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OBSERVATION POST

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Year 2010 In Review

Another year has come and gone. Turn the page to check out some of the highlights of the Combat Center's 2010.



Former Combat Center Marine awarded Silver Star

LANCE CPL. SARAH ANDERSON
COMBAT CORRESPONDENT

A former Combat Center Marine was awarded the Silver Star for valor in Afghanistan during a ceremony at Lance Cpl. Torrey L. Gray Parade Field Dec. 17, 2010.

Sergeant William W. Rollins earned the Nation's third-highest award for demonstrating courage under fire in action against the enemy June 19, 2008, while serving as 1st Squad Leader, 2nd Platoon, Company G, 2nd Battalion, 7th Marine Regiment, in support of Operation Enduring Freedom.

During a patrol to the village of Dowlatabad, in Balkh province, Afghanistan, Rollins' squad was ambushed. His squad was pinned down without a way out. Rollins' found himself to the far left of the squad and furthest from the fire. After a quick assessment, he seemed to be the only one mobile enough to create a distraction, his only hope to free his Marines from the enemy's fire and get them to safety. With machine guns and rocket propelled grenades flying at the Marines, Rollins rushed to within 30 meters of the enemy positions, leveled his machine gun, and provided suppressive fire, allowing his men to escape the immediate ambush area, according to the award citation.

Once his Marines with-

drew, Rollins maneuvered through enemy fire to rejoin his squad where he continued to attack the enemy while the squad's wounded Marines were extracted. Then, with enemy fire still impacting around him, Rollins' observed a Marine hit, rushed to his aid and dragged him to safety. Rollins' aggressive actions in the face of the enemy drew fire onto his own position and provided his squad the reprieve they needed to maneuver to safety, according to the award citation.

Marines and those closest to him aboard the Combat Center attended the ceremony to honor their brother for his bravery.

"Sergeant Rollins is truly a hero, his actions are incredible and selfless," said Lt. Col. John M. Reed, battalion commander, 2nd Bn., 7th Marines. His actions on the battlefield place him in the company of many other notable Marines in history."

Reed also noted that Rollins' actions were taken solely to ensure the safety of his brothers on the battlefield. "The Silver Star is awarded to anyone who distinguishes himself in extraordinary heroism and gallantry," Reed added.

Several of his fellow Marines said the medal was well-deserved, that Rollins' bravery epitomized the values every Marine, past and present, lives by.



LANCE CPL. SARAH ANDERSON

Sergeant William W. Rollins stands in front of Marines from his unit, 2nd Battalion, 7th Marine Regiment, during a ceremony in which Rollins was awarded the Silver Star, the Nation's third-highest award in a ceremony at the Combat Center's Lance Cpl. Torrey L. Gray Parade Field Dec. 17, 2010.

"It doesn't surprise me that he got it," said Edgar Figueroa, a former active duty Marine and friend of Rollins. "He's a very humble guy. He would give you the shirt off his back. He is a normal guy, who got put in an extraordinary situation, did what any Marine or squad leader would do; protect his squad, even if it means his own life. I'm proud of him."

After the ceremony, Rollins stood proud and humbled as the Silver Star

hung from his chest and old friends greeted him with smiles and congratulations.

"I feel extremely honored," Rollins said. "The only thing going through my head at the time was how can we move to cover safely. This [award] was the last thing on my mind. It is quite an honor, and it's nice to be back."

Rollins and his wife, Alexandra, expect a baby girl in February. He plans to enroll in a fire fighter academy in Houston.



LANCE CPL. SARAH ANDERSON.

Sergeant William W. Rollins (right) is congratulated by a Marine from, 2nd Battalion, 7th Marine Regiment.

The year's top centerspeak responses

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

What is your New Year's resolution?



SGT. CARLOS VALDERAS
MOJAVE VIPER TRAINING, MOTOR TRANSPORTATION

"Not to spend so much money on my truck."

Who is your favorite president?



MAJ. STEVEN STORMANT
G-3, HEADQUARTERS BATTALION

"Ronald Reagan because he didn't take crap from anybody."

What non-alcohol related activity do you enjoy doing?



CPL. CHARLES LONDON
STAFF JUDGE ADVOCATE'S OFFICE

"I like to lift weights and better myself so I can be sexy for the summer."

Who is your favorite superhero?



LANCE CPL. JOHN TORREZ
COMPANY K, 3RD BATTALION, 5TH MARINE REGIMENT

"Batman, because he's a real person and always gets the girl."

Who do you want to win the World Cup?



PFC. JOSH OSE
WEAPONS COMPANY, 1ST BATTALION, 8TH MARINE REGIMENT

"America, because all the other countries are POGs."

What is the greatest invention of your generation?



CPL. LEONEL BARRON
HEADQUARTERS COMPANY, 7TH MARINE REGIMENT

"The microwave because you can cook food in minutes."

Where do you see yourself in five years?



CHIEF WARRANT OFFICER 2
EDUARDO QUIROZ
COMPANY A, HEADQUARTERS BATTALION

"Retired and going fishing."

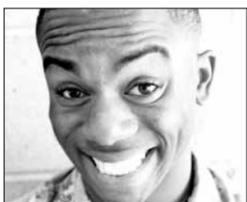
What do you want your mark on history to be?



SGT. DENNIS LUM
COMPANY C, 3RD LIGHT ARMORED RECONNAISSANCE BATTALION

"Changing the face of the entire U.S. political system."

What are your plans for Halloween?



CPL. DESHAUN WHITEHEAD
1ST BATTALION, 9TH MARINE REGIMENT, HEADQUARTERS AND SERVICES COMPANY

"Going to a costume contest as SpongeBob SquarePants."

What Halloween costume are you planning to wear?



CAPT. EDWIN NUÑEZ
4TH TANK BATTALION

"Pauly D. from Jersey Shore."

What is your favorite part of the Birthday Ball celebration?



CPL. TODD CARRUTHERS
HEADQUARTERS BATTALION, POSTAL

"Bringing a date who knows nothing about the Corps, and at the end of the day she is thinking you're the greatest thing on Earth."

What is your favorite winter sport?



SGT. DANIEL BURNS
TACTICAL TRAINING AND EXERCISE CONTROL GROUP

"Ice skating, because it is way more dangerous than people think it is."

Hot Topics

TOBACCO CESSATION

The Naval Hospital Health Promotion and Wellness Program offers tobacco cessation counseling. Classes are no longer mandatory to receive the tobacco cessation medications. For more information, call Health Promotions at (760) 830-2814. Submitted by Dan Barber, Public Affairs Officer (760) 830-2362.

DSTRESS LINE

From combat related stress to the everyday stressors of life, stress can affect even the strongest Marine. The DSTRESS Line was developed by the Corps to provide professional, anonymous counseling for Marines, their families and loved ones when it is needed most. Call 1-877-476-7734.

APPRENTICESHIPS THROUGH USMAP

The USMAP is a formal military training program that allows Coast Guard, Marine Corps and Navy personnel to complete a civilian apprenticeship program while on active duty. Marines are assigned an apprenticeable trade based on their respective occupational specialties, while sailors may apply for an apprenticeable trade based on their Navy rating. For more information, visit <https://usmap.cnet.navy.mil>.

NEIGHBORHOOD WATCH

There will be a Base Housing Neighborhood Watch community meeting at the Protestant Chapel at 7 p.m. Jan. 19. For more information, call Crime Prevention at 830-4961 or send an e-mail to brandon.stuart@usmc.mil.

