

MCAGCC TWENTYNINE PALMS
**OBSERVATION
POST**

March 11, 2011

Since 1957

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Battle Colors dazzle Combat Center

CPL. M. C. NERL
COMBAT CORRESPONDENT

Marines with the Marine Corps Drum and Bugle Corps, known as the "Commandant's Own," and the Marine Corps Silent Drill Platoon from Marine Barracks 8th and I, in Washington, D.C., showcased their world-famous drill talents, as well as musical

performances, during the Battle Colors Ceremony at the Combat Center's Lance Cpl. Torrey L. Gray Field.

Installation Marines and sailors, along with family members, local area elementary students and retirees, gathered for the annual event. Gunnery Sgt. Keith

See **COLORS**, A6 - A7



CPL. M. C. NERL

Percussionists with the Marine Corps Drum and Bugle Corps, performed for service members, retirees, family members and local area elementary school children Wednesday at the installation's Lance Cpl. Torrey L. Gray Field. The Battle Color Detachment also included the Corps' official colors, as well as the Silent Drill Platoon.



CPL. M. C. NERL

Marines with the Marine Corps Silent Drill Platoon exchange rifles with amazing precision Wednesday at the Combat Center's Lance Cpl. Torrey L. Gray Field. The Marine Corps Battle Color Detachment also included the Marine Corps Drum and Bugle Corps, as well as the Corps' Color Guard.

2/7 Marines seize Twentynine Palms Airport



CPL. ANDREW S. AVITT

Marines and sailors with Company C, 2nd Battalion, 7th Marine Regiment, in collaboration with local authorities, conducted an airfield seizure exercise at the Twentynine Palms Airport, located just outside the City of Twentynine Palms, March 4. The exercise aimed to increase the units capabilities and prepare them for their upcoming exercise aboard the Marine Expeditionary Unit later this year.

CPL. ANDREW S. AVITT
COMBAT CORRESPONDENT

Sand swirling around the CH-53E Super Stallion helicopters provided light concealment for the Marines as they touched down to seize the airfield. Weapon-toting enemy fighters milled about the area and watched as the unit systematically closed in from across the tarmac toward the airport's facilities. Like cats waiting for their prey, they waited patiently for just the right moment to attack.

The Marines and sailors with Battalion Landing Team, E Company, 2nd Battalion, 7th Marine Regiment, were taking part in an airfield seizure exercise at the Twentynine Palms Airport, just minutes from the Combat Center gate, March 4. The exercise is part of their preparation for their upcoming deployment as Battalion Landing Team 2nd Battalion, 7th Marine Regiment, the ground combat element of the 31st Marine Expeditionary

Unit. The seizure exercise was part of a larger training evolution known as Exercise Pacific Horizon 2011, taking place aboard Marine Corps Base Camp Pendleton and the Combat Center from March 2-7.

Minutes later, the role players attacked. Enemy fighters let loose a barrage of simulated gunfire and rocket propelled grenades. They detonated pre-positioned improvised explosive devices and suicide bomber vests in an attempt to pick off the Marines.

As if operating from a script, the heavily-armed Marines and sailors with E Company, 2/7, absorbed the assault, then trained their massive firepower on their enemy. Within minutes, the hunted became the hunter, and all that was left were dead enemy fighters and several insurgents with no other option but to run around the airfield, shouting and trying to evade capture and making it as difficult as

See **AIRPORT**, A8

MCTOG officer awarded Bronze Star



CPL. ANDREW S. AVITT

Major John F. D'Astoli, the future operations officer for the Marine Corps Tactics and Operations Group aboard the Combat Center, talks with his fellow Marines after being presented with the Bronze Star Medal by Brig. Gen. H. Stacy Clardy III, the Combat Center's commanding general, at MCTOG Tuesday. D'Astoli earned the medal for meritorious service in connection with operations against the enemy while serving as the team chief, 52nd Iraqi Brigade and Operations Advisor, 14th Iraqi Army Infantry Division Military Transition Team, U.S. Marine Corps Forces, Central Command, from June 11, 2009, to May 30, 2010, according to his citation.



LANCE CPL. ANDREW D. THORBURN

The Combat Center's commanding general, Brig. Gen. H. Stacy Clardy III, reads "Oh the Places You'll Go" by Dr. Seuss to students of Oasis Elementary and their families March 2.

Oasis school holds reading for children

LANCE CPL. ANDREW D. THORBURN
COMBAT CORRESPONDENT

The Combat Center's commanding general, Brig. Gen. H. Stacy Clardy III, and his wife, Alison, con-

nected with local students and their families with a reading of Dr. Seuss at Oasis Elementary School, March 2.

"One of the things I wanted to do when I got out here was support the

Morongo Unified School District any way I could," Clardy said. "I was asked to come and do this, and I was happy come and read to the children, to show personally

See **READING**, A5



Visit the official MCAGCC facebook page at <http://www.facebook.com/thecombatcenter>



Hey Combat Center fans – Spread the word! The Combat Center has its own Flickr photo and video streams. Find them at <http://www.flickr.com/thecombatcenter>.

Save time, money: Use primary care managers

BRIAN P. SMITH

TriWest Healthcare Alliance

How can TRICARE help you be healthy, wealthy and wise? In this article you will learn how to:

- Work with your primary care manager to keep your health in check
- Protect your wallet from unnecessary out-of-pocket expenses
- Make your specialty appointments more quickly.

It may start when your primary care manager refers you to a provider outside of the military clinic for specialty care. Your PCM and the military clinic are your health partners. They help you manage your routine and specialty health care. TriWest gets the referral and then sends you an authorization for a number of visits within a certain time period for a specific type of care.

It is important that you know two things: how many visits and how long?

If you need additional visits – either more than were originally authorized or extending beyond the original time period – you will need to contact your PCM or the military clinic referral office. They may submit a new referral or may request that you visit your PCM.

If you see a specialist without a current referral in place, you would pay toward a deductible and then a 50 percent cost share. This is known as point of service (POS).

Active duty service members cannot use point of service. Without a referral, they may be responsible for the entire cost.

That's how you can save money. So how do you save time?

Easy! Register for paperless authorization letters at www.triwest.com/GoGreen. Don't wait days on a mailed authorization letter. Electronic notifications are sent within 24 hours of being processed. You can schedule your specialty care visits that much sooner.

Centerspeak

Who is your pick for the NCAA March Madness Tournament?

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



STAFF SGT. JACK MCNELLIE

COMPANY A, MARINE CORPS COMMUNICATION-ELECTRONICS SCHOOL

“Texas, because that is my home state.”



CPL. DAVID LOPEZ

COMPANY K, 3RD BATTALION, 7TH MARINE REGIMENT

“University of Arizona, because they are in the top 20.”



CPL. MATHEW LANG

MARINE CORPS TACTICS AND OPERATIONS GROUP

“North Carolina, because they are better than Duke and Kansas.”



PFC. SEAN HOLIDAY

COMPANY A, MARINE CORPS COMMUNICATION-ELECTRONICS SCHOOL

“Wisconsin, because I am from there.”

Hot Topics

RED CROSS DENTAL PROGRAM

The next session of the American Red Cross Dental Assistant Training Program at the Combat Center's dental facility will begin in April. The program includes about 700 hours of classroom and clinical experience. Classes are Mondays-Fridays, from 6:45 a.m. to 4 p.m. Participants must be at least 18 years old, be a military-sponsored identification card holder and be current on immunizations. Applications are available at the American Red Cross office in the Village Center. Deadline for applications is March 28 by 4 p.m. to the American Red Cross Office. For questions, call 830-6685.

HEALTH FAIR

An Active Duty and Base Employee Health Fair will be held April 7-8 at the base theater. It will be presented in two-hour segments each day from 7:30 a.m. to 3 p.m. The fair will offer Hearing Conservation, Men's Health, Women's Health, Tobacco Cessation, Sexual Health/STD Prevention, Behavioral Health, Internet addiction, Self Esteem and Sexual Assault Prevention. For more information call Petty Officer 2nd Class Nicole Gacayan at 830-2002, or Petty Officer 2nd Class George Herrera at 830-2621.

VOLLEYBALL SIGN-UP

Sign-up for the CG's Intramural Volleyball League. Games will be played Tuesday nights at the West Gym at 6, 7 and 8 p.m. League play will begin March 15. Open to all Active Duty, DOD/NAF Employees and family members of Active Duty. Call the sports office at 830-4092.

Marine Corps History

March 13, 1943

The first group of 71 Women Marine officer candidates arrived at the U.S. Midshipmen School (Women's Reserve) at Mount Holyoke College in South Hadley, Mass.



