



MCAGCC TWENTYNINE PALMS
OBSERVATION POST
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AGE OF WARRIORS

STORY BY CPL. SARAH DIETZ
 ILLUSTRATIONS BY SGT. HEATHER GOLDEN

Life and death is an infantryman's business. They need to know when to take it and to know how to save it. Their mission's success depends on strong leaders. Leading someone into and back out of death's hands demands only the best.

Marines with 2nd Battalion, 7th Marine Regiment, sent their upcoming leaders to the field to complete the Tactical Small Unit Leaders Course earlier this month.

The two-week course took the Marines to the American Mine training area, where they were consumed with combat leadership training.

The average day for the grunts began at 5:30 a.m. Ranges and classes ran daily until 6 p.m. with a chance of night fire.

The ranges scheduled were unique to each Marine's primary job. The infantrymen, machine gunners, assaultmen and mortar men were separated from each other to focus on their individual required skills.

While some focused on firing, others

turned their attention to maneuvering and communication.

"Anybody can be a team leader in garrison. Out here we can see if he's got it," said Cpl. Brandon Besendorfer, mortar squad leader, Company F, 2/7. "These are all peers. None of the [new guys] are out here. They have all been on deployment together. If you can't give a peer an order, how are you supposed to be able to lead Marines?"

The Marines were given an abundance of ammunition for every weapon brought to TSULC. The infantrymen cross-trained, meaning they were taught weapon systems outside their normal job. Basic riflemen were

See TSULC, A5



Combat cook-off

Cooks compete for top chef title with military field rations

LANCE CPL. ALI AZIMI
 COMBAT CORRESPONDENT

Food served in the field is a common punch line in Marine Corps humor. The prepackaged food can be somewhat tasteless and bland. But food service specialists, better known as "combat cooks," with 2nd Battalion, 10th Marine Regiment, rewrote that chow time means in the field.

"I was speaking to a cook, and he told me he was the best cook in the Marine Corps," said Lt. Colonel Phillip M. Bragg, commanding officer, 2/10. "I decided to let him prove it."

Fox, Echo, Golf and Headquarters Batteries, from Company H, 2/10, faced off in a cook-off at Camp Wilson Feb. 16.

"Marines are naturally competitive," said Staff Sgt. Aubrey Evans, battalion mess chief, 2/10. "They come out here, trash talk, and after, the winners get bragging rights."

The four batteries competed against each other, challenging themselves and each other to create the best meal, using nothing but what would be available to them in the field.

"You're going down, Golf," said a first sergeant in the crowd in a friendly competitive manner.

"With all due respect first sergeant," replied Cpl. Thomas Gillard, Golf Battery, 2/10, and one of the competing cooks, "I don't think so."

Each team was allowed two cooks, with two assistants. Using the prepackaged field rations, they were given one hour to form unique and delicious meals to impress the

group of battery commanders judging the food.

Judges were allowed to critique the food however they wished.

As the contest began, Marines hustled about the long row of tables covered by supplies and ingredients. While some were unorganized and preferred to wing it, others knew exactly what their plan of attack would be.

"Some people didn't know what to make. Together it came out pretty good," said Cpl. Phuc T. Nguyen, food service specialist, competing for Fox Battery, 2/10. "The appearance of our cake was my favorite part."

Fox Battery impressed the judges and crowd with a two-layered cake shaped in the form of the eagle, globe and anchor, covered with white icing. But they were not the only ones to come up with an intriguing dish.

HQ Battery served a dish of bacon wrapped beef that got HQ's supporters in the crowd to chant out "bacon" repeatedly.

"The crowd was definitely into it," said Bragg, creator of the cook-off. "They came out here supporting their batteries."

The Marines sitting in the bleachers in front of the cooking area constantly screamed and cheered for their cooks and waved around improvised signs of black sharpie and cardboard.

After the judges finished sampling, the crowd of Marines got a taste of the food.

The winners were announced at 2/10's warrior meal the next day. HQ Battery won for the best main meal, with their bacon-wrapped beef. Fox Battery won in the dessert category with their emblem-shaped cake.

"We've never done something like this before," Bragg said. "But it looks like we're going to make it a tradition."

Local schools awarded grant

■ Money will be used to keep deployed parents connected with students

SGT. HEATHER GOLDEN
 PRESS CHIEF/EDITOR

A \$1.5 million grant awarded to the Morongo Unified School District will help keep deployed parents connected and engaged in their child's school work back home.