Marine Corps History

JAN. 10, 1995

The Pentagon announced that 2,600 U.S. Marines would be deployed to Somalia for Operation United Shield to assist in the final withdrawal of UN peacekeeping troops from Somalia. The decision came in response to a UN request for American protection of its peacekeeping forces serving in the war-torn African nation.

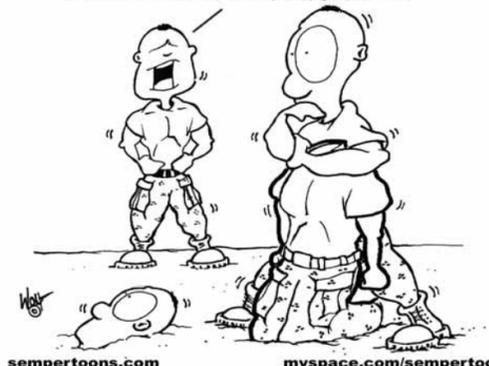


Report any suspicious activity immediately which may be a sign of terrorism, including:

1. Surveillance
2. Suspicious questioning
3. Tests of security
4. Acquiring supplies
5. Suspicious persons
6. Trial runs
7. Deploying assets

830-3937

"OH GREAT!, NOW HE CAN USE HIS HEAD AS A WEAPON!, GET THE ARMBAR AND TAP HIM OUT BEFORE HE GETS THE ADVANTAGE!!!!"



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

SUDOKU #2047

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CROSSWORD AND SUDOKU PUZZLES COURTESY OF © 2010 HOMETOWN CONTENT

PROVIDERS

[Puzzle solutions on A7]

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70						71					72				

ACROSS

1. Kemo
5. "Pygmalion" penner
9. In unison
14. Say the rosary
15. Durango dough
16. Helped out at a T-ball game, perhaps
17. Farm unit
18. Bar mitzvah or baptism
19. Old hat
20. "Return of the Jedi" star
23. Before, poetically
24. Twister Joey
25. Lay to rest
29. Pocahontas's husband John
31. Racetrack boundary
34. "Zip--Doo-Dah"
35. Comedienne Charlotte
37. Cedar Rapids college
38. Solitary
39. "The Piano" Oscar winner

DOWN

1. It keeps things separate
2. Triple Crown jockey of 1941 and 1948
3. Bung-hole's place
4. Watchful one
5. Shopaholic's binge
6. Calfless cow
7. Italian wine city
8. Trials and tribulations
9. Pulitzer poet W.H.
10. Wisenheimer
11. Make a choice
12. Society page word
13. Hall, formerly of "The Tonight Show"
21. Standard of excellence
22. Mount Saint
26. Gym-socks emanation
27. Queens, in chess
28. Domesticated insect
30. Supermarket aisle
32. Sore spots
33. Promissory initials
36. A natural, in craps
39. One who saves the day
40. Thumbs-up vote

Compliance with CCO 5760.1C required for private organizations

RANDY MEYER
MCCS MANAGEMENT ANALYSIS & CONTROL

Throughout the Combat Center, private organizations operate to improve the quality of life for our Marines, Sailors and their families. Private organization such as, but not limited to the Officer's Spouses Club, Chief Petty Officers Association, and Family Child Care Provider's Club are not government organizations. Rather they are groups of individuals who meet and operate aboard the Combat Center for their mutual enjoyment and benefit. Private organizations must be in compliance with CCO 5760.1C, which requires that each organization is formally recognized and authorized to operate

aboard the Combat Center. This Combat Center Order is available under the base's website, <http://www.29palms.usmc.mil/dirs/manpower/adj/ccotoc.asp>. This order requires that no later than Feb. 1 of each year, or within 30 days of establishment, each organization shall request authorization to operate or continue to operate aboard the Combat Center. Failure to reapply can be cause for revocation of authority to operate aboard the Combat Center.

Private organizations seeking to operate aboard the Combat Center shall submit at least the following documents, along with their request for authorization to the director of MCCS: (1) copy of most recent certified adopted constitution and bylaws of that organization, (2) descrip-

tion of membership eligibility, (3) documentation governing liabilities, disestablishment, management/officer's responsibilities, and insurance if applicable, correspondence address, roster of organization's officers, and calendar of scheduled events/activities for the calendar year.

MCCS will sponsor an open meeting Jan. 19 from 11 a.m. to 2 p.m. at the Community Center, room 102 for all interested private organizations seeking assistance with their applications or turning their renewing private organization application in.

For more information, contact Randy Meyer, MCCS Management Analyst, at meyerra@usmc-mccs.org or by calling 830-8107.

OBSERVATION POST

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RCT-7 remembers 74 fallen brothers

LANCE CPL. SARAH ANDERSON
COMBAT CORRESPONDENT

Rows of military crosses solemnly lined Lance Cpl. Torrey L. Gray Field Oct. 15, 2010 during a memorial ceremony dedicated to the 74 men lost during Regimental Combat Team 7's recent

deployment to Afghanistan.

From October 24, 2009 to September 28, 2010, units attached to RCT-7 lost 70 Marines, three sailors, and one British journalist to the war overseas.

Seventy-three helmets were placed on 73 rifles while 73 dog tags hung over 73 new boots. There was a single

white cross in the midst of them all, with a British flag placed beside it, a quiet reminder the United States is not alone in this war.

"The battlefield cross – its purpose, to show honor and respect for the fallen at the battle site," stated a narrator of the service. "Today its immediate need is to show respect for the fallen among the still living members of the unit."

Regimental Commander Col. Randy P. Newman rose and spoke of the honor these 74 men showed on the battlefield.

"We pay tribute today to what these men gave, lives cut short but not unfulfilled," Newman said. "Each man gave their lives in a noble effort to give back to the people of Afghanistan so they can determine their future and to increase the security of our own nation."

As he spoke, the 74 crosses behind him held a reminder for every Marine in attendance of what it means to fight

alongside one another to complete the Corps' mission.

"Once the first drop of blood was shed by a Marine in Afghanistan, we became committed to remaining there for however long our nation

desires there," Newman said. "Our Corps will remain there and will fight because that is what we do. They went onto the battlefield with the full understanding that we were 100 percent committed to

what we were there for.

"The only way that any of these men would have died in vain is if we give up in the effort that is currently succeeding in Afghanistan," Newman said.



LANCE CPL. SARAH ANDERSON

Marines bow their heads in remembrance of the 74 Marines, sailors, and one civilian journalist lost in Afghanistan during a Regimental Combat Team 7 memorial ceremony Oct. 15, 2010 at Lance Cpl. Torrey L. Gray Field.



LANCE CPL. SARAH ANDERSON

A Marine bows his head in remembrance of a fallen Marine during the Regimental Combat Team 7 memorial ceremony Oct. 15, 2010 at Lance Cpl. Torrey L. Gray Field. The units attached to RCT-7 were deployed to Afghanistan from Oct. 24, 2009 to Sept. 28, 2010.



LANCE CPL. SARAH ANDERSON

A trumpet player in the Combat Center's Band plays Taps over the 74 memorial crosses during Regimental Combat Team 7's memorial ceremony Oct. 15, 2010 at Lance Cpl. Torrey L. Gray Field. RCT-7 was deployed to Afghanistan from Oct. 24, 2009 to Sept. 28, 2010.



LANCE CPL. SARAH ANDERSON

Seventy-four military crosses line Lance Cpl. Torrey L. Gray Field during a memorial ceremony for Regimental Combat Team 7, Oct. 15, 2010. The total fallen consisted of 70 Marines, three sailors and one British civilian reporter.