Eagle Eyes

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



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

SUDOKU #2110

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CROSSWORD AND SUDOKU PUZZLES COURTESY OF © 2010 HOMETOWN CONTENT

WE'VE GOT THEIR NUMBERS

[Puzzle solutions on A9]

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64						65				66						
67								68						69		
70										71						72

ACROSS

1. Eat in front of the TV, say
5. ___ Bones (Sleepy Hollow bully)
9. Dam on the Nile
14. Equal to the task
15. Slots spot
16. Bluffer's ploy
17. Roger Bannister was the first
20. Achilles, for one
21. Either of two AL squads
22. Table insert
23. "Shoot!"
24. Rubber-stamps
26. Bluesman's lick
28. High-five sound
30. Sibelius's "Valse ___"
34. Plopped down
37. Quarter turns
39. Furrier John Jacob
40. Yuppie, maybe
44. Tinsel town statuette
45. Leaves slack-jawed
46. Pierce Arrow contemporary
47. Exhausted
49. Negative stat for a quarterback
51. Medicinal fluids
53. Letter before sigma
54. Submissions to eds.
57. Four Corners state
60. Messages from DWF's
62. ___ a living
64. OCS graduate, perhaps
67. Part of ICBM
68. Cleveland's lake
69. Bit of baby talk
70. Irascible
71. Sally or Ayn
72. Did in

DOWN

1. '90s treaty acronym
2. Bassoons' little brothers
3. Moved like a coward
4. Rustler's target
5. David, who said "Good night, Chet"
6. Stimp's pal
7. Burden of proof
8. ___ mouth (incessant talker)
9. Hurler's asset
10. Marlin's cousin
11. ___ E. Coyote
12. Riding the waves
13. Soft ball brand
18. Stock yard sounds
19. Sign over a door
25. Tex-Mex condiment
27. Toga party venue
29. Post-snowfall vehicles
31. Hoosegow
32. Vocal quality
33. Therefore, to Descartes
34. Point on a metro map
35. Facetious "I see"
36. When doubled, a '40s hit
38. Sling mud at
41. List of prior arrests
42. Shoe holder
43. Avoided
48. Sturdy cart
50. "Out of the inkwell" clown
52. Puff ___ (dangerous snake)
54. Relating to form
55. "Blue ___ Shoes"
56. Scarecrow's stuffing
57. Condo division
58. Pitchfork prong
59. Tiny colonists
61. Franklin D.'s mother
63. Pulls the plug on
65. Have a go at
66. Yang's opposite

Combat Center Spotlight

Name: Ruby Zunino
Hometown: Brighton, England
Unit: 1st Battalion, 7th Marine Regiment
Job title: Family Readiness Officer
Job duties: Taking care of Marines sailors and families, and providing resources to them.
What do you like most about your job?: "I get pleasure from assisting all the spouses and family members and supplying the tools they need for a successful life in the military."
Significant achievements: "In 2003, while my husband was deployed, I worked full-time running a business and graduated."
Hobbies: Hiking, camping, rock-climbing and fishing
Time at Combat Center: Seven years



OBSERVATION POST

Commanding General Brig. Gen. H. Stacy Clardy III

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SMP lets good times roll



LANCE CPL. SARAH ANDERSON

Private First Class Jolene Crook, a student at the Marine Corps Communication-Electronics School, plays a card matching game as fellow MCCES student, Pfc. Jessica Holloway, looks on during the Single Marine Program Mardi Gras party held at The Zone Saturday.

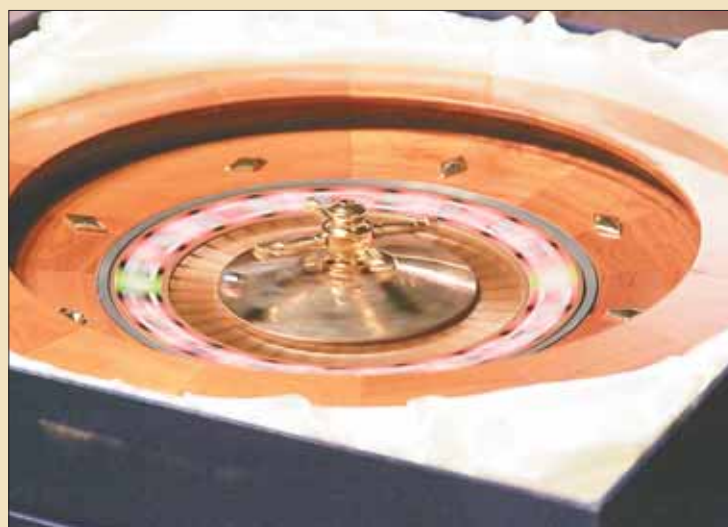
LANCE CPL. SARAH ANDERSON

Marine Corps Communication-Electronics School student Pfc. Nash Creighton shows off his pastry prize during the Single Marine Program Mardi Gras party held at The Zone Saturday.



LANCE CPL. SARAH ANDERSON

Marines from the Combat Center participate in the Single Marine Program Mardi Gras party held at The Zone Saturday.



LANCE CPL. SARAH ANDERSON

Marines played roulette during the Single Marine Program Mardi Gras party held at The Zone Saturday.



LANCE CPL. SARAH ANDERSON

Combat Center Marines play a game of Black Jack during the Single Marine Program Mardi Gras party held at The Zone Saturday.

Off-limits establishments

The Combat Center community is reminded by Brig. Gen. H. Stacy Clardy III, the installation's commanding general, that the following establishments are off-limits to all Armed Forces personnel and their family members until further notice:

- The Yucca Tobacco Mart, located at 57602 29 Palms Hwy., in Yucca Valley
- Puff's Tobacco Mart, located at 57063 29 Palms Hwy., in Yucca Valley
- STC Smoke Shop, located at 6001 Adobe Rd., in Twentynine Palms
- Adobe Smoke Shop, located at 6441 Adobe Rd., in Twentynine Palms

The Armed Forces Disciplinary Control Board identified the four establishments as adversely affecting the health, safety, welfare and morals of service members by selling "Spice" and "Salvia" substances.

The off-limits designation constitutes a lawful general order, and violation by U.S. military personnel is punishable under Article 92 of the Uniformed Code of Military Justice.

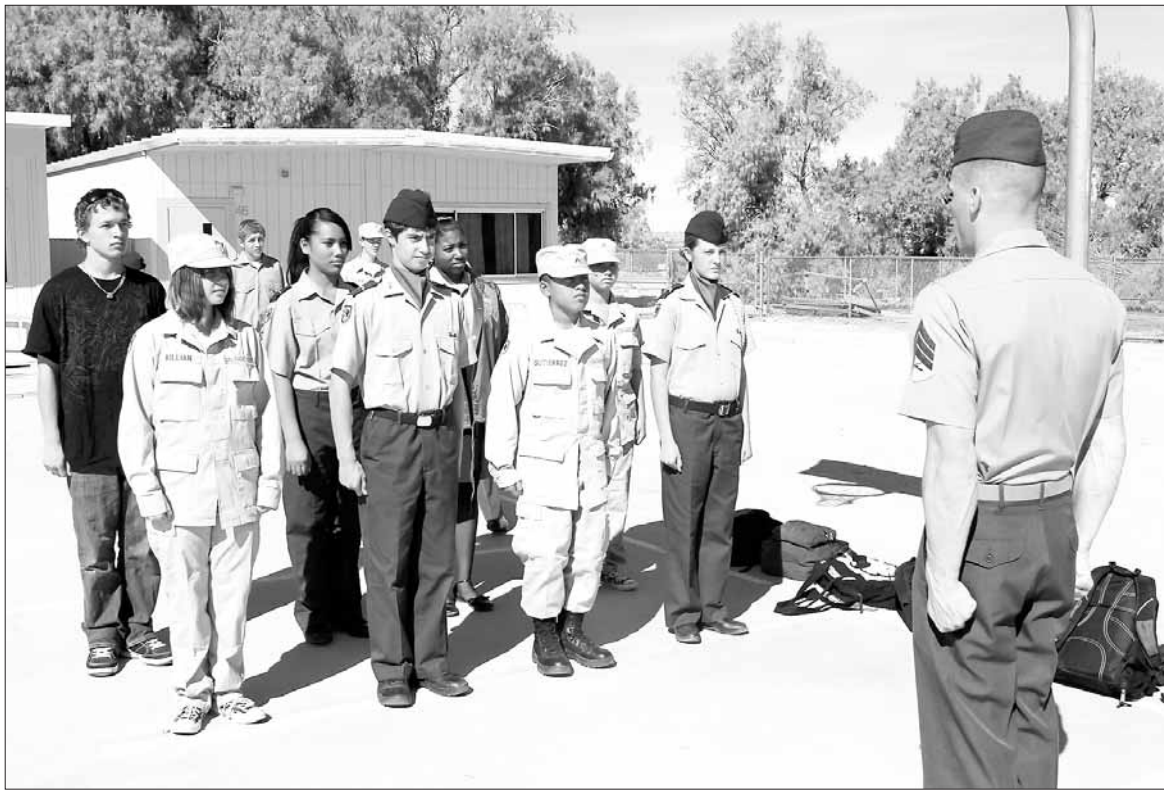
Job op: Military green to LAPD blue

The Los Angeles Police Department is looking for more candidates to join their force, and is hiring active, reserve and retired military members.