The grant was given by the Department of Defense

"This allows the classroom to go beyond the barriers of a community, beyond geographical barriers. A lot of times the biggest thrill for children is coming home and showing off what they did in school that day."

— Tom Baumgarten

Educational Activity Educational Partnership. The MUSD serves military-connected students and their families in and around the Combat Center.

The district plans to use the money to fund a program that boosts reading/language arts and math skills, and to help correct deficiencies at an early age, said Tom Baumgarten, assistant superintendent, MUSD. The program is particularly focused on younger learners and targets

See GRANT, A6

This Week in Combat Center Are you ready to ride?



BOB PIIRAINEN
BASE SAFETY

How many of us inspect ourselves prior to getting on that bike and riding? Most of the time we just put on our gear and hit the road. Here are just a few items we should be taking into consideration prior to riding:

Fatigue: Did you get enough rest last night? How was your work day?

A fatigued rider can be just as dangerous as a rider who has too much to drink. If you get on the bike and then realize you are too tired to safely continue, find a safe place to pull over and get some rest prior to continuing on your ride.

Mental awareness: Did you and your wife have an argument? Are the kids sick? Is work on your back about meeting a deadline?

If we get out there and start riding with all

these other things on our minds, we are liable to miss that car turning left in front of us, or the truck pulling into our lane from a side street. Remember, we don't have a lot of protection when we ride. We must count on our mental abilities to keep us safe.

Under the weather: Have the stomach or flu bugs that always seem to creep up on everyone? Have you been sick for a period of time and are just getting over it?

We never think that a cold could affect our riding. Can you safely ride with a 101 temp? You do not have the mindset to keep yourself out of trouble. Do you think you should be riding if you are taking a medicine? No way! You could be cited for riding impaired.

Bottom line is this: We can do the best job in the world to ensure our bikes are prepped and ready to go. Don't our minds and bodies deserve the same attention?

SJA CORNER

What is the Child Tax Credit, how do I know if I qualify for it?

CPL C. B. ATWELL
CERTIFIED TAX PREPARER, TAX CENTER

The Child Tax Credit, line 51 of the IRS form 1040, may be worth as much as \$1,000 per qualifying child, depending on the taxpayer's income.

This credit is a non-refundable credit which means it can reduce your federal income tax liability, but is capped at that amount. A qualifying child for this credit is someone who meets the criteria for all six tests: (1) age, (2) relationship, (3) support, (4) dependent, (5) citizenship and (6) residence.

First, a child must be age 16 or younger at the end of the tax year 2011. The age test states that the qualifying child must either be your son, daughter, stepchild, foster child, brother, sister, stepbrother, stepsister or a descendant of any of these individuals, which includes your grandchild, niece or nephew. An adopted child is a child lawfully placed with you for legal adoption.

Third, the support test requires that the child must not have provided more than half of their own support for that tax year. Next, the taxpayer must claim the child as their dependent on his or her federal tax return. If the taxpayer is divorced, then only the custodial parent (the parent who the child lived with for over six months of the year) can claim this credit. If the custodial parent has allowed for the non-custodial parent to claim

the qualifying child as a dependant for exemption purposes then the non-custodial parent can claim the CTC as well. The custodial parent must sign form 8332 for the non-custodial parent if the divorce was after 2009, or if the divorce was before 2009, then the decree with a similar statement in it can be used to grant the non-custodial parent this exemption and credit.

The fifth test is citizenship. The child must be a U.S. Citizen, U.S. national or U.S. resident alien.

Lastly, the child must have lived with the taxpayer for more than half of the tax year.

There are some exceptions to the residence test, which can be found in IRS publication 972, under the Child Tax Credit section.

In addition to meeting the six tests for a qualifying child, this credit is also limited if the taxpayer's modified adjusted gross income is above a certain amount. The amount at which this phase-out begins varies depending on the taxpayer's filing status. For married taxpayers who are filing a joint return, the phase-out begins at \$110,000. For married taxpayers filing a separate return, it begins at \$55,000. For all other taxpayers, the phase-out begins at \$75,000.

If you have questions about whether you qualify for the CTC, call the installation's Tax Center at 830-4TAX.

The Tax Center is located in the south end of Building 1428 and is open Monday through Saturday.

OFF-LIMITS ESTABLISHMENTS

MCIWest off-limits establishments guidance prohibits service members from patronizing the following locations. This order applies to all military personnel.

