

Mechanic reveals life lessons, page A3

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Horsing around, page A5



Combat Center dog handler remembered

STAFF SGT. JEREMY ROSS

II MARINE EXPEDITIONARY FORCE (FORWARD)

CAMP LEATHERNECK, Afghanistan – Marines and other coalition service members paused to honor the memory of Staff Sgt. Christopher Diaz with a memorial service at the chapel aboard Camp Leatherneck, Helmand province Oct. 8.

Diaz, a native of El Paso, Texas, and a military working dog handler assigned to II Marine Expeditionary Force Headquarters Group (Forward), Task Force Belleau Wood, died Sept. 28 after being wounded while rushing to the aid of a comrade during combat operations in Helmand province.

During the service, Diaz's friends and fellow Marines, joined by Dino, Diaz's working dog, remembered him as a family man with two young children and a contagious grin, but also as an elite Marine and a highly trained and skilled dog handler.

"He started every work day with the intention to unselfishly better his Marines by generously spreading his valued knowledge of everything he knew," said Sgt. Benjamin Grijalva, a close friend and fellow dog handler.

Staff Sgt. Morris Earnest, a kennel master with II MHG (Fwd.), recalled Diaz's affection for cigars, and said his regular smokes were his way of spending time with his fellow Marines and honoring his fallen forefathers and brothers. It was a tradition that dated back to Diaz's service in Iraq in 2005.

A third-generation Marine, Diaz enlisted in August 2003 as a military policeman after graduating from La Cueva High School.

As a working dog handler he achieved almost unparalleled professional success, including being selected to attend an advanced training program for several months

See DIAZ, A7



RUDY GUTIERREZ / EL PASO TIMES

A honor guard carries the remains of Staff Sgt. Christopher Diaz, 27, out of St. Mark's Catholic Church, El Paso, Texas, during funeral services Monday. Diaz, a Combat Center dog handler, was killed in Afghanistan Sept. 28. Cpl. Jeremy Angenend [left] and Cpl. Gary Elbrecht, both with III (MEF) Headquarters Group K9 unit here, led the honor guard. All the pall bearers previously worked with Diaz.

Park place



LANCE CPL. SARAH DIETZ

[Above] Two hikers walk through the Hidden Valley site in Joshua Tree National Park Oct. 7. This location is popular with climbers and campers. The park is also home to the Joshua Tree, a plant unique to the Mojave Desert in the United States.

[Right] Joshua Tree National Park is home to the yucca plant, a shrub known for its green sword-shaped leaves and white flowers. This plant, native to the desert, was used as a food source by Native Americans. The roots were used as shampoo in rituals and the dried leaves were used as a flint source to start fires.

See story and more photos on B1



LANCE CPL. SARAH DIETZ

Breast Cancer Awareness Month

■ Early detection key to survival

DIANE DURDEN

PUBLIC AFFAIRS SPECIALIST

Awareness ribbons have been used for generations to show support for a cause.

There are colors that represent almost any cause you can think of. The more common colors are red for AIDS and HIV awareness, black for POW/MIA, blue for DUI, the jigsaw pattern representing autism and yellow to show support for our military. I think it's safe to say most of us aboard the Combat Center wear a yellow ribbon.

What other color ribbon do you wear? As a breast cancer survivor, I also wear a pink ribbon.

According to the American Cancer Society, there will be an estimated 288,130 women diagnosed with breast cancer in 2011 in the United States. An estimated 39,520 will die from the disease. That's nearly double the population of Twentynine Palms.

Breast cancer is one of the most common types of cancer among women, skin cancer being the most common. Breast cancer is also the second leading cancer death among women, the first being lung cancer.

Unlike the causes for skin cancer (excessive ultraviolet light) and lung cancer (smoking), there are no known direct causes of breast cancer.

How do you prevent something when you don't know what the causes are?

You can't, but that doesn't make us helpless in the fight against this disease. There are several things you can do to increase your chances of survival if ever diagnosed.

The key is early detection. The first step is to know the risk factors and which factors apply to you. Know which ones you can't control and which ones you can change.

You must know yourself. Become familiar with your body, specifically your breasts. Know what is normal for you. Know how they look and how they feel. This will enable you to identify changes that may indicate something is wrong.

Start by conducting self breast exams monthly. These can be conducted anytime during the month, but should be done at the same time each month. Anytime is a good time as long as you are doing them. And you are never too young to start doing your own exams.

Another type of exam is the clinical breast exam. This exam is similar to the self exam. However, it's conducted by your health care provider, normally during your annual wellness check.

Mammograms are another valuable tool in

See CANCER, A7

Program revolutionizes battery reconditioning, saves money

DIANE DURDEN

PUBLIC AFFAIRS SPECIALIST

Employees from the Combat Center's Hazardous Waste Management section are trend setters when it comes to saving taxpayers' dollars.

Much like personally owned vehicles, batteries for tactical vehicles lose their charge after excessive use. With units training at the Combat Center practically non-stop, vehicle batteries take a beating.

Maintenance sections aboard the Combat Center

can bring their dead batteries to the Hazardous Waste Management section, located on Rifle Range Road, to exchange them for reconditioned ones. Batteries are exchanged on a one-for-one basis.

Sulfate buildup on battery plates within the plastic housing is the main cause of lead-acid battery problems and failure.

The equipment used by HWMS reverses the natural electro-chemical reaction within the battery.

Dead batteries are con-

nected to the Pulse Tech HD pallet charger, which services 12 batteries at a time, or to the World Charger, bench top model, which can recondition a single battery.

These are ready for use typically within 48 hours.

The battery reconditioning program, in its third year, saved the Combat Center \$356,520 in fiscal year 2011 by reconditioning 991 batteries.

"Why would you want to spend the time and resources (energy and money) when you can get batteries for free?"

said Dave Budd, an environmental protection specialist with Natural Resources and Environmental Affairs Division. "All they (mechanics) have to do is bring us their dead batteries."

However, when mechanics continue to use old technology to recharge dead batteries, the batteries become unserviceable once they die again.

Batteries that are reconditioned instead of recharged can go through the reconditioning process several times

See BATTERIES, A3



DIANE DURDEN

Reconditioned batteries are ready for issue to Combat Center maintenance sections in exchange for dead batteries on a one-for-one basis.

This Week in Combat Center History

Reprinted from the Observation Post dated Oct. 11, 1963, Vol. 7, No. 41

No Kentucky windage by Metro

AUTHOR UNKNOWN

Since man first conceived the idea of projecting a missile through the air, he has been concerned with the effects of the wind and weather on his marksmanship efforts.

During the many years in which weaponry progressed from stones and clubs through bows and arrows and eventually to primitive firearms, “Kentucky windage” or estimation, was an entirely adequate means. However, with the development of long-range artillery it became necessary to eliminate the guesswork from the process of compensating for atmospheric conditions while firing.

This has been accomplished with the employment of a meteorology section such as that now operating within and for the 1st Field Artillery Group.

Weather Unit

This self-contained mobile unit consisting of 14 men under Warrant Officer L. O. Hosek, is equipped and qualified to provide up-to-the-minute data on wind direction and speed, humidity, temperature, barometric pressure and density.