Take the LAPD written test every third Wednesday at 4:30 p.m. at the Combat Center's Christ Chapel, building 1541. The more honorably-served years you have in the Armed Services, the higher your starting pay will be. For more information, check out <http://www.joinlapd.com> or call 866-444-LAPD (5273).



Sunday marks the return of Daylight Savings Time. Combat Center personnel are reminded to set their clocks ahead one hour at 2 a.m. Sunday. DST also marks the transition to the wear of summer seasonal uniforms for Marines and sailors.



DIANE DURDEN

Nicholas Cascarilla, an administration NCO with the Installation Personnel Administration Center, instructs a small group of cadets on the movements performed when given the command to "dismiss." Marines from HQBN worked with cadets from the Twentynine Palms Junior High School California Cadet Corps March 2 teaching basic drill movements and uniform inspection techniques.

HQBN connects with 'next generation'

DIANE DURDEN

PUBLIC AFFAIRS SPECIALIST

For decades, Marines have passed their knowledge and experience from one generation to the next. Older, more sea-

soned Marines teach and mentor younger Marines as they make their own way through the ranks.

Headquarters Battalion Marines went one step further, reaching out to yet an even younger gener-

ation, by participating in the CACC class conducted at Twentynine Palms Junior High School in Twentynine Palms, Calif., March 2.

The CACC was founded in April 1911 when the California High School Cadet Act created a statewide organization for all secondary schools. Its original purpose was to prepare commissioned officers for service in the U.S. Armed Forces. Today's mission emphasizes quality educational and leadership development aimed at preparing students for success in college and the work force.

The CACC class at Twentynine Palms Junior High School, an elective class available to both 7th and 8th grade students, has been offered at the school more than 30 years. Science and personal finance instructor Ted Luke remembers the class being part of the curriculum when he was a student

See HQBN, A9



DIANE DURDEN

First Sgt. Thomas Russi, first sergeant for Company A, Headquarters Battalion, asks a cadet about elements of the California Cadet Corps emblem on the student's cover during a uniform inspection demonstration conducted at Twentynine Palms Junior High School.

SJA CORNER

Conflicts of interest forbidden for lawyers

CAPT. DAVID SEGRAVES

LEGAL ASSISTANCE OFFICE

After learning of a non-support allegation made to his command, a Marine seeks counsel with the Legal Assistance Section, but is turned away. The legal assistance clerks inform him there's a conflict, and the Marine cannot be helped.

While this result can lead to frustration, Marines need to understand the reasons for the rules and their options when they are "conflicted-out" of using the Legal Assistance Office aboard the Combat Center.

One common problem we run into is domestic relations issues. If a Marine considering divorce seeks counsel of the Legal Assistance Office for his rights and responsibilities, the Marine becomes the client of the Legal Assistance Office. Later, if the Marine decides to file for divorce, and his spouse comes to the Legal Assistance Office seeking advice, our clerks will have to inform the spouse there is a conflict of interest, and she cannot be assisted. The conflicts of interest can occur in every type of legal situation (e.g. in landlord-tenant disputes, contracts disputes, civil harassment), but the most common and heated situation involve disputes between spouses.

All judge advocates are Marine officers who are also attorneys. As judge advocates, we must follow the Rules for Professional Conduct as found in JAG Instruction 5803.1C. As attorneys, we have to follow the rules for professional conduct of the states where we are licensed. Both sets of rules require a duty of loyalty to individual clients. Put simply, clients need to know that they can trust their attorneys to have the client's best interests ruling their actions. As such, judge advocates cannot take on new clients who have interests that are adverse to their existing clients.

As a society, we value the relationship between a client and an attorney so much that all courts recognize that information passed from a client to an attorney is privileged and must not be revealed by an attorney without the consent of the client. Similarly, clients

need to know that any information they give to a judge advocate at the Legal Assistance Office will not be used to their detriment in the future. This need and the related professional conduct rules guide our office to extend the conflict rules to cover even prior clients. As long as we maintain a file on a former client, currently three years after the case is closed, we will not take on clients who have conflicting interests with former clients. We strictly follow these rules to ensure every client knows they can fully confide in their attorneys.

Marines who find themselves "conflicted-out" of using the Legal Assistance Office aboard the Combat Center have options. Our clerks can provide a handout with the contact information with all other Marine legal assistance offices in the area. These other offices will provide the same services free of charge. Marines and their family members eligible for legal assistance can also use legal assistance offices aboard our sister services installations. Conflicted clients can go to <http://legalassistance.law.af.mil/content/locator.php> to locate the closest offices to any location.

Our office will also provide the contact information for San Bernardino's Legal Aid (1-866-889-7328) and the Public Service Law Corporation (1-951-682-7968) for Riverside County disputes. Both of these organizations provide free legal counsel.

If the dispute involves family law (divorce, child support, child custody) in California, Marines can use family law facilitators. These are trained employees of the county who will help clients fill out paperwork. While they cannot provide legal advice, they are subject matter experts in filling out forms.

Finally, the Legal Assistance office maintains a list of local attorneys who have errors and omissions (malpractice insurance). Many of these attorneys have reduced fees or free consultations for military members.

While it may be frustrating to be turned away from the Legal Assistance Office because of a conflict of interest, it is necessary to ensure we provide the best services possible to our clients.

Patrols get 1/3 ready to work with ANA soldiers

LANCE CPL. SARAH ANDERSON
COMBAT CORRESPONDENT

Marines from 1st Battalion, 3rd Marine Regiment, put their last three weeks' worth

of training to the test with a patrol accompanied by Afghan role players Tuesday. Their actions were assessed by members of the Advisor Training Group.

The training not only

focused on interaction and learning the culture, but also how to advise and teach Afghan National Army soldiers combat rules and techniques.

"We assess them on the

skills they learn here," said Capt. Nicholas Abbate, an instructor at ATG and team one lead assessor for the day. "They learn to advise our host nation on doctrinal warfare functions in a counterinsurgency environment."

The Marines selected for the training were chosen from random platoons and companies across their battalion. This enables the group to share what they learned with as many of their fellow Marines as possible.

The Marines partnered up with role players posing as ANA soldiers to practice teaching classes on searching for improvised explosive devices and other combat patrolling techniques.

When the patrol began, the Marines and soldiers discovered a simulated IED, giving the Marines an opportunity to show the ANA role players how



LANCE CPL. SARAH ANDERSON

A Marine demonstrates how to search civilians to role players posing as Afghan National Army counterparts before a patrol exercise Tuesday at Range 220.



LANCE CPL. SARAH ANDERSON

A role player acting as an Afghan National Army soldier watches a detained insurgent after being instructed what to do by Marines during a patrol exercise Tuesday at Range 220.

See PATROL, A10

READING, from A1

I was willing to contribute."

The school staff was grateful for the help participation Clardy and his wife provided.

"I really appreciate it," said Randy Eigner, the principal of Oasis Elementary. "It is one of those things, since we really don't have a huge military population here, but the fact they are willing to come, it's an honor to us."

Everyone stressed the importance reading holds for children when they are young and as they continue to grow.

"I think it inspires them, they see how fun it can be and how much they can enjoy it," said Alison Clardy, wife of Clardy. "It is an activity they can learn on their own and keep themselves entertained."

"It is the way kids learn to read, it's not just about learning the letters. The earlier kids hear people reading to them, the better they will be able to read," Eigner said. "It is unfortunately something that seems to be missing nowadays, but it's very important."