In Oceanside:

- Angelo's Kars, 222 S. Coast Hwy, Oceanside, Calif., 92054

- Angelo's Kars, 226 S. Coast Hwy, Oceanside, Calif., 92054

In San Diego:

- Club Mustang, 2200 University Ave.

- Club San Diego, 3955 Fourth St.

- Get It On Shoppe, 3219 Mission Blvd.

- Main Street Motel, 3494 Main St.

- Vulcan Baths, 805 W. Cedar St.

In National City:

- Dream Crystal, 15366 Highland Ave.

- Sports Auto Sales, 1112 National City Blvd.

Local off-limits guidance prohibits service members from patronizing the following locations.

In Twentynine Palms:

- Adobe Smoke Shop, 6441 Adobe Rd.

- STC Smoke Shop, 6001 Adobe Rd.

In Yucca Valley:

- Yucca Tobacco Mart, 57602 29 Palms Hwy.

- Puff's Tobacco Mart, 57063 29 Palms Hwy.

In Palm Springs:

- Village Pub, 266 S. Palm Canyon Dr.

For the complete orders, but not off limits, check out the Combat Center's official website at <http://www.marines.mil/units/29palms>



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

SUDOKU #2452-M

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CROSSWORD AND SUDOKU PUZZLES COURTESY OF © 2011 HOMETOWN CONTENT

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[Puzzle solutions on A6]

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ACROSS

1. Daddy-?o
5. Geishas' sashes
9. ___?Hawley Tariff Act of 1930
14. "I smell ___!"
15. Prefix with cab or cure
16. Barbera's partner in animation
17. Sorvino of "Summer of Sam"
18. Friedman's subj.
19. Rejoinder to "Ain't!"
20. Dicey doings at Canaveral?
23. Healing plants
24. Result of a QB's mistake
25. Ambulance org.
28. One of a Hill 100: Abbr.
29. Holliday partner
33. Brightly colored seashell
35. Parts of TV broadcasts
37. Send packing
38. Alternative toa beer belly?
43. Go bananas

DOWN

44. Rudolph's master, for short
45. Get even for
48. Cigar butt?
49. Equi-? kin
52. "Alice" diner owner
53. Victim of deflation?
55. Kosher, so to speak
57. Comment at the meatpacking plant?
62. Yankee great Lefty
64. ___ Nagila
65. Lie in the sun
66. Roomy dress
67. Amblor or Bogosian
68. Pastry chef, at times
69. Pave over
70. Cubicle fixture
71. Poetic dusks

DOWN

1. Where gauchos roam
2. Bird on baseball cap
3. "Coat of Many Colors" singer
4. Like uncirculated air
5. Cartel since 1960
6. Guitar wizard Jeff
7. Pedestal topper
8. Ten Commandments mount
9. Religion with no formal dogma
10. Neither fem. nor neut.
11. Like a fugitive
12. Lennon's lady
13. Confucian path
21. Finish off
22. Dad's bro
26. Junk drawer abbr.
27. Clockmaker Thomas
30. Toothpaste tube abbr.
31. Fixes, as a fight
32. ___ Vecchio (Arno

DOWN

34. "The Caine Mutiny" author
35. Sunday closing
36. FedExed or faxed
38. Pull an all ?nighter
39. Be afflicted with
40. Little League membership restriction
41. Indy service area
42. Amtrak's bullet train
46. Old coot
47. Humpty Dumpty, e.g.
49. Pianist/politician Paderewski
50. Disgust
51. Catchall category
54. Marveled aloud
56. Jazz pianist Blake
58. ___cava
59. Produce-?scale deduction
60. "We try harder" company
61. Cope with, slangily
62. Needle-?nosed fish
63. Baja cheer

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WHAT I'VE LEARNED

THE NICE GUY

Cpl. Marshall BrunsLifeguard manager, 22
Reno, Nev.INTERVIEWED AND PHOTOGRAPHED BY
LANCE CPL. ALI AZIMI

Feb. 22, 2012

> **I've been swimming all my life**, ever since I could remember. I've been in the water since I was a baby.

> **I like reggae music.** I like going to concerts and seeing California, just going cruising.

> **In a way it coincides** with my personality. I mean reggae music, they sing about staying positive and loving life. It's relaxing music. It's just uplifting.