Combat Center soaks up sun's rays

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

The desert sun beats down on everything all day long, rarely inhibited by cloud cover dampening its power.

Conditions like this exist year-round and make the Combat Center a prime location for the use of solar energy, said Gary Morrissett, Utilities & Energy Manager for the Combat Center. The Combat Center capitalized on this by installing more than 2,400 additional solar panels in June 2010.

The solar panels will help save about \$160,000 a year, Morrissett said.

"We are in the Sun Belt, which is one of the best areas for solar production," said Morrissett. "So we have tried to take advantage of this opportunity and Headquarters Marine Corps has supported us do to that."

The new panels, which were placed on buildings 1201, 1202, 2008, 2067 and 2068, are stationary and focus the energy they generate to surrounding buildings.

"Any excess power will be put into the grid itself," said Chris Murphy, the assisting manager from Stronghold Engineering. "The main plan is to

have the power meters spin backwards in this area and I think it is doing that right now."

The old panels, which are lined up on the far end of main side, constantly rotate toward the sun to receive maximum energy all day.

Besides the sun panels, the Combat Center has been working on other ways to improve its energy independence, said Morrissett. There are controls in most of the buildings which cut power after hours, retrofitted lights, both indoors and outdoors, and motion sensors which turn lights off when no one is around.

"We are trying to use more green energy," said Peter Mazarre, the construction manager for this project.

"We are trying to lower our carbon footprint. It's going to make it so we are not relying on generated power. It's going to provide more energy from the sun, which is free."

Although the technology allows for heightened energy conservation, Morrissett said the real environmental impact still lies with the individual. Combat Center patrons still need to remember to keep outside doors and windows shut when air conditioning is on and to manually switch off lights when leaving a room empty, he said.



COURTESY PHOTO

Solar panels on buildings 1201, 1202, 2008, 2067 and 2068 were completed June 10, 2010, and will help save about \$160,000 a year.

Combat Center celebrates 58th birthday, Silver Star after 43 years

**LANCE CPL.
WILLIAM J. JACKSON**
COMBAT CORRESPONDENT

As the Combat Center Band filled the Lance Cpl. Torrey L. Gray Field with music, members of the Combat Center community filled the bleachers the morning of Aug. 20, 2010, awaiting the installation's 58th birthday ceremony and the awarding of a Silver Star Medal, the military's third highest award, to retired Col. Marcel J. Dube.

Dube, the former Chief of Staff of the Combat Center retired in 1989. He

was also elected to the Twentynine Palms City Council and was mayor for three of his eight years on the City Council. Dube has spent more than 52 years of military and public services.

The ceremony began with a citation dictating the "gallantry and intrepidity" Dube displayed while serving as the senior advisor to 3rd Battalion, Vietnamese Marine Corps, in March 1967.

During his tour, Dube led a small team of Vietnamese Marines, equipped with

Browning Automatic Rifles, through enemy lines to rescue a U.S. Air Force Forward Air Controller, whose L-19 aircraft was shot down by enemy fire.

While pursuing the downed aircraft, the North Vietnamese Army's fire was directed toward the helicopter, masking Dube's team's efforts in launching suppressive fire. Unscathed, Dube successfully evacuated Air Force Capt. Phil Jones, cleared the crash site and had 11 confirmed enemy kills.

Dube later returned to the aircraft, disarmed the live ordnance and retrieved six rocket pads. Finally he and his team overturned the bird and coordinated its recovery.

After the citation reading, Brig. Gen. H. Stacy Clardy III, commanding general, addressed the crowd and thanked every-

one for coming, stating it was an honor to be able to present the award before turning the microphone over to Dube.

Recalling stories of "the old Corps," Dube gave his appreciation to the Marines aboard the Combat Center, to the Marines he once served with and to his family.

"We served here, and we love the place," Dube added. "Happy Birthday and God bless."

The ceremony drew to an end as Clardy cut the birthday cake, and the installation colors were pinned with the Meritorious Unit Commendation Streamer with one Bronze Star, the National Defense Service Streamer with three Bronze Stars and the Global War on Terror Service Streamer in honor of its 58th birthday anniversary.



LANCE CPL. WILLIAM J. JACKSON

Brigadier Gen. H. Stacy Clardy III, the Combat Center's commanding general, pins a Silver Star on retired Col. Marcel J. Dube for his actions in Vietnam.

Marines, sailors plant new beginning for national park



CPL. ANDREW S. AVITT

Sgt. Alberto Garcia, a scout squad leader with 3rd Light Armored Reconnaissance Battalion, from Corpus Christi, Texas., prepares to fill in hole around a newly-planted Joshua tree at Joshua Tree National Park April 7, 2010. During the restoration process, volunteers planted new trees to help rejuvenate the environment after a fire swept through the area and burned 450 acres last May.

CPL. ANDREW S. AVITT

COMBAT CORRESPONDENT

JOSHUA TREE, Calif. – Five Marines and sailors with 3rd Light Armored Reconnaissance Battalion assisted Joshua Tree National Park Resources' staff with an environment restoration project along the Lost Horse Mine Trail in Joshua Tree National Park, April 6-7, 2010.

Volunteers planted new trees to help rejuvenate the environment after a fire swept through the area and burned 450 acres last May.

Although Joshua Tree National Park firefighters were able to extinguish the blaze in just two days, the scorched earth bared no resemblance to the untouched areas around the rest of the park.

"If we were to let the environment run its course, it would take 25 to 100 years to return to normal," said Vicky Chang, the science coordinator at Joshua Tree National Park.

"Restoring the vegetation

quickly helps to restore the ecosystem and bring animals back to the area," added Katy Mathews, a biologist with Joshua Tree National Park staff, and Rochester, N.Y. native.

Volunteers and park staff dug two-foot-by-one-foot holes for 120 plants from the Joshua Tree National Park's Center for Arid Land Restoration Nursery, which collected seeds from within a five-mile radius of the burn site and cultivated the seedlings until they became resilient enough to live in the wild. This process takes anywhere from six months to a year.

The plants and other supplies were then airlifted to four separate sites within the burn area.

The various vegetation included Joshua trees, apricot mallow, cheesebush, black bush, buck wheat and desert almond.

Planting the native vegetation from the park's nursery helps to prevent further degradation and will help

visually blend the site with surrounding areas.

"We are planting perennials. That way they will be coming back year after year," Chang said. "These plants will, in turn, seed and be spread by wildlife, offering a multiplying effect. We restore small areas and let nature take its course."

After planting, volunteers put up fencing to protect the plants from wildlife consumption, to end a two-day restoration process which has left a mark on Joshua Tree National Park.

"It was an amazing experience," said volunteer Petty Officer 3rd Class Robert Herrera, a 3rd LAR corpsman, from Fort Lauderdale, Fla., who volunteered for the two-day project. "I'm glad I could help to repair the damage done by the fire so others will have the chance to see what the real Joshua Tree looks like."

The park is always looking for volunteers for various projects. For more information or to volunteer, call 367-5579.

U.S., Romanian Marines partner to hone rifle, martial arts skills

STORY AND PHOTOS BY

CPL. R. LOGAN KYLE

BLACK SEA ROTATIONAL FORCE

BABADAG TRAINING AREA, Romania — U.S. Marines, in partnership with Romanian Marines and soldiers, honed their rifle and hand-to-hand combat skills May 18, 2010.