During the readings the room was filled with children



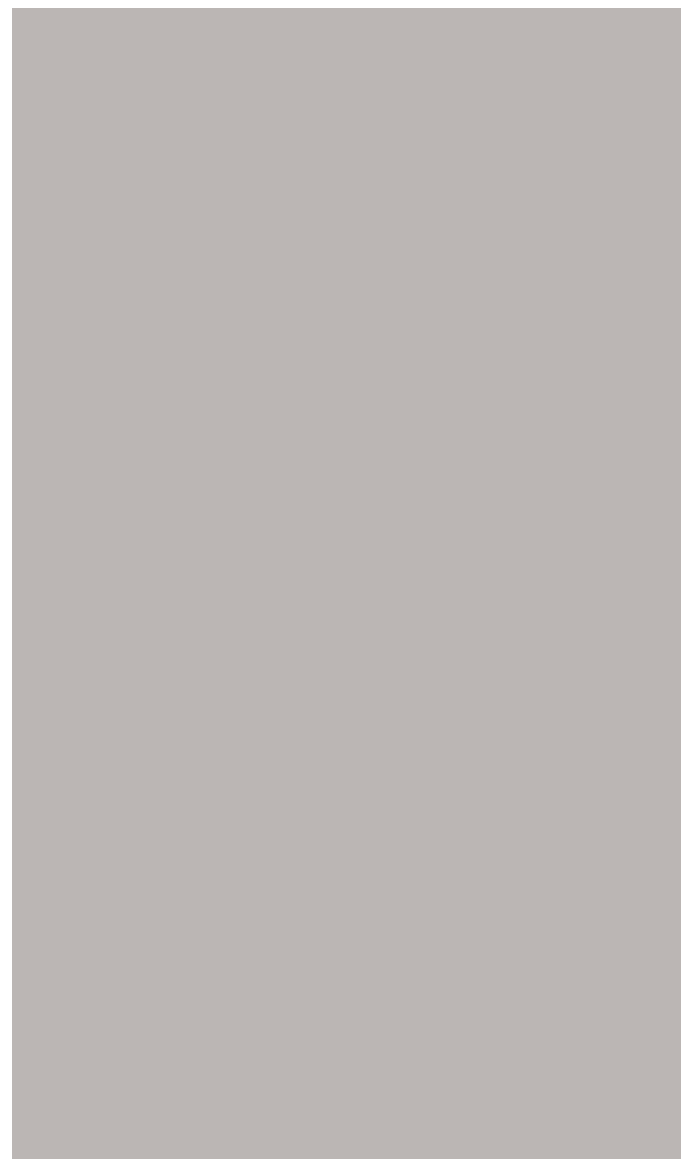
LANCE CPL. ANDREW D. THORBURN

Brigadier Gen. H. Stacy Clardy III, the commanding general of the Combat Center, poses with Oasis Elementary staff after reading to the school's students March 2.

and the sound of laughter as they enjoyed "Oh the Places You'll Go" and "I Can Read With My Eyes Shut."

The night didn't end there, but kept true to its reading theme, with a book trade available. The importance of staying actively involved with children's development was a key issue for Clardy.

"It is important that we are all involved, whether you are the commanding general, a mother or a father, it is important to be a part of their education," he said.



STORY AND PHOTOS BY CPL. M. C. NERL



A Marine with the Marine Corps Silent Drill Platoon perform the trademark rifle toss Wednesday at the Combat Center's Lance Cpl. Torrey L. Gray Field. The Marine Corps Battle Color Detachment also included the Marine Corps Drum and Bugle Corps, as well as the Corps' color guard.



The Marine Corps Silent Drill Platoon performed for Marines, sailors, family, retirees and local area elementary school students Wednesday at the Combat Center's Lance Cpl. Torrey L. Gray Field. The Marine Corps Battle Color Detachment also included the Marine Corps Drum and Bugle Corps, as well as the Corps' color guard.

COLORS, from A1

Martinez, the Drum and Bugle Corps drum major, said the setting here couldn't be better for a great performance.

"The performance was great; the weather here is perfect for performing," said the Kansas City, Mo., native. "The Marines performed very well today. We couldn't have asked for more."

Thanks to their yearly January training at Marine Corps Air Station Yuma, Ariz., the band, along with the Silent Drill Platoon, is always ready for desert performances by the time their touring season starts in the early part of the year.

Corporal Oscar Franquez, the Marine Corps Silent Drill Platoon's guide, said he draws inspiration not just from putting on shows, but especially from doing it aboard the Combat Center.

"I feel it's a privilege to do what I do, and to come here," said Franquez, from Santa Clarita, Calif. "This is where Marines train before they go overseas, and it's really just great to come and perform for our fellow Marines who are getting ready to leave."

"It's a privilege to do our job, to represent those Marines who are out, fighting for this country's freedom," Franquez continued. "We all love doing what we do. It's almost that it's our job to remind the public that there're Marines out there making sacrifices for them and keeping them safe."

The performance was a first for Pfc. Jake Velazquez, a student attached to the Combat Center's Marine Corps Communication-electronics School. He said he couldn't have enjoyed it more.

"Both shows were awesome," said the Phoenix native. "I remember hearing about the Silent Drill Team, watching videos on YouTube when I was a poolee. It's something I've been waiting to see in person, and definitely wasn't a disappointment."

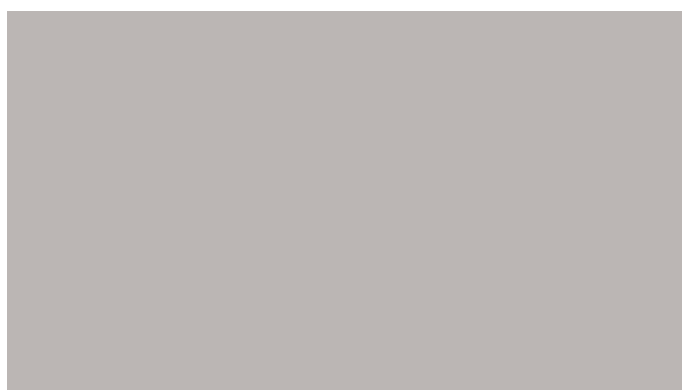
The Battle Color Detachment is slated to appear at Marine Corps Recruit Depot San Diego, Calif., next and will continue to tour all the Corps' installations, before returning to the Combat Center again next year. Check out <http://www.marines.mil> for more on their 2011 tour dates.



Members of the Combat Center community enjoy the performances by the Marine Corps Silent Drill Platoon, Drum and Bugle Corps and Color Guard at Lance Cpl. Torrey L. Gray Field Wednesday.



A Marine with the Marine Corps Drum and Bugle Corps talks with kids after the Battle Colors Ceremony at the Combat Center Wednesday.





Marines with the Marine Corps Silent Drill Platoon perform their trademark rifle spin Wednesday at the Combat Center's Lance Cpl. Torrey L. Gray Field. The Marine Corps Battle Color Detachment also included the Marine Corps Drum and Bugle Corps, as well as the Corps' color guard.



After the Marine Corps Battle Color Detachment performance, people were allowed to meet and talk with the members of the Marine Corps Color Guard, Drum and Bugle Corps, as well as the Silent Drill Platoon.