- > **When I'm swimming**, I just daydream. I go into la-la land.
- > **When I'm saving money**, I'll still go swim some laps and get a tan.
- > **I heard over in Newport Beach**, their lifeguards get \$100,000 a year. I would just buy a van and be a beach bum. But ocean lifeguarding is a whole other story because you got currents, waves and sharks. Not so much over here, but it is definitely a factor.
- > **It's sort of like being a guardian angel.** It's kind of cool, you're always looking out for someone. It's a nice feeling that they know they can go to you.
- > **During the summertime**, you get to come in a T-shirt, shorts and flip-flops. It's nice.
- > **I just don't like button-ups.** Just a T-shirt for me and some jeans, and I'm set. I don't need any dress-up clothes.
- > **I just try to see the bright side** of everything. Not getting down on the whole thing and just looking past it.
- > **There's no room for hate.** You just got to love everything and love everyone.
- > **Whoever needs** a hand, I'm just right there with them, just helping them out or whatever. Wherever there is work to be done, you'll see me there.
- > **Back in high school**, I was just trying to have fun. Hang out with friends. I'm the same way now.
- > **So there was this alley** way down the street from my house. We took some of my clothes, packed it with newspaper and made it look like a person. We were hiding, and heard this truck coming and thought, "Alright, this is our vehicle." We didn't know it was our buddy's uncle. This guy was huge. We tossed it out, and he hits it. We hear him slam on the brakes, thinking he hit a person. We hear him jump out, screaming at us. We're thinking, "Oh, this guy is going to beat us up."
- > **Definitely no more scarecrow** events after that. Thinking back, I would hate for something like that to happen to me.
- > **My friends are definitely people who are** not selfish at all. I can't have selfish friends. They are always there to give a hand to me and help me out. I'm there for them as well.
- > **After the Marine Corps**, I plan on being a UPS driver. I've thought about college, and definitely want to see the world. I just wanted to get settled first.
- > **I plan on going back** to Reno. If not, I got 49 other states to try out.



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**TOUGH MINDED
OPTIMISM**
by Lou Gerhardt


When Paul Smith speaks or writes wise people pay close attention. Paul is an owner of the 29 Palms Inn and a lover of our Hi-Desert and is an influential spokes person on environmental issues.

Some weeks ago he impressed governors and others at the Western Governors' Conference by extolling the virtues of both the 29 Palms Inn and the entire Hi-Desert.

Rebecca Unger reported it:

"Paul Smith, owner of the 29 Palms inn, laughed at being "the little guy" at the table.

"People come to enjoy the wilderness expanse of the desert, a wilderness unimpeded by mechanisms and big roads," Smith told the visiting governors. "Psychologically people are glad to know the wilderness is there. It's the spirituality of why people come here."

Smith did such a good job of selling his inn's attractions that Arizona Gov. Jan Brewer wondered why the winter conference attendees stayed in Palm Springs and not at the 29 Palms Inn.

"I think we'll have to take another adventure and go there," Brewer quipped."

Paul is also chairperson of the 25 member Tourism Economics Commission and at the last meeting of the 29 Palms City Council he strongly emphasized the economic input of several wind and solar projects projected for areas around Joshua Tree National Park.

Paul, with the input of Andrea Compton, chief of resources at Joshua Tree National Park, made it abundantly clear that the proposed wind and solar projects would put wind turbines on 20,186 acres southeast of Twentynine Palms and north of the Pinto Mountains

"Look up at the Pinto Mountain," Smith asserts, "just imagine 20,000 acres covered with windmills."

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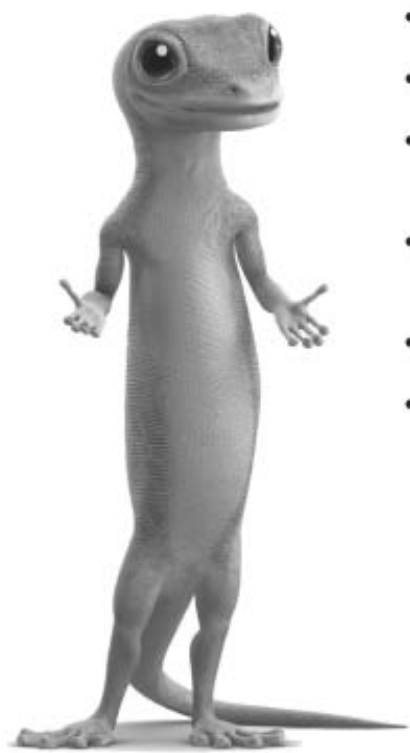
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OPERATION SHAHEM TOFAN