The value of this information to the artillery battery is exemplified by the fact that one percent variation in density alone will alter the strike of a 155mm projectile by 17.5 meters on an 8,000 meter trajectory. Add to this any other conditions existing at the time and the necessary of a well-informed Fire Direction Center¹, weather wise, is readily apparent.

The principal component of the metro section’s equipment is a balloon, inflated with either helium or hydrogen. For safety reasons, hydrogen is used only in garrison where adequate storage facilities are available and necessary precautions may be taken. When deployed in the field, non-combustible although less economical helium provides the lift.

Balloon Used

To obtain basic information such as wind direction and speed, the balloon is launched by itself and followed visually. For a more detailed mission, a radiosonde² of the same type used by all official weather stations, is attached. This compact unit records temperature, humidity pressure and density, to be relayed by a small radio transmitter to the Ground Meteorology Direction Finder³. Signals may be received from an altitude of 140,000 feet and a horizontal distance of 125 miles, or any combination thereof.

Before the radiosonde is borne aloft, it is calibrated to the ground conditions and checked for accuracy by a control monitor.

After the balloon has been released, the metro team mans an electronically equipped van where signals are received, translated, computed and set down on a standard NATO message form for delivery to the firing batteries.

As a result of the metro section’s efforts, required corrections are made on the individual artillery pieces, insuring the weather conditions will not deter the projectile from its destination.

- 1). The Fire Direction Center is a team of men compiled to accomplish the task of calculating solutions belonging to fire missions and relaying appropriate commands to the artillery sections.
- 2). A radiosonde is a device attached to a weather balloon used for reading and transmitting various atmospheric conditions back to a fixed receiver.
- 3). A Ground meteorology direction finder is a receiver used to collect the data transmitted back from the radiosonde.

Federal Impact Aid Cards out soon

Federal Impact Aid cards come out this month. Your child’s school will be sending them home with the students, so keep an eye out. Schools with a significant percentage of military connected students qualify for additional funding, through the Federal Impact program. Spending five minutes to fill them out and send them back could mean the difference for a better education for your child and more opportunities for them at school. If the card never makes it home, you can pick up an extra from the schools themselves. For more information:

- Visit <http://www.facebook.com/thecombatcenter>
- Visit <http://www.facebook.com/CombatCenterSchoolLiaison>
- Visit <http://ed.gov>
- Call your School Liaison at 830-1574

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Hot Topics

FRAUD, WASTE, MISMANAGEMENT HOTLINE

The Command Inspector General’s Fraud, Waste, Mismanagement Hotline is available to all military personnel, civilian employees and family members at 830-7749 or DSN 230-7749. Facsimiles can be called in at 830-6155 or DSN 230-6155. You can also file a complaint at SMBPLMS CenterInspector@usmc.mil

HAUNTED HOUSE

The Single Marine Program promises to turn the old Main Exchange into a damp, dark, and musty place with endless screams of tortured souls October 29-30 from 7p.m. to 11 p.m. For More information on the upcoming haunted house, call 830-4767. Must be 13 years or older to participate.

10TH ANNUAL CRAFT FAIR

The Community Center is hosting their 10th Annual Family Care Craft Fair Oct. 15, from 9 a.m. to 3 p.m. Local crafts and artisans will be featured, selling their latest creations just in time for the busiest shopping season of the year. There will be an hourly prize drawing and bake sale. For more information call 760-910-9028.

HQMC/MMOA (OFFICER) TEAM VISIT

The Manpower Management Officer Assignment Team will be aboard MCAGCC Oct. 18-19. An informational PME will be held at 8 a.m. on Oct. 18 at the Protestant Chapel, Building 1541 for all company and field grade officers.



Eagle Eyes

Immediately report any suspicious activity 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 #2326

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CROSSWORD AND SUDOKU PUZZLES COURTESY OF © 2011 HOMETOWN CONTENT

SHAVING STROKES

[Puzzle solutions on A7]

1	2	3	4		5	6	7	8	9		10	11	12	13
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53					54	55								56
57					58						59			
60					61						62			

ACROSS

1. Sporting wingtips
5. Predatory whales
10. Have the nerve
14. Golfer Isao___
15. Boils or broils
16. QED middle
17. “The Bridge on the River Kwai” tune, to a cheating golfer?
20. Brand that “nobody doesn’t like”
21. Quite similar
22. “Beavis and Butthead” chuckle
23. Word before kite or turtle
24. Hard-working sort
26. Outfielder’s yell
28. Form 1040 completer
29. Bottom-line figure
30. Deep sleeps
31. Agromists’ concerns
33. Shutterbug’s command, to a cheating golfer?
38. Had a row?
39. “Amistad” character
41. Go bad
44. Hightailed it
45. Propelled like a shuffleboard disk
46. Pooh-poohed
48. Bloomers worn around the neck
49. USNA grad
50. Roll for Patti or Madonna
51. Unyielding
53. Is in fine fettle, to a cheating golfer?
57. “Rule, Britannia” composer Thomas
58. Jelly flavor
59. Watch readouts, briefly
60. Hanoi holidays
61. Surfer wannabe
62. Smeltery materials
5. Spotted wildcat
6. Pricey timepiece
7. Face one’s responsibilities
8. Rap sheet letters
9. Latvia or Lithuania, once: Abbr.
10. Admit to a poker game
11. Roll in, so to speak
12. Handful for Serena or Venus
13. Obsolete anesthetic
18. Oreo makers
19. Fold, spindle, or mutilate
22. “How Dry I Am” punctuation, maybe
24. Gathered intelligence
25. Chaucer piece
27. Tit for ___
28. Skater Sasha
31. Valuable violin, for short
32. Sushi alternative
34. Also-ran of fable
35. Day-___ paints
36. Lilac color
37. Night to poets
40. Magazine VIPs Abbr.
41. “One if by land” man
42. Point to the right direction
43. Bibliography data
45. Bottom-feeder’s milieu
46. Make more lean
47. “___ Kapital”
48. Parkinsonism treatment
51. Just ___ (the slightest bit)
52. He sang about Alice’s
54. “Thats disgusting!”
56. Tricky turn

DOWN

1. Cul-de-___
2. Slammer
3. State with a panhandle
4. Noted Christian

WHAT I'VE LEARNED

THE LCPL

LANCE CPL. ADAMS NICHOLS
TANK MECHANIC, 24, WARSAW, IND.