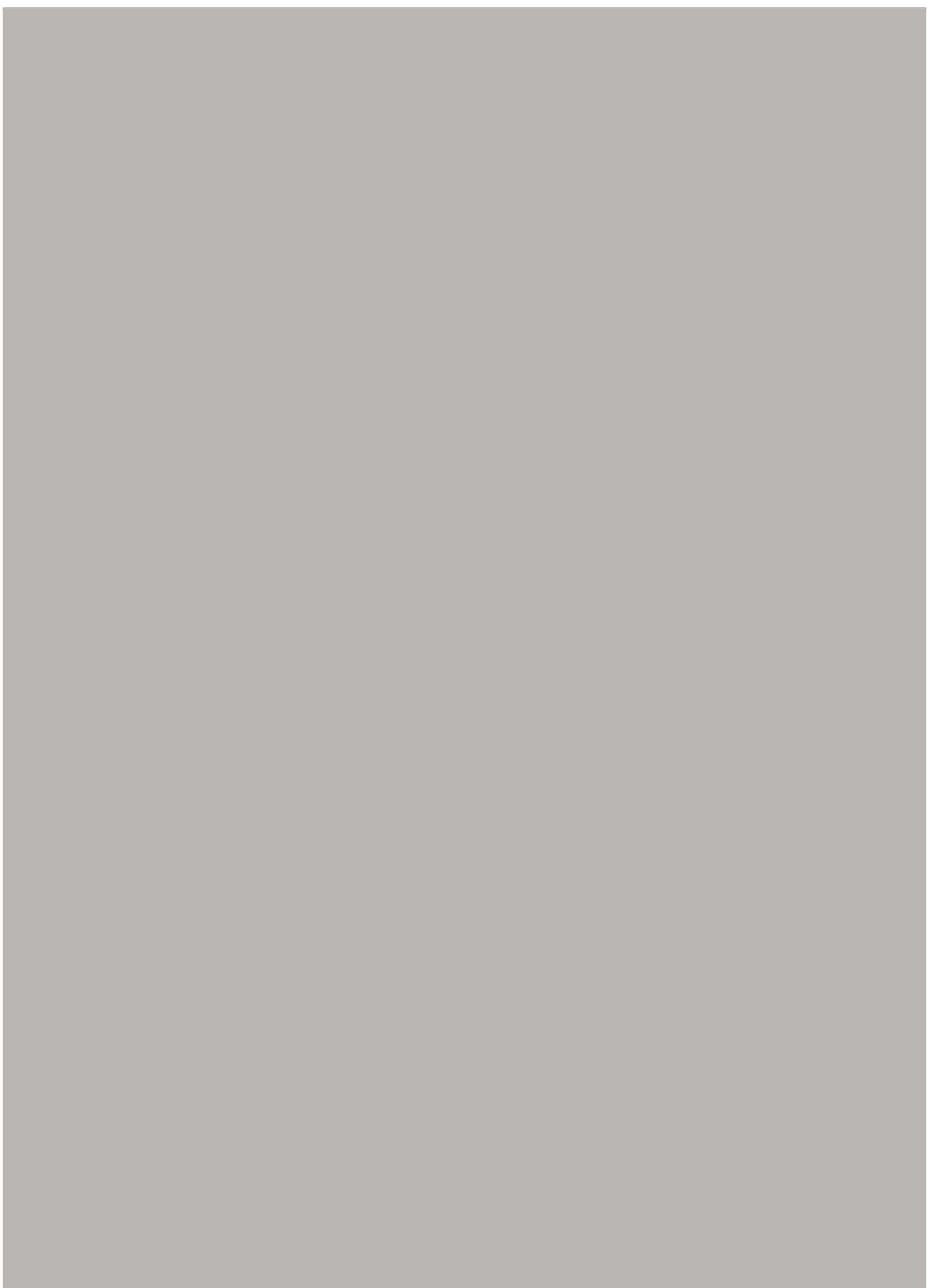
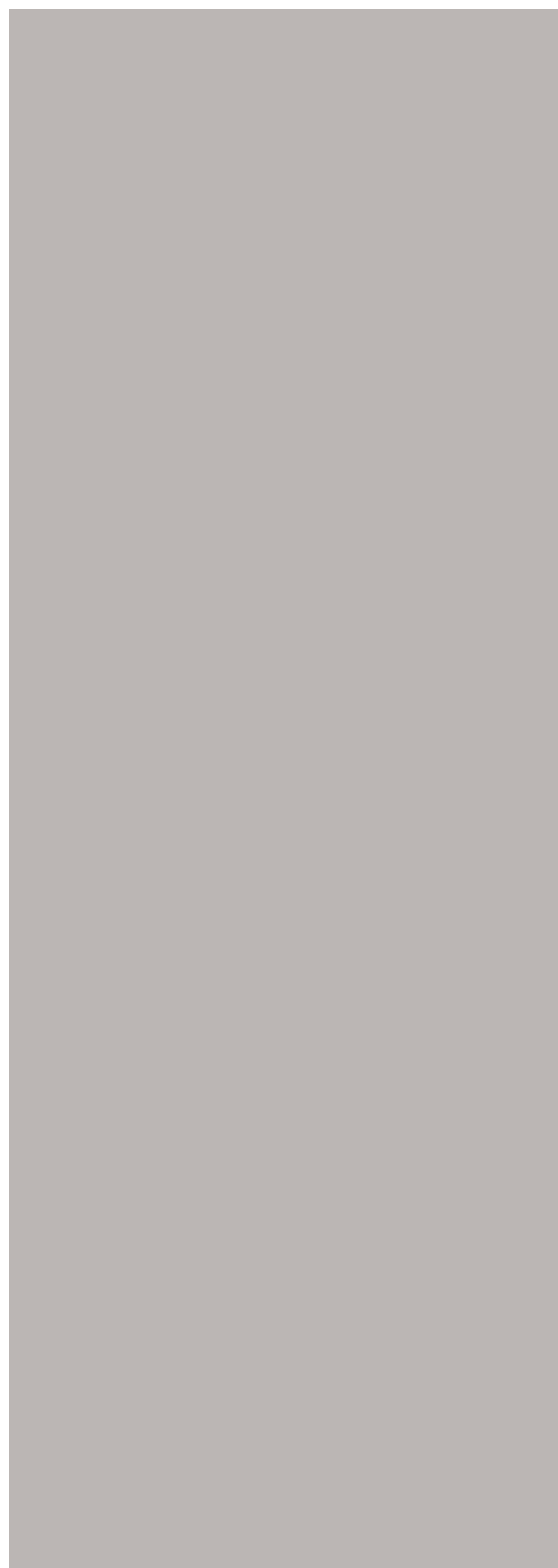


Drum Major Gunner Sgt. Keith Martinez and the Marine Corps Drum and Bugle Corps listen to applause Wednesday during the Battle Color Detachment's performance at the Combat Center's Lance Cpl. Torrey L. Gray Field.

ADVERTISEMENT



Gunner Sgt. Keith Martinez, the drum major of the Marine Corps' Drum and Bugle Corps, conducts a musical piece Wednesday during the Battle Color Detachment's performance at the Combat Center's Lance Cpl. Torrey L. Gray Field. The Marine Corps Silent Drill Platoon and the Marine Corps color guard were also present.





CPL. ANDREW S. AVITT

Marines and sailors with Company C, 2nd Battalion, 7th Marine Regiment, in collaboration with local authorities, conducted an airfield seizure exercise at the Twentynine Palms Airport, March 4. The exercise aimed to increase the units capabilities and prepare them for their upcoming exercise aboard the Marine Expeditionary Unit later this year.



CPL. ANDREW S. AVITT

Marines and sailors with Company C, 2nd Battalion, 7th Marine Regiment, in collaboration with local authorities, conducted an airfield seizure exercise at the Twentynine Palms Airport, located just outside the City of Twentynine Palms, March 4.

AIRPORT, from A1

possible for the Marines.

Airfields are tactically crucial to any fight, not only for their ability to base and house units, but also for bringing in supplies to friendly forces, said Capt. Richard McKenzie, company commander of Co. E, 2/7. This is why it is also crucial to practice taking control of these favorable facilities from enemy forces.

"We came in to take these buildings; we landed multiple birds on the airfield and provided security," said Cpl. Ryan Graham, the company radio operator with Co. E, 2/7. "As soon as security was set, we started pushing by squad rushes up to the objective."

The helicopters lifted off, but stayed close and circled just a few hundred feet above the area, waiting for the call to drop down and retrieve the Marines as soon as the airport was under their control.

The Marines were especially careful in their approach to the role players. In a real world airport seizure, not everyone would be the enemy and not all hostile individuals would be armed. Trainers made it tougher to distinguish friend from foe, by dressing all roles players in jeans and T-shirts.

The element of unpredictability and free-thinking role players adds to the experience and makes it harder for the Marines and ultimately provides the most realistic training scenario possible, Mckenzie said.

After sustaining light casualties and taking control of the airport, the unit called in a notional medical evacuation, another skill the unit needed to practice before heading out to the South Pacific with the MEU.

Being able to perform flawless evacuations is an important skill for a battalion landing team, whose responsibilities could include spearheading assaults and amphibious

landings, Mckenzie said.

"Being on a MEU, you'll never know what kind of task you are going to have," Graham said. "You could be going to Afghanistan one minute, and a week later being doing something like this in another country."

In less than an hour, all hostile role players were either dead or subdued with flexi-cuffs, and the assault was over. McKenzie said the Marines did well and were successful in accomplishing their mission.

As quickly as they had landed, the Marines boarded waiting helicopters and swooped away into a clear blue sky.



CPL. ANDREW S. AVITT

Marines and sailors with Company C, 2nd Battalion, 7th Marine Regiment, in collaboration with local authorities, conducted an airfield seizure exercise at the Twentynine Palms Airport March 4.



DIANE DURDEN

Cadet Logan Crow, a 7th grader in the California Cadet Corps at Twentynine Palms Junior High School, reports to Cpl. Oscar Martinez, a wireman with G-6, during the practical application portion of a class on basic drill movements conducted at the school March 2. Marines from HQBN worked with cadets during the hour-long class, teaching basic drill movements and uniform inspection techniques.

HQBN, from A4

at the school in 1983.

"I wished I'd have taken the class then," said Luke, who is temporarily filling in as the instructor for CACC the class' regular instructor, Capt. William Morton.

The curriculum emphasizes instruction in patriotism, proper care and wear of the uniform, marching, survival skills and navigation. The HQBN Marines joined the class to teach basic drill and uniform inspection techniques.

"It's a ridiculously good feeling working with kids," said Lance Cpl. Aaron Piggee, an administration clerk with the Installation Personnel Administration Center.

Marines first demonstrated a few basic drill movements, beginning with the positions of "attention," "at

ease" and "parade rest." Students also learned facing movements and "fallout."