The Marines and sailors of scout platoon, Headquarters and Service Company, 1st Tank Battalion, are currently training with the Romanian military in nonlethal weapons, combat marksmanship, noncommissioned officer development, the Marine Corps Martial Arts Program and other areas of military operations.

Scout platoon helped train Romanian troops by teaching them the fundamentals of marksmanship and by developing a special course based on the MCMAP hand-to-hand combat regimen to help them better prepare for situations they may encounter while conducting peacekeeping operations.

First Tank Battalion, from Marine Corps Air Ground Combat Center Twentynine Palms, Calif., forms the core of the Security Cooperation Marine Air-Ground Task Force deployed to the Black Sea region. The U.S. Marines are training in partnership with Romanian Marines and soldiers to create a more fluid relationship between the two nations' military forces.



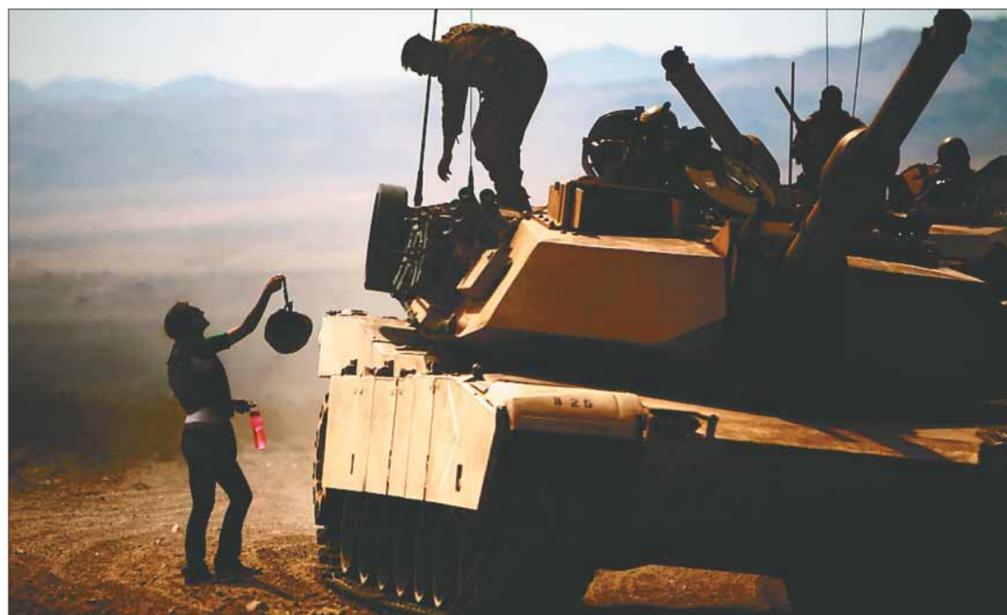
Cpl. Richard Chavez, a radio operator with scout platoon, Headquarters and Service Company, 1st Tank Battalion, speaks with Romanian Marines about proper firing positions at Babadag Training Area, Romania, May 18, 2010.



A Romanian Marine practices hand-to-hand combat techniques at Babadag Training Area, Romania, May 18, 2010.



Romanian Marines practice U.S. Marine Corps Martial Arts Program techniques at Babadag Training Area, Romania, May 18, 2010.



CPL. R. LOGAN KYLE

Cpl. Francisco Guzman, a tank commander with Company B, 1st Tank Battalion, retrieves his Kevlar helmet from Jessica Plummer, the wife of Lance Cpl. Chad Plummer, a crewman with Co. B, after a ride in an M1-A1 Abrams Main Battle Tank during the battalion's "Jane Wayne Day" at Combat Center Range 500 March, 30, 2010.



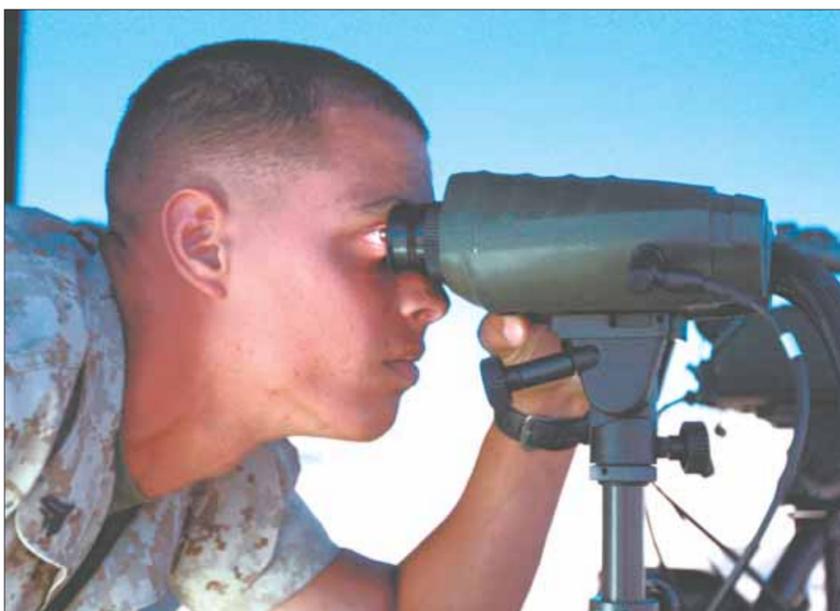
CPL. R. LOGAN KYLE

Ukrainian Army soldiers with the 30th Mechanized Infantry Brigade attack Marines with 1st Tank Battalion's scout platoon during a Marine Corps Martial Arts Program physical training exercise at Babadag Training Area, Romania, June 16, 2010. The PT was designed to incorporate the MCMAP skills they have learned throughout the week.