INTERVIEWED BY
SGT. HEATHER GOLDEN
OCT. 11, 2011

- > **I started working when I was 11.**
- > **I was going to enlist right out of high school.** I had everything down to MEPS, then wrecked my truck and broke my leg. Recruiter said I couldn't ever join.
- > **Got married at 19.** Became a mechanic.
- > **So now,** I have a steel rod in my leg and a wife.
- > **She probably doesn't want me to say this.** We met at a family reunion. We get teased for it a lot. My cousin married her sister. Definitely no blood relation. My cousin and her sister aren't married anymore though, so it's ok.
- > **She's very supportive,** but I don't think she would've gone through with it if she'd known I was going to be a Marine.
- > **It takes a lot of work and honesty.** Took me a long time to realize that even if the truth hurts, you have to say it.
- > **Help each other out.** Just because you're a guy doesn't mean you can't do dishes. Even if it sucks.
- > **I'd also say you need to be content.** Some of the best times we've had are when we've had nothing. Sometimes you just have to be content where you are and what you have.
- > **We had a rough first year because I was stupid.** But we've come through a lot, and we're very happy with each other. Where we are. With the kids. We have a nice house.
- > **I actually got in trouble** because I wouldn't take off my wedding band in boot camp. It kind of helped me though, because my senior respected me more for it.
- > **I actually did end up losing it in MOS school.** It's gone. Back at Ft. Knox.
- > **She's got a lot of patience.** I'm pretty impressed so far with how she's handled me.
- > **She's beautiful,** she's smart. I married her because she has a nice car.
- > **I don't know how** she graduated nursing school being pregnant, raising a four-year-old and not having a husband there.
- > **Eli's 4.** Definitely a boy. He wrestles constantly.
- > **Isabella's 11 months old.** She's spoiled, but she knows she can get whatever she wants from daddy. She's gonna be a bad one.
- > **She drooled on my phone** so much that now it always thinks something's plugged in. See? This accessory is not optimized for this iPhone.
- > **I know** he's gonna give me the same problems I gave my dad.
- > **He'll tackle the dog,** or the dog will tackle him. They're both about the same weight, so it makes for a good fight.
- > **He's got a pretty good rear choke.** A great knife hand. I'm kinda worried he's going to use it on some kid at school, so I eased up on the MCMAP.
- > **He is a good big brother,** except one time he wanted us to buckle her in her car seat because she was bothering him. We were inside the house.
- > **She does have me** wrapped around her little finger. She's so mean to me.
- > **I like Phineas and Ferb.** It's my favorite. I'll watch it any day. My son gets mad at me. He'll ask me to watch something, but I'll put Phineas and Ferb on instead.
- > **I never had** any disconnect with him, though.
- > **When Isabella was born,** the first time I held her, she cried.
- > **I like** to go four-wheelin'.
- > **I got a nice Jeep** that I break all the time. My wife gets annoyed because I'm always in the garage.
- > **I went to a hick town high school.** Drove a pick-up. I worked on that, too.
- > **I did most my growing up** in Indiana. Spent my important years there.
- > **My family was in training** to become missionaries. They did all the training. All the Bible study. My dad just didn't feel like that's where he needs to be. So, he's a farmer.
- > **We had a small little two acres.** Always had a couple of hogs or something.
- > **I had a horse** named Peanut. My sister says he's hers.
- > **It's a great way to grow up.** Like a month ahead, the men would go up in the mountains and built the houses. I got to sleep in a hammock.
- > **We ran around** with plastic knives and guns and shot each other.
- > **There were black bears in the mountains.** We went in their caves. A lot of exploring. It's good for a boy.
- > **A lot of us had BB guns.** And yeah, we shot each other with BBs a lot.
- > **Got into my first fight there.**



PHOTO BY PFC. ALI AZIMI

- > **I think being a Christian** and being a Marine can go hand-in-hand. As a Christian, you're not supposed to lie or steal. Same things that we're not supposed to do as Marines.
- > **I was 23** when I went to boot camp. I made meritorious lance corporal at the school-house for getting class honor man.
- > **I was really disappointed** in boot camp. I thought I was going to break and cry myself to sleep every night. My wife says it's because I'm ridiculous. I say it's because we need to train harder.
- > **They were coming to visit** for Family Day, and my son was on the bus telling people he was on his way to get his new daddy.
- > **Being older** than the average lance corporal, sometimes it sucks. But, it does put me in a little more of a leadership position and guidance role. A lot of the others can be really dumb, just due to age.
- > **Sometimes it's hard** just not opening my mouth.
- > **Working with tankers,** it makes life interesting. Everyone thinks they're invincible.
- > **I wanted to be a grunt,** but my wife said no. This way, I could still go and have fun with it and not get stuck behind a desk.
- > **It takes a lot to decommission a tank.** It'd have to be blown to pieces. Even then, sometimes we'll just put it back together.
- > **I thought they were just mechanical beasts.** But they're not. They're delicate.
- > **I wanted to be a Marine.** There's nothing more to that. I hated at MEPS when they asked us to write an essay on why we want to be a Marine. I just wanted to be a Marine. Send me to damn boot camp.



DIANE DURDEN

The Pulse Tech HD pallet charger can recondition up to 12 batteries at one time.

BATTERIES, from A1

before the battery become completely unusable. Getting Combat Center personnel to utilize the program requires training at the small unit level, said Pat Mills, the supervisor for the HWMS. Retraining maintenance personnel and maintaining desktop and local standard operating procedures with the most up-to-date information about the program are the best ways to ensure

the program continues, added Mills. Not all batteries turned into the center can be reconditioned though. Those batteries are sold to a civilian vendor as recyclable waste product. The vendor reutilizes the plastic housing, sulfuric acid and lead plates. The money earned through this program is then used to pay for the disposal of lithium batteries that cannot be reconditioned or recycled. Currently, the Combat Center is the only installation

within the Marine Corps using the Pulse Technology to recondition batteries. But, Carl Atchley, a hazardous waste material handler with NREA, is working closely with the manufacturer. He said he expects maintenance shops Marine Corps-wide will have the capability to recondition their own batteries in the near future. "If we can keep the vehicles rolling, then the Marines can continue to get the training they need to be successful," said Mills.

Marines conduct visit, board search, seizure exercise

CPL. GARRY J. WELCH

31st MARINE EXPEDITIONARY UNIT

USS ESSEX, At sea – As the CH-46E Sea Knight helicopters crested the horizon and approached the USS Germantown, they lowered ropes to deliver their payload of approximately 35 Marines with the Maritime Raid Force, 31st Marine Expeditionary Unit.

Marines of the MRF, consisting of Force Reconnaissance Platoon and elements of the Battalion Landing Team, 2nd Battalion, 7th Marines, conducted a mock visit, board, search and seizure in preparation for the MEU’s upcoming certification exercise.

As the Marines of MRF hit the deck they immediately moved forward, quickly subduing a small group of enemy combatants, and transitioning into providing security for the next wave of Marines.

“We had three helicopters coming in,” said Cpl. Garrett Greer, assistant team leader, force reconnaissance platoon, MRF, 31st MEU. “We fast-ropeed in and pushed towards the bridge while team two and three spread out to give us security.”

As the security element exited the final helicopter and hit the deck, they quickly took over the task of providing security and guarding the cap-

tured enemy combatants. Once the security element was in position, MRF split into two teams and pushed forward to secure the upper and lower decks of the ship.

“It went well,” said Greer. “There really was not much we could have done differently to make it any better.”

According to Greer, it took the MRF approximately 30 minutes to secure all of their objectives. The goal of a VBSS operation is to secure a hijacked or enemy vessel while minimizing damage to the ship or crew.

“VBSS has been used in the past to combat piracy,” said Capt. Marcelo Castro, the MRF company commander, BLT 2/7, 31st MEU. “VBSS is one of the many capabilities that keep the MEU ready to respond to any contingency in the Asia-Pacific region.”

The Marines of the MRF are currently preparing to participate in the MEU’s upcoming certification exercise, where their performance will be evaluated.