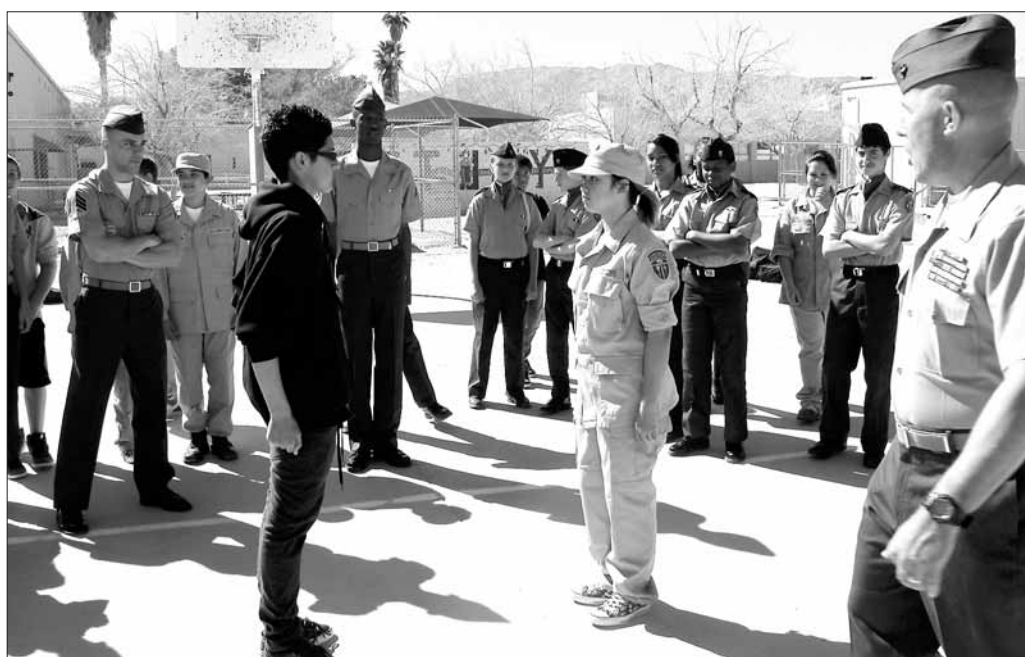
Each Marine then worked with a small group of students for more individualized instruction.

Before the end of class, the cadets played a quick game of "knock out," a game where competitors perform various facing movements. Cadets were "knocked out," or eliminated, for incorrect movements, such as facing in the wrong direction, starting

the movement too early or not moving at all. The game continued until there was only one student left.

"You just have to remain calm and think before you move," said 8th grader Lauryn Cabanlit after outlasting her classmates in the game.

The hour-long class ended with handshakes and high-fives as the cadets thanked the Marines for their time. Both cadets and Marines said they are looking forward to next time.



DIANE DURDEN

The final two cadets face off in a game of "knock out" during the California Cadet Corps class at Twentynine Palms Junior High School March 2. "Knock out" is a game used to test performance of drill movements and obedience to orders where contestants are "knocked out," or eliminated, for performing incorrect drill movements.



DIANE DURDEN

First Sgt. Thomas Russi, first sergeant for Company A, Headquarters Battalion, explains the basics of close order drill while HQBN Marines demonstrate the movements to California Cadet Corps students from Twentynine Palms Junior High March 2.

CROSSWORD SOLUTIONS

N	O	S	H	B	R	O	M	A	S	W	A	N			
A	B	L	E	R	E	N	O	R	A	I	S	E			
F	O	U	R	M	I	N	U	T	E	M	I	L	E	R	
T	E	N	D	O	N	S	O	X	L	E	A	F			
A	S	K	O	K	S	R	I	F	F						
				S	L	A	P	T	R	I	S	T	E		
S	A	T		E	L	L	S	A	S	T	O	R			
T	H	I	R	T	Y	S	O	M	E	T	H	I	N	G	
O	S	C	A	R		A	W	E	S		R	E	O		
P	O	O	P	E	D		S	A	C	K					
				S	E	R	A		R	H	O	M	S	S	
U	T	A	H		A	D	S		E	K	E	O	U	T	
N	I	N	E	T		Y	D	A	Y	W	O	N	D	E	R
I	N	T	E	R		E	R	I	E	D	A	D	A		
T	E	S	T	Y		R	A	N	D		S	L	E	W	

SUDOKU

1	6	2	3	7	9	8	5	4
5	3	8	1	6	4	9	2	7
4	7	9	8	2	5	3	6	1
7	1	5	2	9	8	6	4	3
3	8	6	4	1	7	2	9	5
2	9	4	5	3	6	1	7	8
9	2	3	7	5	1	4	8	6
8	5	1	6	4	2	7	3	9
6	4	7	9	8	3	5	1	2

COMBAT CENTER RELIGIOUS SERVICES

Sunday
Immaculate Heart of Mary
 8:45 a.m. - Confessions+
 9 a.m. - Rosary
 9:30 a.m. - Catholic Mass*
 9:30 a.m. - Children's Liturgy of the Word
 4 p.m. - Choir Practice
 4:15 p.m. - Confessions+
 4:30 p.m. - Rosary
 5 p.m. - Catholic Mass
Christ Chapel
 9 a.m. - Calvary Fellowship (Contemporary Worship*)
 9 a.m. - Children's Church
 10:30 a.m. - Redemption (A blend of traditional and contemporary worship)
 10:45 a.m. - Children's Church*)
Weekday Events
Immaculate Heart of Mary
 Mon.-Fri. 11:45 a.m.-Catholic Mass
Christ Chapel
 Mon. - Fri., noon - Prayer
Tuesday
Christ Chapel
 9 a.m. - Christian Women's Fellowship* (Sept.-May)
Immaculate Heart of Mary
 3:30-5:30 p.m. - Military Council of Catholic Women
Wednesday
Immaculate Heart of Mary
 First Wednesday, 6 p.m. - Baptism preparation class and 7 p.m. - Knights of Columbus
Thursday
Immaculate Heart of Mary
 9 a.m. - Adult Class
 6 p.m. - Children RCIA
 6:30 p.m. - RCIA (Sept.-April)
 7 p.m. - Gr. 7 and Confirmation
Friday
Immaculate Heart of Mary
 First Friday each month, 12:15 p.m.,
 4:30 p.m. - Exposition/ Adoration Most Blessed Sacrament
Legend
 * Indicates child care is provided
 + Call 830-6456/6482 for confession appointments

Muslim prayer space is available in the Village Center, room 87.
 Jewish prayer space is available in the Village Center, room 93.
 For information call 830-5430.

Combat Center Trader Ads

AUTOMOTIVE

CLASSIC 1957 CHEVY PICK-UP. 350 engine, 3 speed automatic, \$6,900 OBO. 361-3509.

1983 YAMAHA VIRAGO 750. Not running. Complete. New seat, front tire and battery. Full face helmet also. \$300. 413-4015.

2007 SUZUKI BOULEVARD. Black and chrome, 1600 CC, \$3,000 in extras included. Asking price \$13,500. 401-3739.

2002 CR250. FMF pipe and silencer, paddle tire, eline starter, runs very strong. \$2,600 OBO. 910-3979.

2000 NISSAN XTERRA. 4x4, auto, PDL, PW, roof rack, tow pkg., newer timing belt, 31" BFG's, 132K miles, \$5,000. Call 957-5630.

2008 TOYOTA YARIS. \$10,000 OBO. Approx- imately 46K miles. Good condition. Consistent maintenance. Call 622-4562.

C5 CORVETTE FRONT BRA. \$50. 413-4015.

MISC.

BICYCLE, BABY ITEMS: Schwinn Stingray bicycle, solid wood baby crib, baby walker, stroller, wooden horse and more. All in excellent condition. Call 217-3310.

DIAMONDBACK MOUNTAIN BIKE. Like new. \$100. 413-4015.

REDWOOD BURL COFFEE TABLE. Beautiful. \$325/offer. 413-4015.

COLLECTIBLE CARDS: Baseball, football mid 80's to 90's. Call 567-7921.

The deadline for submitting Trader Ads is noon Wednesday, for the upcoming Friday's newspaper.

Trader Ad forms are available at the Public Affairs Office and may be filled out during normal working hours at Bldg. 1417. Ads may also be submitted through

e-mail, but will only be accepted from those with an @usmc.mil address. If you are active duty, retired military or a family member and do not have an @usmc.mil address you can go to the PAO page of the base Web site at: <http://www.29palms.usmc.mil/dirs/pao/> and

complete a request to publish an ad. The limitations for ads are: 15-word limit, limit of two ads per household and the Trader may be used only for noncommercial classified ads containing items of personal property offered by and for individuals authorized to use this service. Such

ads must represent incidental exchanged not of sustained business nature. **Ads for housing rentals will not be considered for the Combat Center Trader.** To have a "House For Sale" ad run in the Observation Post, applicants must provide

Permanent Change of Station orders and have the ad 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 830-6213.



LANCE CPL. SARAH ANDERSON

A Marine calls a halt as he spots a notional improvised explosive device during a patrol exercise with role players posing as Afghan National Army counterparts Tuesday at Range 220.



LANCE CPL. SARAH ANDERSON

Marines and their role playing Afghan National Army counterparts keep civilians off the road because of a known simulated improvised explosive device in the area during a patrol exercise Tuesday at Range 220.



LANCE CPL. SARAH ANDERSON

Marines assist a "wounded" role player after he was hit by a notional rocket propelled grenade blast during a patrolling exercise Tuesday at Range 220.

PATROL, from A5

to deal with the situation.

"It's great to be put in this type of environment before it really happens in Afghanistan," said Petty Officer 2nd Class Kyle Smith, a corpsman for 1/3.