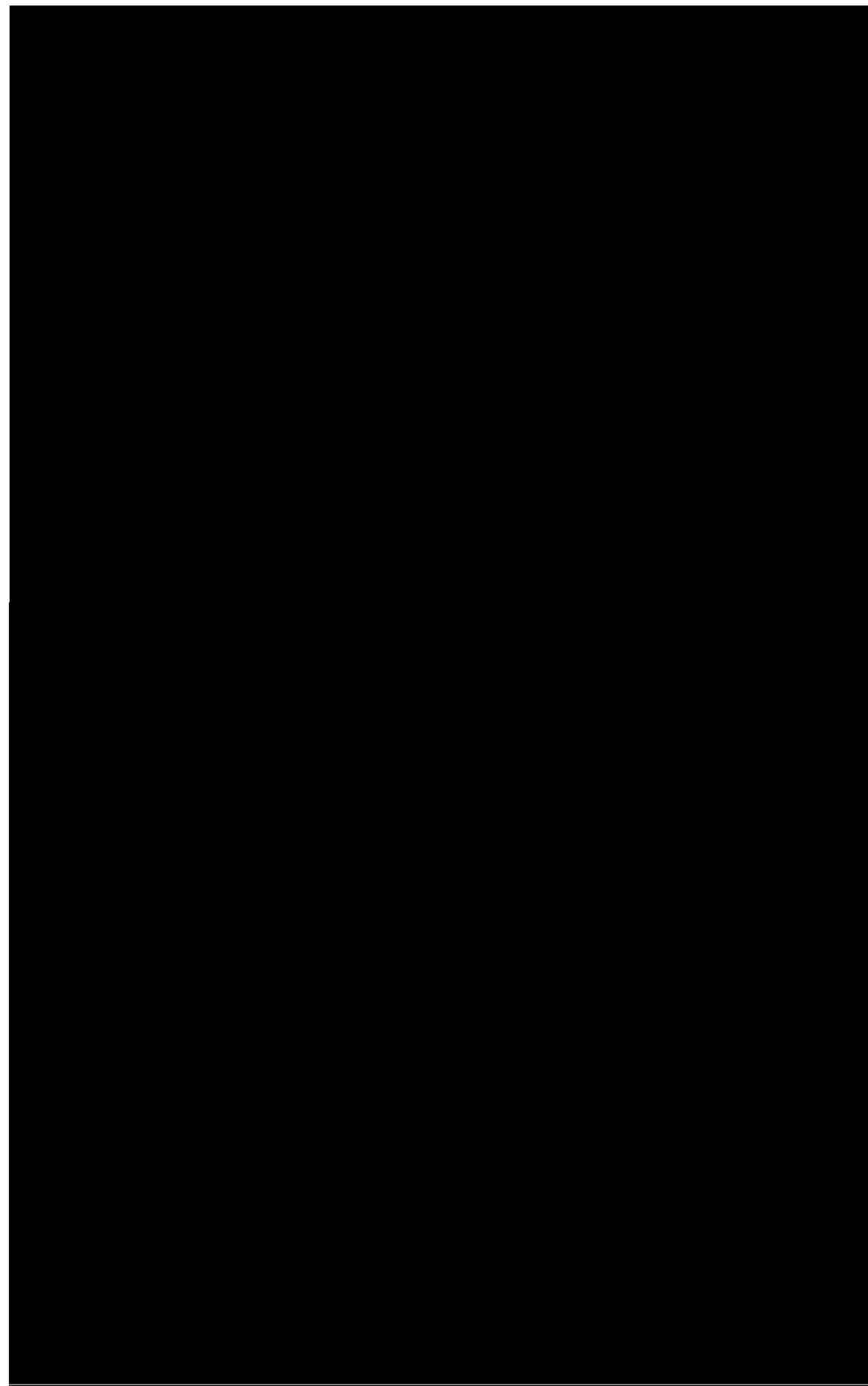
PFC. SARAH ANDERSON

Marines from the 3rd Light Armored Reconnaissance Battalion run a relay which included putting random clothing items on at different points of the race during a Barracks Bash July 29, 2010 at a light armored vehicle ramp.



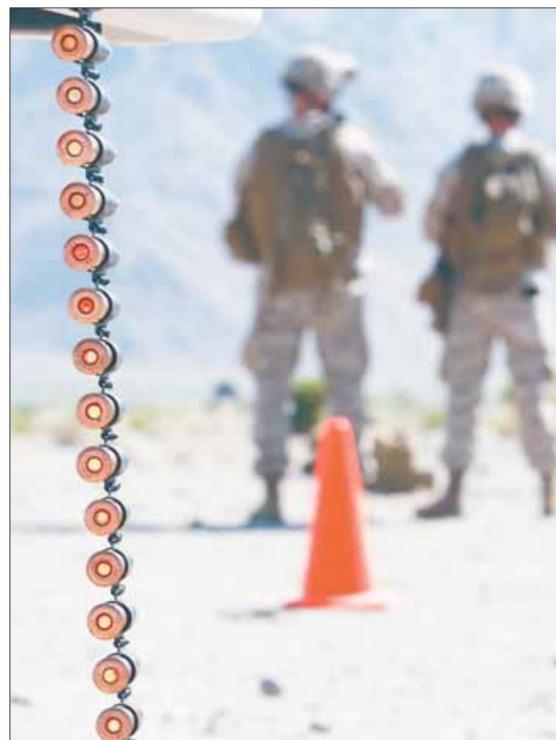
LANCE CPL. ANDREW D. THORBURN

Corporal Omar Curbelo, a light armored vehicle crewman for Company E, 3rd Light Armored Reconnaissance Battalion, looks through the Vector 21B binoculars to find the simulated targets at the Supporting Arms Virtual Trainer, June 15, 2010. The trainer gives Marines a chance to call in motor, artillery and air strikes against simulated enemy positions.



LANCE CPL. M. C. NERL

Marines training with the Combat Center's Advisor Training Group set off signal smoke Sept. 27, 2010 after being hit by a notional improvised explosive device. The group trains Marines in convoy operations, which is among many other things they will use in support of Operation Enduring Freedom.



LANCE CPL. M. C. NERL

Marines load rounds into ammo belts July 14, 2010 as other Marines prepare to fire on the firing line at the Combat Center's Range 113A. The Marines were trained in foreign weapons by the Advisor Training Group here.

SUDOKU								
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CROSSWORD SOLUTIONS															
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Marines with Headquarters Battalion carry a casualty during a medical evacuation drill April 29 at the Combat Center's Range 100. The drill was designed to foster team building during the unit's three-day field training exercise.

HQBN Marines return to rifleman roots

**STORY AND PHOTOS BY
LANCE CPL. M. C. NERL**

COMBAT CORRESPONDENT

Combat Center Marines from Headquarters Battalion took a break from their regular duties supporting Marines and returned to their rifleman roots with a three-day field exercise at the Combat Center's Range 100 April 28 - 30, 2010.

The Marines used the time to refresh basic com-

bat skills, like patrolling, immediate action drills, hand and arm signals and calling for fire.

They also performed a medical evacuation, practiced defensive tactics by digging and manning their own fighting holes and carried out a night patrol utilizing night vision goggles and employing proper light and sound discipline.

"The training was meant to

refresh non-infantry Marines who haven't had a chance to get out of the office and refine their infantry skills," said 1st Sgt. Thomas D. Russi, the company first sergeant for Company A, Headquarters Bn.

Leadership was a recurring theme throughout the field exercise, said Russi, from Temecula, Calif. It was a perfect opportunity to test the Marines' everyday unit cohesion and leadership skills in situations which the Marines do not experience every day.

The Marines responded to the challenge with enthusiasm, even surprising their leaders with how well they came together and adapted.

"The cold weather and the wind was really kicking their ass, but there wasn't a whole lot of complaining," Russi said. "The Marines weren't even asking questions like we thought they would. Like, 'This isn't my job; why am I doing this?'"

Lance Cpl. Cosme Cardenas, a light armored vehicle mechanic with Exercise Support Division, said the training was a step in

the right direction in preparing him for an upcoming assignment with a deploying unit.

"I need to know everything we're doing out here," said the Hesperia, Calif., native. "I haven't even slept out in the field since before my [military occupational specialty] school, but it wasn't hard recalling everything."

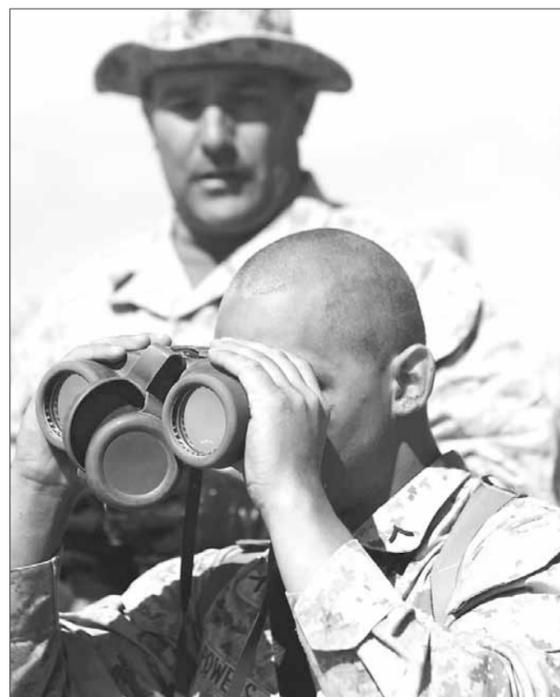
Even Marines who have plenty of experience in the field said they were still able to take something away from what the group accomplished.