“We are looking forward to doing it again, and doing it right,” said Greer.

The 31st MEU is the only continuously forward-deployed MEU and remains the nation’s force in readiness in the Asia-Pacific region.

Marines with Force Reconnaissance Platoon, 31st Marine Expeditionary Unit, board a CH-46 Sea Knight helicopter on the flight deck aboard USS Essex (LHD 2), Oct 4.



LANCE CPL. VERNON T. MEEKINS



NAVY PETTY OFFICER 2ND CLASS SPENCER MICKLER

Marines assigned to the Force Reconnaissance Platoon of the 31st Marine Expeditionary Unit fast rope from a CH-46E Sea Knight helicopter for a visit, board, search and seizure drill aboard the USS Germantown. The 31st MEU is currently preparing for certification exercises. The 31st MEU is the only continuously forward-deployed MEU and remains the nation’s force in readiness in the Asia-Pacific region.

Why the LONG faces?



Navy Chief Petty Officer Tamara L. Marks, the leading chief petty officer for the Adult Medical Care Clinic, grooms her horse, Kharisma, in preparation to ride her at the Outdoor Adventures stables Oct.11.

Stables keep families, horses together

Story and photos by Pfc. Ali Azimi
Combat Correspondent

Baracks-dwelling service members can't keep dogs, cats or even fish in their rooms. However, there is one pet any service member may keep on base. And it weighs more than five times a full grown man.

The horse stables at the Combat Center's Outdoor Adventures facility have been open for 20 years, giving generations of service members the opportunity to keep riding away.

"It's relaxing," said Navy Chief Petty Officer Tamara L. Marks, the leading chief petty officer for the Adult Medical Care Clinic and owner of two horses who reside at the stable. "You can have a horrible day, and then you go and pet your horse and life gets better."

Outdoor Adventures charges \$100 a month per

horse for stables and \$16 for a bale of hay that will keep the horse fed for about a week.

"For California, it's a good deal," said Navy Lt. Shelley Griffith, an environmental health officer at the Robert E. Bush Naval Hospital. Griffith owns three of the horses at the stables.

There are other stables off base, but none that offer the convenience of having your animal only five minutes away, she said.

But keeping a horse at the stables comes with more responsibilities than simply paying the monthly fees.

Owners must tend to the horses two times a day, caring for them and cleaning out their stall. They must also clean up any mess left behind by their animals while riding around the installation.

Both Marks and Griffith

were horse owners before coming to the Combat Center. They brought their horses to the installation, using trailers. The fact that the Combat Center had stables to house her horses was one of the deciding factors when Griffith requested to be stationed here, she said.

Griffith, a mother of two, uses her horse for more than just the personal enjoyment of riding. Griffith's daughter qualified for the Exceptional Family Member Program and needs horse therapy.

"Her doctors have always recommended using horse therapy because it helps keep her calm, and so we were able to continue that here," she said.

The horses are available to their owners any time, day or night. They can be ridden anywhere on base,



Navy Chief Petty Officer Tamara L. Marks, the leading chief petty officer for the Adult Medical Care Clinic rides her horse, Kharisma, around the Outdoor Adventures stables Oct.11. Keeping horses at the stables requires daily care and maintenance by the owners.

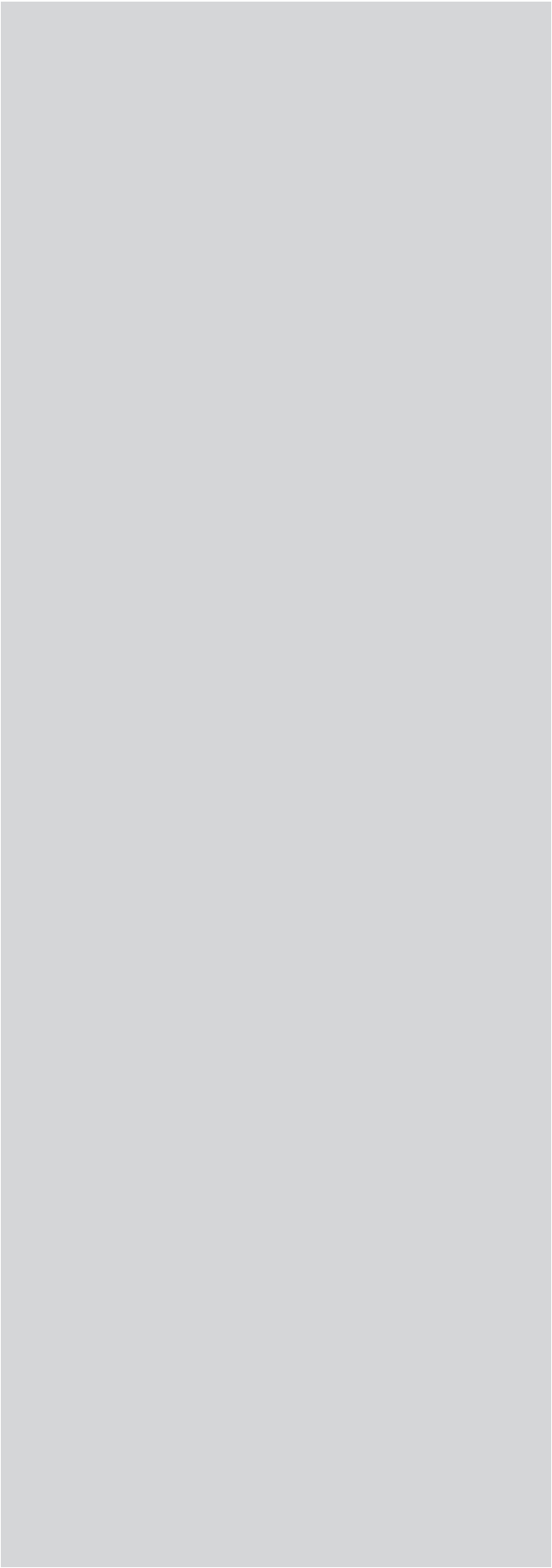
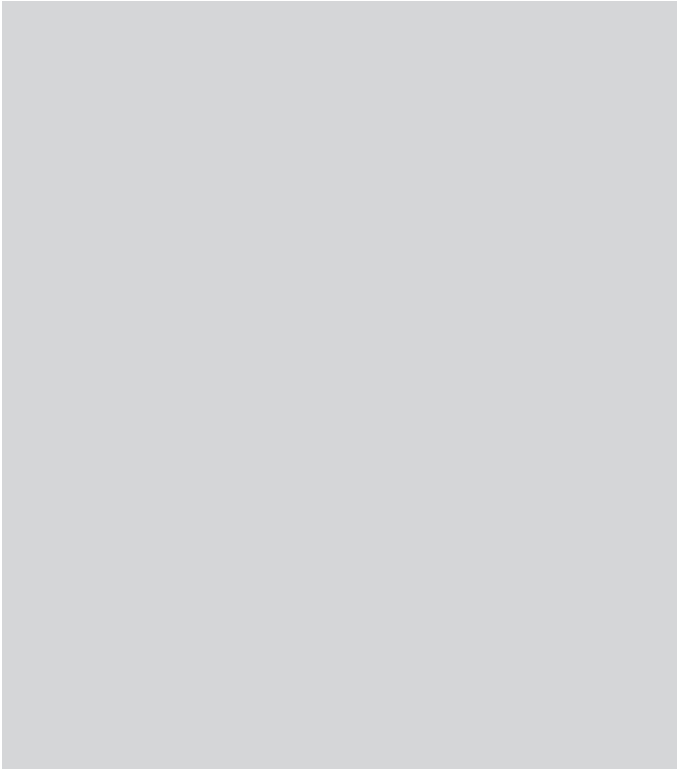
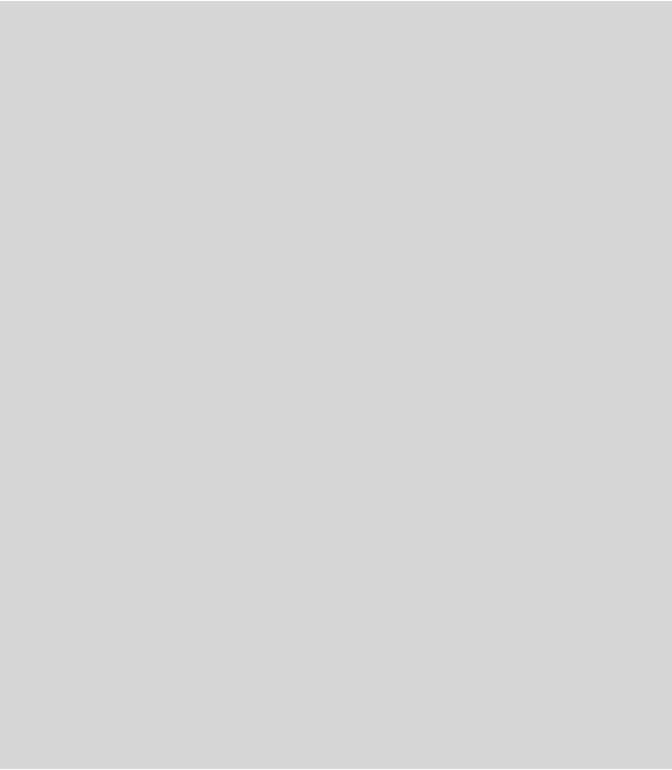
AADVERTISEMENT