The Marines and soldiers also stopped at a notional hospital to negotiate getting extra supplies they needed and at the governor's house to announce their presence to the area and learn about the concerns and needs of the local population.

As the group pressed on, they were ambushed by an insurgent using rocket propelled grenades and small arms fire. Aside from detain-

ing the insurgent, the Marines and soldiers also tended to four role playing civilian casualties, whose injuries included broken bones, burns, a sucking chest wound and leg amputation.

"It was a hectic situation and hard," Smith said. "It's designed to be stressful. This training is very realistic, and it was a lot of hands-on."

The Marines and soldiers medically evacuated the casualties then finished their patrol.

"We worked really well together," said Cpl. Jacob Bettilyon, a Marine 1/3. "The language barrier was hard, but it was a great experience."



LANCE CPL. SARAH ANDERSON

A Marine demonstrates how to search civilians to role players posing as Afghan National Army counterparts before a patrolling exercise Tuesday at Range 220.



HQBN, Most Hated square at finals



Russell Griswold, a player from HQBN rebounds the ball for a put pack in the Commanding General's Intramural Basketball League Championship Finals at the East Gym and Fitness Center March 3. HQBN took the finals 71-60.

STORY AND PHOTOS LANCE CPL. D. J. WU
 COMBAT CORRESPONDENT

Most Hated and HQBN squared off for the Commanding General's Intramural Basketball League Championships at the East Gym and Fitness Center March 3.

The two teams fought their way through league play as, finally facing off at the finals of the championship tournament.

"The tournament showed what the season already told us," said Franco Robinson, the head coach for Most Hated. "The teams that are supposed to be here, are."

The HQBN team, with their undefeated season, made it to the championship finals with no problems.

"It was a cake walk in the season play," said James Burke, the acting coach of HQBN for the championship finals.

Each team sailed through all after three rounds in the double elimination tournament with little opposition from the rest of the rostered teams.

The top priority game plan was clear to both of the head coaches.

"It's going to come down to defense," Robinson said.

"We have to get out early and rebound and play good defense," Burke added.

HQBN had the control over much the game and showed why they held an undefeated season.

"We put in all our effort, and did what we did all season," said Antoine Kilgore, a HQBN player, head coach for the team and Most Valuable Player of the championship game.

Most Hated fought hard at the start of the second half to cut the margin down to three at the closest deficit. But they could not keep the pressure in the end.

In the end, HQBN took the title with a score of 71-60, culminating their undefeated season with a championship trophy.

Kilgore said that the team felt good about the win and is anticipating to do the same in next year's basket ball season.



Elijah Gonzalas of Most Hated shoots over HQBN's Brandon Houk during the Commanding General's Intramural Basketball League Championship Finals at the East Gym and Fitness Center March 3.



Thomas Burke of HQBN brings it in for a layup during a fastbreak at the Commanding General's Intramural Basketball League Championship Finals at the East Gym and Fitness Center March 3.



Chris Brown of HQBN take the outside shot against Lamar Hatchett of Most Hated during Commanding General's Intramural Basketball League Championship Finals at the East Gym and Fitness Center March 3. HQBN won the game 71-60.

OP launches 'Desert Detours' series



CPL. M. C. NERL

Fans gathered around the track to watch the nearly 100 teams in the 5th annual running of the Griffin King of the Hammers off-road race in Johnson Valley, Calif., Feb. 11. The crowd numbered nearly 20,000 to see the international caliber race.

See page B3 for our new series, "Desert Detours"

Lt. Dan Band to return



PFC. MICHAEL T. GAMS

The Lt. Dan Band's 2011 visit to Marine Corps Air Ground Combat Center Twentynine Palms is about much more than just entertainment. This year, the band is also working in conjunction with the Marine Corps' DSTRESS Line to educate Marines and their families about resources available to assist them with the challenges inherently resulting from life in the Marine Corps. Catch all the action at Sunset Cinema Saturday at 7 p.m.



Combat Center Clubs

Excursions Enlisted Club

Fridays: Social food, 5 to 7 p.m.; Salsa dancing, 7 to 8 p.m.; Ladies' night, 8 to 10 p.m.; DJ Vlad, 8 to 11 p.m.
Saturdays: Variety Night with DJ Gjettblaque
Wednesdays: DJ Gjettblaque, 8 to 10 p.m.

Bloodstripes NCO Club

Monday: Chicken nuggets and nachos
Wednesdays: Italian sausage with peppers & onions, green salad, 5:30 to 7:30 p.m.
Thursday: Free salsa lessons

Hashmarks 29 SNCO Club

Fridays: Dinner, full menu, 4:30 to 9 p.m., Social hour 5:30 p.m., DJ, 8 p.m. to 1 a.m.
Mondays: Steak night and full dinner menu
Monday-Friday: All-Hands lunch, 10:30 a.m. to 1:30 p.m.
Wednesdays: Dinner, full menu, 4:30 to 9 p.m., Karaoke, 5 to 7 p.m.

Combat Center Officers' Club

Monday-Friday: Lunch served, from 11 a.m. to 1 p.m.
Taco Thursdays: 5 to 7 p.m.

For complete calendars visit <http://www.mccs29palms.com>.

Local Events

Pappy and Harriet's Weekend Line-Up:

The Farmers

Description: The country/rock band performs
When: 7:30 p.m., Friday and Saturday, March 11 and 12
Where: 53688 Pioneertown Road, Pioneertown
For more information, call 365-5956 or visit <http://www.pappyandharriets.com>.

Willie Boy's Weekend Line-Up:

Duck and Cover

Description: The rock band performs
When: 9 p.m., Friday, March 4

The Barnyard Boys

Description: The popular country band performs
When: 9 p.m., Saturday, March 12
Where: Willie Boys Saloon and Dance Hall, 50048 Twentynine Palms Highway, Morongo Valley, 363-3343.
or visit <http://www.willieboys.com>

Fiddler on the Roof

Description: The famous Tony Award winning musical
When: 8 p.m. Friday, March 11, 2 p.m. and 8 p.m. Saturday, March 12, 2p.m. and 7 p.m. Sunday, March 13
Where: McCallum Theatre
73000 Fred Waring Drive, Palm Desert
For more info call 340-ARTS or visit <http://www.mccallumtheatre.com>.

Theatre 29 presents "Pinocchio"

Description: Adapted from the novel by Carlo Collodi
When: 7 p.m. on Fridays and Saturdays, March 11 to April 9. Opening night activities begin at 6 p.m.
Where: Theatre 29, 73637 Sullivan Road, Twentynine Palms
For more information call 361-4151 or visit <http://www.theatre29.com>

Lower Desert

Meatloaf

Description: The quintessential rocker performs
When: 9 p.m. Friday, March 25
Where: Morongo Casino Resort and Spa
49500 Seminole Drive, Cabazon
For more information call 800-252-4499 or visit <http://www.morongocasinoresort.com>.

Kenny Rogers

Description: The country legend performs his hits
When: 9 p.m., Saturday, March 26
Where: Spotlight 29 Casino Resort
46-200 Harrison Place, Coachella
For more information call 866-377-6829 or visit <http://www.spotlight29.com>.

Whoopie Goldberg

Description: The famous comedian performs
When: 8 p.m., Saturday, March 26
Where: Fantasy Springs Resort Casino
84-245 Indio Springs Parkway, Indio
For more information call 800-827-2946 or visit <http://www.fantasyspringsresort.com>.

The Comedy of Sinbad

Description: The comedian performs stand-up
When: 5 p.m., Sunday, April 3
Where: Morongo Casino Resort and Spa
49500 Seminole Drive, Cabazon
For more information call 800-252-4499 or visit <http://www.morongocasinoresort.com>.

Sunset Cinema

Friday, March 11

6 p.m. – The Dilemma, Rated PG-13
9 p.m. – Sanctum, Rated R

Saturday, March 12, NO MOVIES

7 p.m. – The Lt. Dan Band Concert

Sunday, March 13

2 p.m. – The Roommate, Rated PG-13
6 p.m. – The Rite, Rated PG-13
9 p.m. – Sanctum, Rated R

Monday, March 14

7 p.m. – No Strings Attached, Rated R

Tuesday, March 15

7 p.m. – True Grit, Rated PG-13

Wednesday, March 16

7 p.m. – The Green Hornet, Rated PG-13

Thursday, March 17

7 p.m. – The Dilemma, Rated PG-13

'Adjustment Bureau' a race against destiny

NEIL POND

AMERICAN PROFILE

"The Adjustment Bureau"

Rated PG-13

How much of your life is destiny, a path you were fated to walk, and how much depends on the choices you make, the detours you take?

Philosophers have chewed on that question forever. Now it's Matt Damon's turn.

In "The Adjustment Bureau," he plays a rising young politician who finds out his life has diverted from the master plan that's been plotted out for him. To get it back on track, a mysterious group of nattily dressed men in neckties and fedoras emerge from the shadows to make the necessary "adjustments" in his course.