"I go to the field a lot, but it's always as a cook," said Lance Cpl. Fernandez Garcia, with the installation's food service office, and a native of Antonito, Colo. "I mean, who knows? I may even be put on patrols and have to use all this stuff we've been doing, instead of just cooking for all the other Marines."

The battalion is currently putting plans together for more follow-up training to continue enhancing the Marines' field expertise in the coming months.



A Marine with Headquarters Battalion patrols the Combat Center's Range 100 as the sun rises behind him during a field training exercise April 29, 2010.

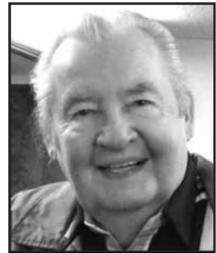


First Sgt. Thomas D. Russi [background], the company first sergeant for Company A, Headquarters Battalion, instructs Pfc. Sonny Powers, an ammunition technician with the Combat Center's Center Magazine Area, during a call for fire exercise at Combat Center Range 100 April 29, 2010.

ADVERTISEMENT

TOUGH MINDED OPTIMISM

by Lou Gerhardt



Perspective 2011

2010 has been a very good year for me. I have enjoyed good health, a loving family, many friends, and worthwhile tasks that challenge me.

I am an ordained minister and I officiated at many weddings including two same sex ceremonies. I delivered a number of talks at Rotary, Kiwanis, and other service groups, and, of course, I offered a total of more than 60 positive living seminars. I also did considerable family counseling, blessings of homes, adult and child baptisms, etc.

My point is that at the age of 85 I have a pretty good perspective on our society and its individual citizens.

So as we begin a new year I give you the words of a world-renowned historian Will Durant speaking from the pulpit of the Church I served in Los Angeles.

"I was once challenged to sum up civilization in a half hour. I did it in less than a minute. Civilization is a stream with banks. The stream is sometimes filled with blood from people killing, stealing, shooting and doing things that historians usually record. While on the banks, unnoticed, people are building homes and making love, raising children, singing songs, writing poetry and even whittling statues. And the story of civilization is the story of what happens on the banks. Too often historians are pessimists because they ignore the banks and write about the rivers."

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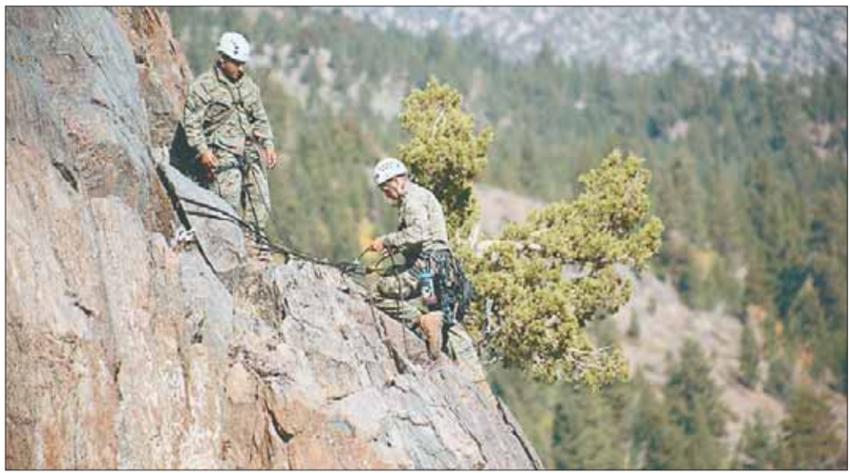
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Combat Center welcomes first baby of new year



DAN BARBER

The first baby of 2011 at the Combat Center was born to Sgt. Walter Roc-Kall Richardson, with Marine Wing Support Squadron 374, and his wife, Sharhonda at the Robert E. Bush Naval Hospital's Desert Beginnings at 2:18 p.m., Jan 1, 2011. D-Monte Benjamin Richardson weighed 6 pounds and 15 ounces. Also present to welcome the newest family member was big brother, 3-year-old D-Andre.



CPL. ANDREW S. AVITT

Two Marines with 2nd Battalion, 5th Marine Regiment conduct a two-party-climb while scaling a 150 ft. wall in Toiyabe National Forest during the Assault Climber's Course Oct. 15, 2010.

Assault climbers reach new heights

**STORY AND PHOTOS BY
CPL. ANDREW S. AVITT**

COMBAT CORRESPONDENT

MOUNTAIN WARFARE
TRAINING CENTER

BRIDGEPORT, Calif.— Marines and sailors with 2nd Battalion, 5th Marine Regiment, learned the art of mountain climbing and its practical application in a tactical environment during the assault climbers course at the Mountain Warfare Training Center Oct. 4-15, 2010.

Throughout the five-week course, students learned about mountain safety, the care of mountaineering equipment, mountain casualty evacuations, suspension and traversing, among other techniques useful for assault climbers.

The mountain climbing portion of the course taught Marines the basics of climbing and eventually progressed to the more advanced aspects, such as a conducting lead climbs.

"Ninety percent of the Marines here have never climbed before," said Capt. Thomas Irwin, the officer in charge, Special Operations Training Group, I Marine Expeditionary Force. "[The course] takes the Marines from the bottom to the top," said the Culver City, Calif., native, commenting on the evolving Marine's skill levels.

Climbing teams scaled multiple rock faces during the phase, including one more than 150-feet-tall.

"During the course, the hardest part to overcome for me was my fear for heights," said Cpl. Robert Blair an anti-tank missile man and team leader with 2nd Bn., 5th Marines. "When I did, I was looking for my next thrill, that next chance to repel or climb.

"After you realize the systems are good, it gives you a

lot more confidence in everything that you're doing," said the Dallas native.

Blair said throughout the course he was challenged mentally and physically and has a few recommendations for Marines and sailors considering the course.

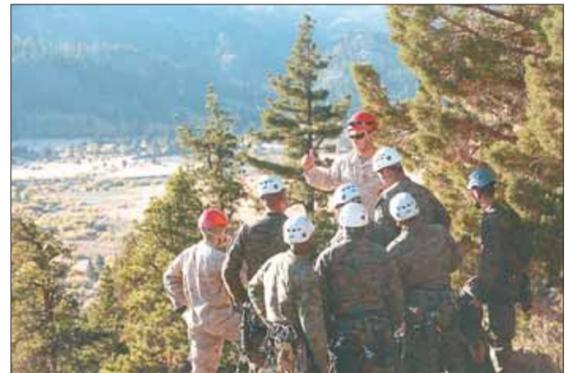
"Study your knots. The hardest part of this course was the first week, while learning about the knots and systems. There are also a lot of things that you will do in this course you never expected doing in your life, you know? I am from Dallas; there aren't too many places to go repelling around there."

A tactical theme was present throughout the course, as Marines learned how to minimize the sound of their climbing harness and other swinging pieces of gear attached to it.

"For nighttime climbing, when we are trying to be more tactical, we don't use voice commands. We use rope tugs," said Sgt. Jay Richardson, an instructor with SOTG, I MEF. "One rope tug means 'I'm off climb,' two rope tugs means 'I'm on belay,' and three rope tugs symbolizes that 'I'm about to start climbing.'"