with the exception of training areas.

"There are things you don't see unless you're out on your horse," said Griffith. "So unless you get out there, you miss a lot of Twentynine Palms."



Navy Lt. Shelley Griffith, an environmental health officer at the Robert E. Bush Navy Hospital, rides her horse around the Outdoor Adventures stables Oct.11.





[Above] Marine Unmanned Aerial Vehicle Squadron 3 technicians launch an RQ-7B Shadow into the skies of Afghanistan Oct. 3. The Shadow constantly streams data back to coalition ground commanders to plan their next strategy to quell the insurgency in southwestern Afghanistan.

[Left] Marine VMU-3 technicians, Cpl. Jeremy Perez and Cpl. Aaron Gibson, prepare an RQ-7B Shadow for launch.



An RQ-7B Shadow is an unmanned aerial vehicle operated by VMU-3 in the skies of southwestern Afghanistan. Each Shadow carries a camera, which surveys and streams video to higher headquarters and ground units, giving them a full, accurate perspective of the battlefield.

Convoy commander: Unmanned aerial vehicles saved my life

**STORY AND PHOTOS
BY CPL. JUSTIN BOLING**

MARINE UNMANNED AERIAL VEHICLE SQUADRON 3

CAMP LEATHERNECK, Afghanistan - Marine Unmanned Aerial Vehicle Squadron 3 RQ-7B Shadows operate out of multiple sites in Helmand province, allowing the drones to survey virtually every corner of the southwestern region under NATO's International Security Assistance Force.

“Mission after mission, we were exposed to a barrage of small arms fire, medium machine gun, heavy machine gun and sniper fire in addition to (road-side bombs) and (rocket and mortar attacks),” wrote 1st Lt. Marcos Garcia in a letter to VMU-3. “We were forced to take similar routes due to their trafficability and the enemy exploited this.”

Garcia served as a convoy commander with 2nd Marine Logistics Group in Helmand province, Afghanistan, for seven months.

According to his letter, his convoy suffered eight improvised explosive device strikes, three artillery and rocket attacks, 10 small-arms-fire engagements and three complex ambushes while moving fuel trucks throughout southwestern Afghanistan. That was, until VMU-3 got involved, using their RQ-7B Shadow drones to provide valuable aerial surveillance and reconnaissance for Garcia and his Marines.

“The turn in events truly took place as soon as the Shadow supported our convoys,” wrote Garcia. “The Shadow is a remarkable asset that should be employed by any convoy traveling in a highly kinetic environment.”

“Our primary goal is to provide information needed to make operations successful,” said Gunnery Sgt. Jarrad Demster, the staff noncommissioned

officer in charge of VMU-3's Camp Leatherneck detachment.

According to Demster, a native of Boise, Idaho, the survey footage collected by the Shadow is utilized by both ground and aerial forces to plan their actions and ensure they are conducted safely and intelligently.

The IEDs present a serious threat to ground forces traveling throughout southwestern Afghanistan. For Garcia and his Marines, the presence of the Shadow allowed them to mitigate the threat posed by roadside bombs.

“We can watch areas for strange behavior and use our camera to scan for signs of IEDs,” said Demster. “This allows us to ensure convoy routes are safe for travel before the vehicles in the convoy even start their engines.”

On Aug. 28, Garcia and his Marines were attacked by more than 35 insurgents. The Shadow offered Garcia and joint tactical air controllers the information needed to place precise fire on enemy fighting positions.

Four Hellfire missiles and a 500-pound, laser-guided bomb quickly put a stop to the enemy assault.

“We aid attack aircraft and artillery assets to deliver more effective fire on targets,” said Demster. “We can also keep eyes on the target to ensure the success of the strike.”

Garcia wrote that he owes his life to the Shadow and to VMU-3.

“The Shadow has proven reliable, effective and ... devastating against enemy forces,” wrote Garcia. “I'm convinced that lives were saved (by this asset).”

“It feels great to be reminded how important our work is,” said Demster of Garcia's letter. “My Marines got to hear the tangible result of their efforts and feel a sense of accomplishment.”

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NAVY PETTY OFFICER 2ND CLASS JONATHAN DAVID CHANDLER

Dino, Staff Sgt. Christopher Diaz’s military working dog, lies at the feet of Marine Corps dog handlers during Diaz’s memorial service at the Camp Leatherneck, Helmand province, chapel, Oct. 8. Diaz, a native of El Paso, Texas, and an expert military working dog handler with II Marine Expeditionary Force Headquarters Group (Forward), Task Force Belleau Wood, died Sept. 28, while supporting combat operations in Helmand province. Diaz was deployed out of the Combat Center where he served as a handler with III MHG.

DIAZ, from A1

in Israel. After completing the course, Diaz was one of only a handful of dog handlers in the Corps to have the qualifications he possessed.

His skill and professionalism led to him being chosen to support reconnaissance and special forces in some of the most dangerous places in Afghanistan.

Before departing on his current deployment, Diaz faced a choice.