Specifically, the adjusters scramble to keep Damon's character, New York congressman David Norris, apart from the beautiful British dancer, Elise, played by Emily Blunt, he wasn't "supposed" to meet – and certainly wasn't meant to love.

Shave 90 minutes off the running time and 50 years from the contemporary setting, and this could have



COURTESY PHOTO

In "The Adjustment Bureau" Matt Damon plays New York congressman David Norris, a rising young politician who finds out his life has diverted from the master plan that's been plotted out for him. To get it back on track, a mysterious group of nattily dressed men in neckties and fedoras emerge from the shadows to make the necessary "adjustments" in his course.

been a "Twilight Zone" episode from the 1950s. I kept expecting Rod Serling to step into the frame, cigarette in hand, setting the stage for the bizarre turn of events about to befall the promising young pol and the ballerina.

Norris is understandably skeptical when he accidentally discovers (oops!) what's going on behind the seem-

ingly normal scenes of his life. Quite naturally, he resists the adjustment bureau's efforts. He's determined to make his own choices, even after he's warned that doing so will not only screw up not only his own success, but also ruin the life of the woman he's determined to pursue.

So who are the adjusters, the people who make sure things go according to plan?

When Damon's character asks, he's told they're not angels. But they've been around for a long, long time, keeping low profiles but always there, always watching, always adjusting. And they've definitely got some powerful connections – up there, out there, somewhere. They've had their fingers in the slow-baking pie of human history, it's explained, from the very beginning.

Their fedoras pack some powerful juju, allowing them (or anyone else lucky

enough to snag one) access to magical "shortcuts" that make zipping around New York a breeze. Sometimes a door is just a door, but some doors, some times, can be so much more.

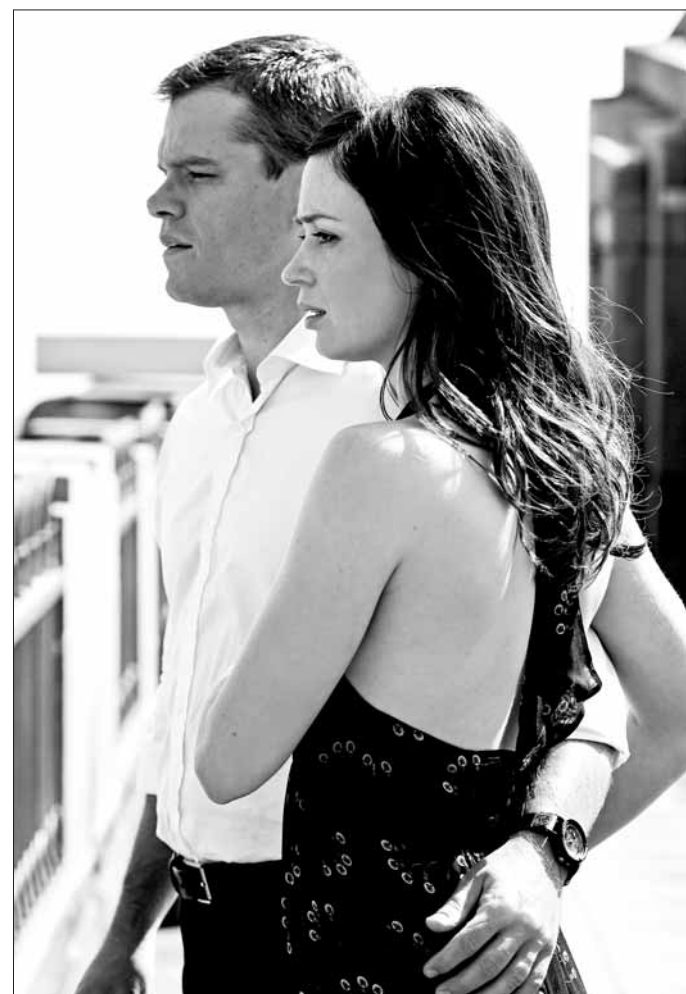
This is some heavy stuff, although not as much of an inside-out head trip as last year's "Inception." Damon and Blunt make a fine-looking couple, believable in the mind-blowing dilemma they find themselves, racing to outrun – and outfox – destiny. And first-time director George Nolfi does a good job wrapping romance, action and mystery around an intriguing story touching on religion, philosophy, the battle between free will and fate, and the awesome, life-altering power of love.

"The Adjustment Bureau" is never preachy, but it does leave you with plenty to ponder. And those magic hats – super snazzy. Where can I get one?



COURTESY PHOTO

The adjusters scramble to keep Damon's character, New York congressman David Norris, apart from the beautiful British dancer, Elise, played by Emily Blunt. Someone he wasn't "supposed" to meet and wasn't supposed to love.



COURTESY PHOTO

Damon's character is determined to make his own choices, even after he's warned that doing so will not only screw up not only his own success, but also ruin the life of the woman he's determined to pursue.

Combat Center Leisure

Desert Detours: Johnson Valley



Welcome to the first installment of "Desert Detours," a series that will follow correspondent Cpl. M.C. Nerl, around on his explorations of the high desert, the basin and the valley. The "out-of-five" palm tree rating scale offers at a glance how worthwhile the writer considers a place to be. Locales will be judged on their levels of accessibility, atmosphere, fun and cost. Keep an eye out every week for new shenanigans and hot tips on cool things to do.

CPL. M. C. NERL

COMBAT CORRESPONDENT

JOHNSON VALLEY, Calif. – Is off-roading your forte?

Marines willing to spend the time and money can enjoy many off-road events near the Combat Center – and yes, spectating is just as much fun as participating.

Close to the western edge of the installation's training area is Johnson Valley, Calif., one of the first, and still premier, racing areas in the world of off-roading, said Jeff Knoll, the event director of the 5th annual Griffin King of the Hammers, an event held at Johnson Valley Feb. 12 – 19.

Johnson Valley is an integral part of the off-roading world, as it is one of the first of its kind. Even when events are not taking place, it is a great place for service members and civilians alike to kick up some dirt or rock crawl, Knoll said.

One group of Marines from Marine Corps Base Camp Pendleton, Calif., set the example, and lived the dream through their racing team, Broadsword Racing.

The team got a feel for just how brutal the Hammers, the first professional race, could be when their vehicle was damaged, just like many others are during the race, said Adam Arsenault, the team's driver.

"We got into the race, didn't do as well as I had hoped, but we all still had fun, and that's what it's all about," Arsenault said. "Racing just gives you the freedom to drive however you want within the vehicle's limitations."

Spencer Morris, the team's crew chief, gave insight into just how tightly-knit the world of off-roaders is, whether it's a Sunday romp through the dirt, or an international competition.

"This whole community is very close, and just about everyone has been willing to help each other, even though we're all competing against one another," Morris said.

While the big event has come and gone, the world-famous courses in Johnson Valley are still open to free driving year-round.

While the better physicians out there wouldn't recommend offroading to the elderly, small children, or women who are expecting, Marines who don't get

enough of rolling around in the dirt while in the field can go to areas such as Johnson Valley for a weekend of sun, sand...and fun.

The valley can be found on a dirt highway to the right off of Highway 247/Old Woman Springs Rd. Leave the coolers at home as alcohol consumption during any racing is, of course, not allowed. The race area is little more than empty desert, and modern conveniences like restrooms and food stall are non-existent on normal days.

However, for those lucky enough to catch an actual event, the good folks financing the race usually provide port-o-johns and expensive, yet delicious, event food.

Those who are interested in checking the valley out shouldn't be surprised by the bring-your-own-vehicle status, because it's the desert, and even if cars did grow on threes, there aren't any out there anyway.

For all the horsepower and rough-n-tumble good times to be found, I give Johnson Valley four out of five palms.

Keep an eye out for this article every week, because Marines "stuck," on base can expect to find something that was right underneath

their noses as I explore what the area has to offer.

Editor's Note: "Desert Dwelling" is a weekly series exploring opportunities for Marines and sailors from a firsthand perspective. All material included therein is the opinion of the writer and does not imply an endorsement by the U.S. Marine Corps or the Department of Defense.



CPL. M. C. NERL

A competitor gets some air in the 5th annual running of the Griffin King of the Hammers off-road race in Johnson Valley, Calif., Feb. 11.



CPL. M. C. NERL

Fans gathered around the track to watch the nearly 100 teams in the 5th annual running of the Griffin King of the Hammers off-road race in Johnson Valley, Calif., Feb. 11.



CPL. M. C. NERL

A competitor in the 2011 Griffin King of the Hammer's off-road race line up at the starting line Feb. 11 as the race begins. The race was in its 5th consecutive year this year, and included approximately 100 teams, some of which came from other countries.



CPL. M. C. NERL

Jason Scherer and his co-driver, Jason Berger, easily roll through Chocolate Thunder, one of the many hills and rock crawls in the 5th annual Griffin King of the Hammers race Feb. 11 in Johnson Valley, Calif.