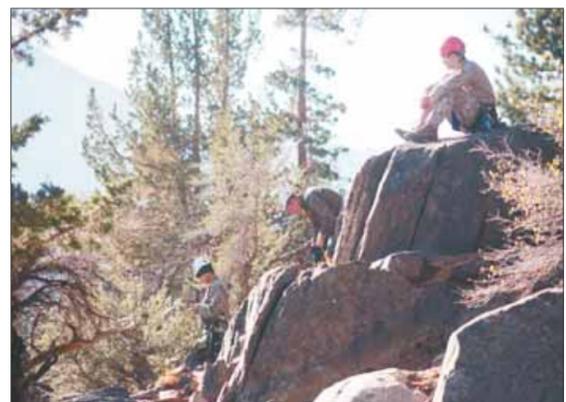
Upon graduation, the assault climbers will return to their units, adding to the flexibility and capabilities of that unit, said the Orange County, Calif., native. Their new skills include being able to effectively move gear, as well as raise and lower casualties, he added.

"They are learning the skill set to move a company's worth of Marines up the side of a cliff safely," Richardson said.



CPL. ANDREW S. AVITT

Sergeant Michael Truax, an assault climber instructor with Special Operations Training Group, I Marine Expeditionary Force, quizzes his Marines over material learned throughout the course, at Mountain Warfare Training Center Bridgeport, Calif., during the Assault Climbers Course Oct. 15, 2010.



CPL. ANDREW S. AVITT

Marines with 2nd Battalion, 5th Marine Regiment, take in the view after scaling a rock face during the Assault Climbers Course at the Mountain Warfare Training Center Oct. 12, 2010.



Parting sports shots,
page B3

Year 2010 in Review

'First Team' shows true colors



GUNNERY SGT. SERGIO JIMENEZ

Lt. Col. Todd P. Simmons, the commanding officer for 1st Battalion, 7th Marine Regiment, from Watervliet, N.Y., leads his Marines and sailors on a formation run throughout the Combat Center April 30, 2010. The unit trained in preparation to become the battalion landing team for the 31st Marine Expeditionary Unit, III Marine Expeditionary Force, which returned home this week.

'We Salute You' rocks Combat Center

CPL. ANDREW S. AVITT

COMBAT CORRESPONDENT

Combat Center personnel and families gathered for the 6th annual We Salute You Celebration on May 22, 2010, at Lance Cpl. Torrey L. Gray Field.

"This event began in 2005 to honor our Marines, sailors and family members," said Kelly Coe, the special events program manager for Marine Corps Community Services. "The tradition of this event is to honor and recognize the continued sacrifices of those Marines and sailors who serve aboard Marine Corps Air Ground Combat Center [Twentynine Palms]/Marine Air Ground Task Force Training Command and their families

during wartime."

Service members from Marine Corps Communications-Electronics School, Headquarters Battalion and Marine Wing Support Squadron 374 volunteered to help with equipment set up and tear down.

One hundred and fifty volunteers from the California BBQ Association and Just Blowin' Smoke BBQ, kept the crowd well fed with 5,000 pounds of pork butt, 2,500 pounds of chicken, and 2,000 pounds of Louisiana hot sausage were served free at the event.

"It was nice they took the time to do all of this. It was a great chance for families to come together," said Sgt.

Meagan Hebert, a radio operator instructor for MCCES

The Combat Center Band performed at the event, followed by country singers Julianne Hough and Joe Nichols.

"I feel pretty good about being here today. We always love playing for the military," said Nichols before his performance Saturday. "We are all about any chance we get to play for the military and have a lot of respect and admiration for those who serve our country."

"The men and women who sacrifice every day, regardless of politics, deserve our support," he said.

Amber Caruso, a country music fan at the event,

See CONCERT, B4



CPL. ANDREW S. AVITT

Country music star Julianne Hough performs before turing the stage over to country music star Joe Nichols during the "We Salute You Celebration" at Lance Cpl. Torrey L. Gray Field May 22, 2010.

Marines dominate during powder puff game

STORY AND PHOTOS BY PFC. SARAH ANDERSON

COMBAT CORRESPONDENT

The gridiron erupted in full-fledged inter-service rivalry as the Marine Panthers and Navy Sharks battled it out for year-long bragging rights and the trophy during the Combat Center's annual powder puff football game at Felix Field May 27.

A powder puff game is one in which roles are reversed. Women take it to the field while the men take on cheerleading.

The game is a great way for the women of the Combat Center to get some competitiveness out of their system, said Tu Tran, the coach for the Panthers.

"It's one of those things, inter-service rivalry; we want to beat the Navy," Tran said. "They love competition."

The Sharks used the game as a fundraiser for their Corpsman Ball later this month, whereas the Marines just came to play for some good, ol' fashioned, rough-n-rumble fun.

"We have been practicing twice a week for about a month," Tran said. "We want to win."

The Sharks said they came to represent what

See POWDER, B4



LANCE CPL. SARAH ANDERSON

Navy Shark cheerleaders form a basic pyramid to rouse the crowd's excitement during a Marine versus Navy powder puff football game at Felix Field May 27, 2010.

Rhinos take championship game



LANCE CPL. ANDREW D. THORBURN

Marine Wing Support Squadron 374 Rhinos number 22 is pummeled by two Headquarters Battalion Bulldog defenders as fellow teammates attempt to pull them off during the championship game of the Commanding General's Intramural Football League at Felix Field Nov. 22, 2010.



Liberty Call

Saddle up for new 'True Grit'

NEIL POND

AMERICAN PROFILE

"True Grit"
Rated PG-13

Among Western lovers, "True Grit" is a somewhat of a sacred cow. The original movie, in 1969, won John Wayne his only Oscar, and its success sparked a wider discovery of the Charles Portis novel on which it was based.

In the new "True," Jeff Bridges saddles up the John Wayne role as Rooster Cogburn, the cantankerous, alcoholic sheriff hired by a resourceful 14-year-old girl, Mattie Ross (a knockout performance by newcomer Heilee Steinfeld), to avenge her slain father. Matt Damon plays the know-it-all Texas Ranger who tags along for the ride, and Josh Brolin is the baddie on the run they're all hoping to bag.

The vision for this version belongs to the writer-director duo of Joel and Ethan Coen, whose sense of deliciously morbid humor, quirky dialogue and dense detail spurs the whole shebang. "True Grit" isn't as out-there as "The Big Lebowski," as goofy as "Raising Arizona," as bleak as "No Country For Old Men," or as twisted as "Fargo," but it crackles, like a good campfire, with colorful Coen flourishes all the same.

First, the Coens immerse viewers in their characters,



COURTESY PHOTO

Jeff Bridges saddles up as Rooster Cogburn, the cantankerous, alcoholic sheriff hired by a resourceful 14-year-old girl, Mattie Ross, to avenge her slain father.

spending a good deal of time setting everything up before the action of the second half is ready to uncoil. A dandy five-minute courtroom scene establishes Rooster as a lawman with a loose interpretation of criminal rights.

Another scene between Mattie and a horse merchant draws out the negotiations by which she's able to wrangle a deal on her terms – and suggests why we should have no trouble believing she'd have the gumption to go after her father's killer.

And in just one encounter between Mattie and Damon's character, the

straight-arrow Texas Ranger LeBeouf, we learn all we need to know about how he'll fit into the story as the preening, polished counterpart to the loutish, bottle-loving sheriff.