He and his fellow Marines with his home dog handling unit under III MHG at the Combat Center had been briefed on the missions they could expect to support in Afghanistan. Diaz and his unit were told they could expect to be in the thick of some of the most determined insurgent resistance in Helmand province. However, with his enlistment set to expire, Diaz did not have to be part of any of it, said Grijalva.

“For [Diaz], the decision was an easy one,” he explained. “Re-enlist to do what he did best - lead Marines and serve his country.”

During the chaplain’s remarks, Lt. Cdr. Steven Coates, II MHG (FWD) chaplain,

reflected on Diaz’s choice to serve. “Staff Sgt. Diaz was where he was supposed to be and when,” said Coates. “I am not suggesting it was the right time for him to die, only that it was the right season for him to serve.”

After the chaplain’s remarks, the audience came to attention as the first sergeant called roll. When he got to Diaz’s name, he called it three times. Silence held briefly before “Taps” echoed from a lone bugler. The assembled service members filed up to the boots, rifle and dog tag memorial display to pay their final respects. The last thing attendees saw as they filed out of the chapel was an open box of cigars.

“Just days before he passed, Chris handed me a cigar with his trademark smile and invited me to join him,” said Earnest. “I will never forget the special time we shared together that night, and I remember he selected a fine cigar from his stash. When I think about this now, it becomes clear why he picked only the finest cigars. It was clearly his way to honor the finest men with whom he served.”

On this day, the men and women with whom Diaz served honored him.

CANCER, from A1

detecting breast cancer.

A mammogram uses x-rays to create an image of the breast tissue. These images are used to find signs of cancer such as tumors, clusters of calcium and abnormal changes in the skin. Mammograms should be part of your annual exam for women over the age of 40 and for those in extremely high risk categories beginning at age 30. Ensure any past images are available for comparison.

My journey began in December 2005 when I found a lump in my right breast. I would like to say I was being diligent about con-

ducting self breast exams but I wasn’t. I just happened to feel the lump. Had I been conducting these exams, regularly, I may have found the lump even sooner.

Fortunately for me, it was still a very early stage.

This is an extremely important factor when it came time to treating the cancer.

Today, I conduct my exams regularly. In addition to the monthly exam, I ensure I get a mammogram at least every year, or more often when my doctor recommends additional screenings.

Ladies, your task for today - conduct your own exam. Then create a plan for your next one. If you are over the age of 40

and haven’t had a mammogram, call to schedule one.

Gents, your task is to encourage your wife, mother, sisters, significant other and any other important women in your life to conduct their exams. And it wouldn’t hurt for you to conduct one yourself, as men can develop breast cancer also.

For additional information, call the Breast Education Office at the Robert E. Bush Naval Hospital, 830-2501; or visit the American Cancer Society’s website at <http://www.cancer.org>; or the Susan G. Komen for the Cure’s website at <http://ww5.komen.org>.

Conducting a breast self-exam



Figure 1



Figure 2

A. In front of a mirror.

- 1. With hands on hips, look for changes in shape, size, or skin texture (Figure 1).
- 2. With hands over head, look for changes in shape, size, or skin texture (Figure 2).
- 3. Check nipples for any unusual discharge.

B. Lying down.

- 1. Use the finger pads of the three middle fingers to apply pressure using the up & down line, circle or wedge patterns (Figure 3).
- 2. Use your right hand to examine the left side, and vice versa.
- 3. Apply three levels of pressure; light, medium, then firm.
- 4. Check both the breasts and the underarm areas of both sides.



Figure 3

C. In the shower.

- 1. While taking a shower, with arm overhead, utilize the same techniques as in the lying down checks. (Figure 4).



Figure 4

LOOKING
for local
entertainment?

See page B2 for our
LIBERTY CALL
section

CROSSWORD SOLUTIONS														
S	H	O	D		O	R	G	A	S		D	A	R	E
A	O	K	I		C	O	O	K	S		E	R	A	T
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SUDOKU SOLUTIONS														
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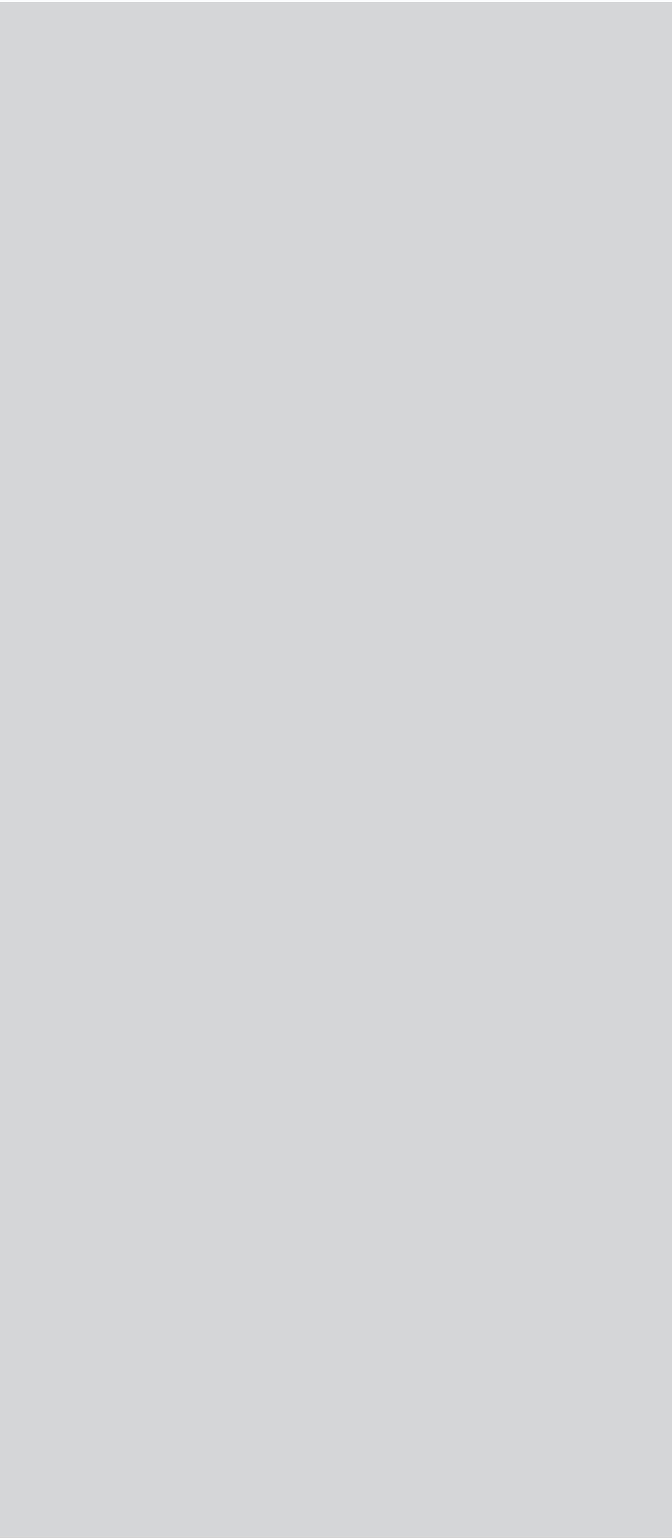
CPL. SALVADOR R. MORENO

A joint-service color guard from Military Entry Processing Station San Francisco presents the National Colors during the San Francisco 49ers Salute to Fleet Week football game Oct. 9. San Francisco Fleet Week is an annual event where the Navy-Marine Corps team connects with citizens of the San Francisco Bay Area to showcase its unique capabilities in humanitarian assistance and disaster response.



