellar conditions are what put Twentynine Palms on the military map when the Army Air Forces began training glider pilots here for service in World War II. Camp Condor, which was established at the Combat Center in 1941, trained glider pilots how to operate and land the aircrafts in order to deliver combat troops to war zones. According to Combat Center records, the gliders held major advantages over



CPL. NICOLE A. LAVINE  
Ronald Renfro, the 29 Soaring Club president, checks the seatbelts on his glider before taking to the skies above the Twentynine Palms Airport Sunday. Renfro and fellow club members gather at the airport each Sunday to take their gliders for a ride.

motorized aircrafts due to their inexpensive and quick construction, ability to land in tighter spots and nearly silent flight. The silence of the flight is one of the characteristics that makes the hobby so satisfying, Renfro said. "You can just sit inside and have a conversation – there's no motor to yell over," he said. "Also, it's

incredible when you're flying and a hawk or other bird flies next to you and makes eye contact with you. It's better than any zoo." Mike Jaworski, a member of the club, compared glider flight to coming-of-age milestones. "It's just like when you first get your driver's license," he said. "It's exciting having all that unlimited freedom."

Children ages 14 and older are authorized to operate a glider plane. The club does not charge any type of fees, however members must pay for their tow plane or winch launches. The Twentynine Palms Airport is located six miles east of Twentynine Palms down Highway 62. To learn more about the club, call Renfro at 366-7832.

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