When the shooting starts, the knives come out and the rattlesnakes and bad guys both start to hiss, we're right there alongside three very different characters we've come to know, like and understand.

Bridges, Damon, Brolin, the Coens – that's quite an impressive pedigree, and it absolutely, totally clicks. But the real revelation here is young Steinfeld, who provides the center of gravity around which the rest of the movie, and all the other characters, revolve. "True Grit" is Mattie's story above all else, and Steinfeld sells it

with an amazing natural grace and ease.

The movie's on-location cinematography looks gorgeous, and the soundtrack, often incorporating snippets of an old familiar hymn, reinforces Mattie's Protestant resolve.

The final scene, about what happened to Mattie (and Rooster) 25 years later, wasn't in the 1969 movie, and it's pure Coens – a parting shot of sweetness and warmth spiked with irony about the "everlasting arms" that carried her to safety.

More faithful to the novel than its predecessor, this "True Grit" follows the basic plotline of the previous movie – if anyone's keeping score. When it gallops to a close, it pretty much leaves 1969 in its dust.



COURTESY PHOTO

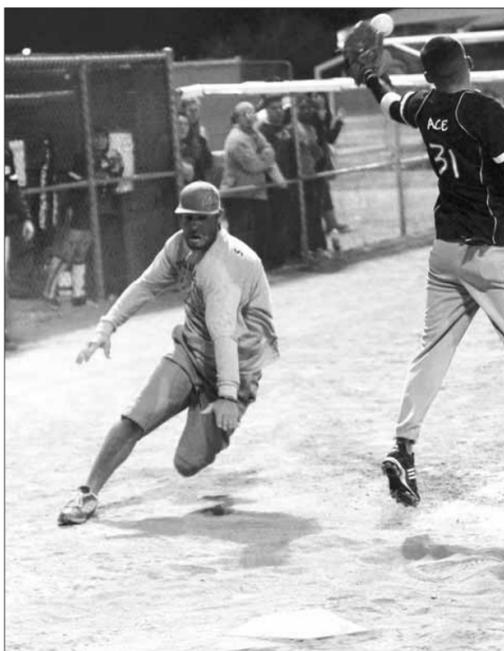
Matt Damon plays the know-it-all Texas Ranger, LeBeouf, who tags along for the ride.



COURTESY PHOTO

Heilee Steinfeld gives a knockout performance as 14-year-old Mattie Ross, the young girl who hires Rooster Cogburn to avenge her slain father.

Combat Center Sports year 2010 in review



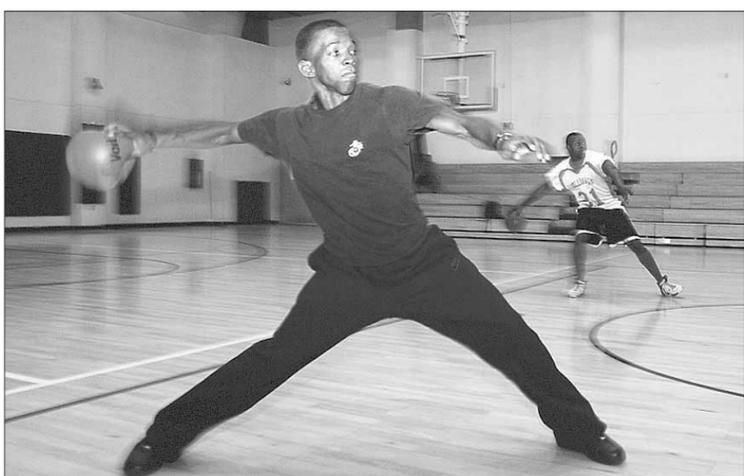
CPL. M. C. NERL

Ray Wren [grey], a player with the Drama Killers, dives to home plate after hitting an in-the-park homerun Dec. 7, 2010 against the Misfits White.



LANCE CPL. ANDREW D. THORBURN

A player for the Mustangs watches his pass fall incomplete onto the grid iron during a scrimmage at the 11 Area football field Saturday at Marine Corps Base Camp Pendleton, Calif., Dec. 11, 2010



PVT. MICHAEL T. GAMS

Eric Charles, a player for Bad Karma, eliminates the competition during the Commanding General's Intramural Dodgeball League game at the East Gym. Bad Karma won both matches on Feb. 2, 2010.



PFC. SARAH ANDERSON

Oscar Serrano, a player for the Marine Corps Air Station Miramar, Calif., installation team, heads the ball as Carlos Iruegas, a player for the Combat Center's installation soccer team, flies through the air during a tournament game June 26, 2010 at Marine Corps Base Camp Pendleton, Calif. The game ended with a 5-1 Twentynine Palms victory.



PFC. SARAH ANDERSON

The Twentynine Palms team celebrates with hard-earned second-place trophy after the West Coast Regional Tournament championship soccer game at Marine Corps Air Station Yuma, Ariz., Sept. 24, 2010. The team went undefeated throughout regionals and lost the final game to the Marine Corps Base Camp Pendleton, Calif., team.



PVT. MICHAEL T. GAMS

Fight Club 29 veteran Omar Askew puts his final opponent, Michael Childs, into a rear naked choke for the win after the pair struggled for 21 minutes in the longest match of the Grappling Experience Tournament in Las Vegas Nov. 13, 2010. Askew won a gold medal in his weight class and a bronze medal in the Intermediate Absolute Division.

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POWDER, from B1

they consider to be a strong minority aboard the installation.

The Navy is a very small group aboard the Combat Center, and being females we are part of an even smaller group, so this is an awesome chance for us to come out here and represent the Navy," said Sheena Hayes, the quarterback for the Sharks.

In the heat of friendly competition, the Marine Panthers jokingly talked up their game before the kickoff. Marine Irina Jones commented, "BAS [battalion aid station] is going to be full in the morning."

However, the Navy Sharks were prepared with their own battery of remarks.

"If we injure them, we have to deal with them in our clinic on Wednesday...that's what happened last year," countered Navy player Kameryn Hughes.

With neither team able to claim home field advantage, it started out as anybody's game.

However, the Sharks' bravado proved to be a false front as soon as the coin was tossed. A combination



PFC. SARAH ANDERSON

Kayla Erienne, a player on the Marine Panthers powder puff football team, dives to save the ball during game against the Navy Sharks at Felix Field May 27.

of aggressive, well-executed plays and quick thinking kept the Panthers leading the scoreboard.

The Sharks made a minor attempt at a comeback during the third quarter, but by then, it was too late. The Panthers claimed victory 40-12.

Sergio Romero, the

Sharks coach, said he believes this game is an important event the girls look forward to every year.

Tran added he looks at the powder puff game as an opportunity for the girls to showcase their talent on their own stage.

"It's a great way for the girls to learn [traditionally]

male sport," Tran said, "They watch it, and they [normally] don't get to play it in an organized fashion."

The sailors also stay excited for the powder puff game all year, Hughes said.

"This is probably, for the females at the hospital, one of the most fun things we do all year," Hughes said.

CONCERT, from B1

received a chance to meet the two performers and had a few posters signed for her daughter and brother.

"It was pretty nice of them to take the time to do that," she said. "What a

great way to show their support for the troops."

The hard work from volunteers and staff made the event a success, Coe said, although the celebration is over and planning for 2011's "We Salute You Celebration" is already underway.

Aerobics Marathon challenges participants



LANCE CPL. SARAH ANDERSON

A participant of the Aerobics Marathon makes a right side kick during the kickboxing class at the East Gym Nov. 17, 2010.