CPL. SALVADOR R. MORENO

Greg Rohrbach, a nurse for San Francisco Veterans Administration Hospital, examines a tourniquet on a training dummy during a peer-to-peer meeting at Marina Green during Fleet Week San Francisco. The daylong event began aboard the USS Bonhomme Richard and continued to a Shock Trauma Platoon medical unit set up by the bay. It focused on allowing local medical staff to see firsthand the Navy and Marine Corps abilities to aid during a disaster crisis or humanitarian mission.



WeekINPhotos

Fleet Week San Francisco



SGT. MICHAEL S. CIFUENTES

[Above] The USS Carl Vinson pass underneath the Golden Gate Bridge in San Francisco during Fleet Week's Parade of Ships ceremony, Oct. 8. A fleet of Navy, Coast Guard and Canadian Navy sea vessels entered the San Francisco Bay in a regal and pinnacle ceremony of Fleet Week.



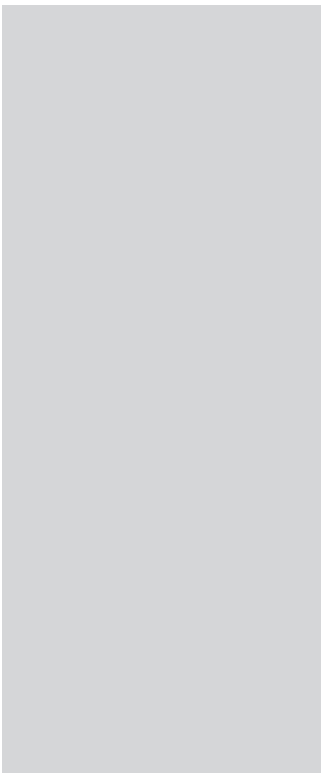
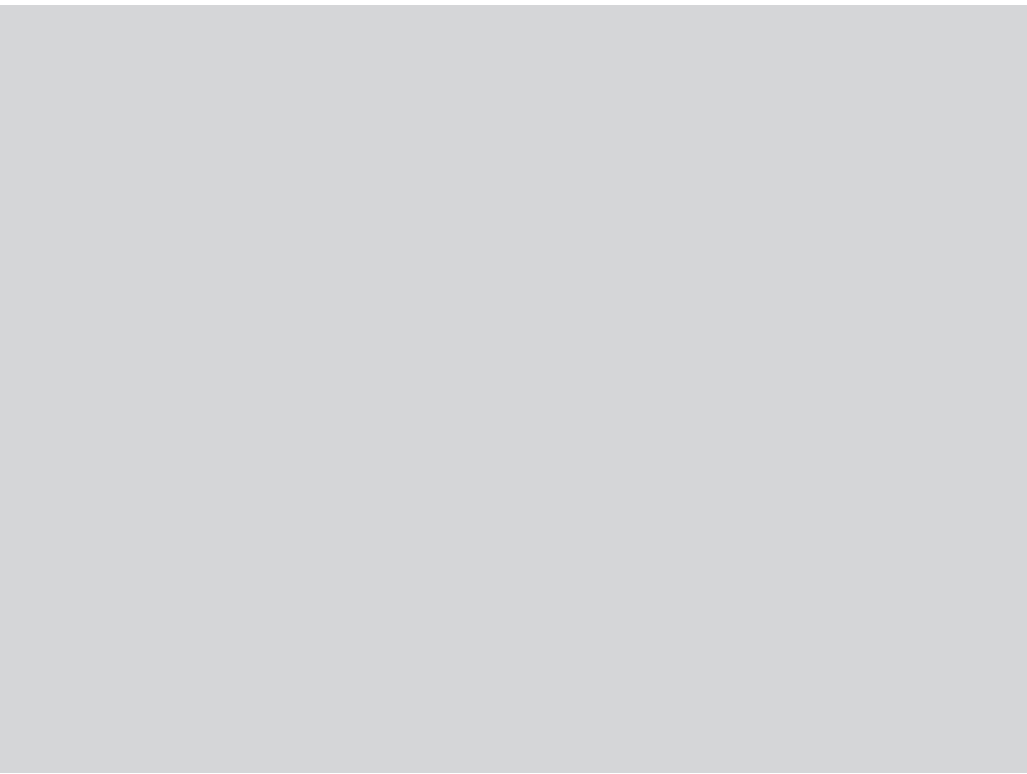
CPL. SALVADOR MORENO

[Left] Airman 1st Class Megan Hokaj, a vocalist with the Air Force Band of the Golden West, accompanied by the 1st Marine Division Band, sings "God Bless the USA" during a halftime performance at the San Francisco 49ers Salute to Fleet Week football game, Oct. 9.



SGT. MICHAEL S. CIFUENTES

Marines serving with 1st Marine Expeditionary Brigade march down Filbert Street during the 143rd Annual Italian Heritage Parade, Oct. 9, 2011. Marines and sailors with the expeditionary brigade traveled to San Francisco in the USS Bonhomme Richard to participate in Fleet Week to showcase the Navy and Marine Corps' amphibious nature, readiness and ability to respond to disasters.





Co-ed softball
heats up, page B3

Taking a thrill ride



PFC. ALI AZIMI

Sgt. Charlene Lewis, an Euphonium player with the Combat Center Band, resists being thrown from the mechanical bull during Headquarters Battalion's Family Day at Felix Field Oct. 6.

Family Day a fun time for all

PFC. ALI AZIMI

COMBAT CORRESPONDENT

The cool afternoon air at Felix Field was thick with the smell of smoky barbecue and the sounds of music and chatter Oct. 6 as Marines scaled a rock climbing wall and were catapulted off a mechanical bull.



PFC. ALI AZIMI

Lance Cpl. Michael Baker, a postal clerk for Headquarters Battalion, attempts a back flip on the bungee trampoline during the HQBN Family Day Oct. 6.

The Headquarters Battalion Family Day included two bungee trampolines, a rock climbing wall, a mechanical bull, moon bounces, a raffle, a cotton candy machine, a disc jockey and free food and drinks.

Marines, sailors and their families sat down to a feast of burgers, hot dogs, chicken, potato salad, chips, cakes and cookies, all served by their noncommissioned officers and staff NCOs.

"I enjoyed serving the Marines chow, and I enjoyed spending time with the Marines and getting to see their families and seeing a side of them I don't get to see during normal work time," said Gunnery Sgt. Rena M. Bruno, the company first sergeant for Company B, HQBN.

As Marines took time to relax, talk and eat, their children ran through the playground and exhausted themselves on the moon bounces. However, the thing families enjoyed most was being able to spend time with each other.

"Since my husband works Monday to Friday, we only see each other at night," said Luisana Figueroa, a mother of four and husband of Sgt. Henry Figueroa, the noncommissioned officer in charge of passenger travel with the Distribution Management Office. "So this is a good time for us to spend time together with the kids."

Separate sections within the battalion have had family events such as this before. What set this event apart was that this was the first battalion-sized Family Day since 2009, said Kathleen Schmidt, the HQBN family readiness officer.

The idea to have the battalion wide family day began at the beginning of

See FAMILY, A8



PFC. ALI AZIMI

The barrel cactus glows in the light of the sun rising over the mountains of Joshua Tree National Park Oct. 7.

Joshua Tree National Park HOLIDAY HOTSPOT

Lance Cpl. Sarah Dietz

Combat Correspondent

When Marines come to the Combat Center and look for activities to do on the weekends, almost every time they are told to check out Joshua Tree National Park.

The 1,200-square mile park is one of the main attractions in the high desert. With scenic hiking trails, campsites, and historical mines to visit, the park is a hotspot for Marines to enjoy the outdoors and experience a place they won't find at any other duty station.

Many of the sites are unique rock formations, and are great for climbing, bouldering and exploring the wonders of the desert.

One location in the park is called Hidden Valley. This valley is a plain surrounded by a seemingly endless sea of rock formations, excellent for scaling and group climbing activities. This valley is also a great place for a photographer with an eye for nature.

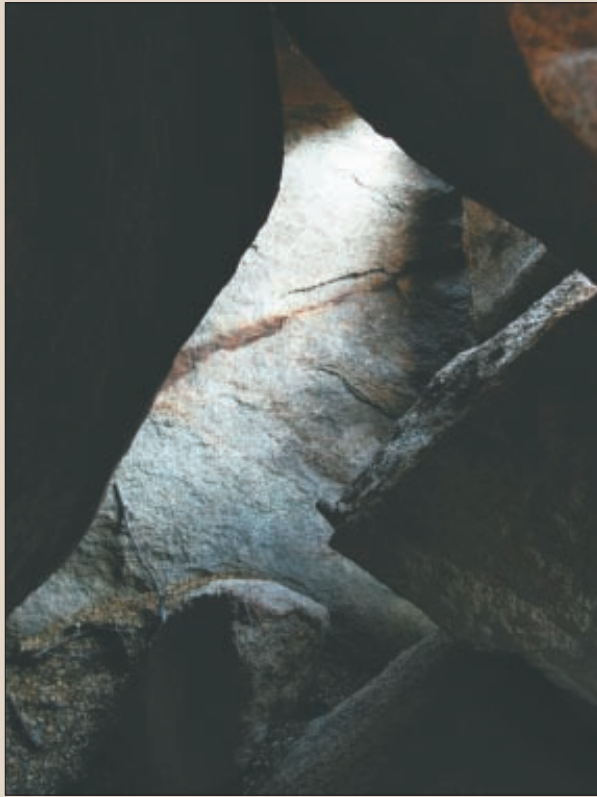
Another site, Wall Street Mill, is where minors came to stamp their gold in the 1930s. A well, the stamp mill and a few vehicles from the time are still there, dusty, rusted and overgrown with nature. Hikers are more than welcome to explore the area and get up close and personal with this period of the nation's history.

There are also multiple hiking trails that take you deep into the park. These trails allow you to step back and enjoy the beauty of the desert. Joshua Trees are only found in two places in the world, the hiking trails give you an exclusive perspective of the desert.

The variety of sites keeps the park a place that one can visit time after time and learn something new with each visit.

The entrance fee is \$15, and covers all the people in the vehicle. Vehicle passes are good for a week. Annual passes are \$30.

For more information on the many activities the park offers call (760) 367-5500.



CPL. ANDREW D. THORBURN



CPL. ANDREW D. THORBURN

[Above] Hidden among the hill sides and rocky corners are sights seldom seen by park patrons, like this small cave created by boulders.

[Left] A flower yucca plant sits at the base of a mountain at Joshua Tree National Park Oct. 7.

Football frenzy

2011 Intramural Football League

Team	Wins	Losses
1. HQBN	4	0
2. MCCES	2	2
3. MWSS-374	2	2
4. 3/11	0	4

Headquarters Battalion Bulldawgs running back, Guillermo Manzo, rushes the ball at the Commanding General's Intramural Football Game at Felix Field Oct. 6. The Bulldawgs defeated the MCCES Mustangs in a landslide victory 26-9. The Bulldawgs' offense dominated in the second half of the game by completing short and long passes and breaking through the Mustangs' defense.

See more photos on page B3



PFC. ALI AZIMI



CPL. ANDREW D. THORBURN

A MCCES Mustang receiver jumps over four-man coverage from the HQBN Bulldawgs during a Commanding General's Intramural Football League game Wednesday.



PFC. ALI AZIMI

MCCES Mustangs quarterback Justin Gates resists a blitz by the HQBN Bulldawgs during a Commanding General's Intramural Football League game Wednesday.



PFC. ALI AZIMI

HQBN Bulldawgs running back Guillermo Manzo attempts to catch the ball in the end zone during a Commanding General's Intramural Football League game against the MCCES Mustangs at Felix Field Wednesday.

Slug season



LANCE CPL. SARAH DIETZ

[Above] Ballz & Dollz base runner Torey Sonka is safe just before a Pitch Slapped!!! infielder touches first base in an attempt to force Sonka out during a Co-ed Softball League game Tuesday at Felix Field.

[Right] Third baseman Ashley Vaughn with Pitch Slapped!!! just misses a catch during a Co-ed softball League game against Ballz & Dollz Tuesday at Felix Field. Pitch Slapped!!! won the game 22-0.

All-women Softball League: week 3

Team	Wins	Losses
1. S.W.A.T.	2	0
2. Cherry Bombers	1	1
3. Where's My Pitches	1	1
4. Playtime	0	2

Co-ed Softball League: week 2

Team	Wins	Losses
1. K's Buy	1	0
2. Chicks & Sticks	1	0
3. Pitch Slapped !!!	1	0
4. Drama Killers	1	0
5. Spartans	0	1
6. MWSS 374	0	1
7. Outkast	0	1
8. Ballz & Dollz	0	1



LANCE CPL. SARAH DIETZ



LANCE CPL. CHERISESS PAIGE GALVEZ

Brittne Kittrell, daughter of Staff Sgt. Amelia Rowe, a career planner for Headquarters Battalion, scales a rock climbing wall during the HQBN Family Day at Felix Field Oct. 6.

FAMILY, from B1

the year, a difficult event to plan, with the different sections all having conflicting schedules. The command had two weeks

to plan all the components for the day's events.

"We wanted to do it all in one day," said Bruno. "That way the Marines can build the camaraderie that they did today, and then the fam-

ilies could be able to watch that and join the Marines."

Marines, sailors and families enjoyed a day of fun and food. They spent time with their families, got to know each other

better and introduced one another to their spouses and children.

"When you have family readiness and morale, you have mission readiness," added Schmidt.



PFC. ALI AZIMI

Lance Cpl. Andrene Thelwell plays with baby Michelle as her mother, Lance Cpl. Maurina Rios, looks on during the Headquarters Battalion Family Day Oct. 6. Both Rios and Thelwell are administrative clerks with the Installation Personnel Administrative Center.