AFGHAN POLICE, MARINES REACH TO HELMAND BORDER

By Cpl. Reece Lodder
3rd Battalion, 3rd Marine Regiment

GARMSIR DISTRICT, Helmand province, Afghanistan



[Top] Lance Corporals Ryan Snyder, 21, team leader, and David Lambert, 21, mortarman, 81mm Mortar Platoon, Weapons Company, 3rd Battalion, 3rd Marine Regiment, talk while providing security from their defensive position as the sun sets during Operation Shahem Tofan (Eagle Storm) Feb. 11. **[Above Left]** Lance Cpl. David Manning, machine gunner, Headquarters Platoon, Weapons Co., 3/3, digs a foxhole at his platoon's defensive position during Operation Shahem Tofan Feb. 12. **[Above Right]** Cpl. DaJuan Dilworth, 25, squad leader, 81mm Mortar Platoon, Weapons Co., 3/3, obtains an Afghan man's fingerprints while collecting census information on a security patrol with Afghan Border Police Feb. 11.

The thunderous clap of low-flying helicopters reverberates off an endless desert landscape. Inside the mechanical fortress, rows of Afghan Border Police and U.S. Marines stare out the open back hatch, calmly watching the wilderness rapidly retract beneath them.

Hazy brown clouds explode skyward, masking the helicopters as they descend into the dust. Shadowy figures emerge and rush into a security cordon as the rotor wash dissipates. Within moments, they've established communication with their now distant headquarters.

Any thoughts of the showy entrance quickly fade as members of the partnered force pick up bulky packs and begin moving to their next position. A laborious hike leads them to a shallow bowl carved out of a sand dune, their patrol base during Operation Shahem Tofan (Eagle Storm) here Feb. 10-13.

In the barren Registan Desert near the former Forward Operating Base Rhino — the first U.S. position established in Afghanistan during Operation Enduring Freedom — ABP and Marines with Weapons Company, 3rd Battalion, 3rd Marine Regiment, scoured dusty highways for smugglers and insurgents moving across the eastern desert into Helmand province.

The ABP's mission was a shift from their current assignment in Garmsir, where they keep watch over the district's southern population centers.

Under the coalition mentorship, they are returning to their core capability of interdicting insurgent activity across Helmand's border. This mission is one of the most challenging among those of the Afghan National Security Forces, said Capt. Robert Murray.

"The ABP are the frontiersmen of the desert ... they go where no Afghan or coalition forces have gone before," said Murray, the officer in charge of the Border Advisor Team 2 in support of 3/3. "They're becoming Afghanistan's force in readiness for securing the untouched parts of Helmand province as its city centers expand outward."

As the two heliborne elements flew southeast into the desert, an armored convoy moved into eastern Garmsir under the cover of darkness. When the sun rose on the operation's first full day, the partnered forces covered three parallel objectives.

At their defensive positions, the ABP followed the Marines' examples, digging foxholes to shield themselves from the chill of desert winds and incessant sand storms.

Catching the last strain of bitter cold before the arrival of spring, they began working through a cycle of patrolling and posting security at their defensive position, breaking the grind only to catch a moment's rest.

In both daylight and at night, the partnered team set out in search of criminals. From the seats of all-terrain vehicles, their ABP counterparts spotted traffic from afar and sped off to search and question the passersby.

Capt. Jason Armas, commanding officer of Weapons Co., 3/3, said the ABP's willingness to excel during the mission was evidence of their growth into competent soldiers.

"A couple of years ago, they weren't capable of doing sustained operations in an austere environment like this," said Armas. "Now, they're grasping the ideas we've given them. They're willing to go out on their own, they aren't hamstrung in proximity to Marines."

Long before they took to the desert, the ABP took an active role in the planning process.

"The Marines won't always be here, so we're learning how to plan and conduct operations on our own," said Lt. Mohammad Zarif, commander of 4th Tolai, 2nd Kandak, Helmand ABP. "We wanted to show them the ABP can take on the challenge of providing security for our own country."

Murray said the ABP prepared for the operation by coordinating with their higher command, rather than depending wholly on the Marines for logistical support. He called their personal provision and transportation of fuel, food, water and cold weather equipment a "logistical victory."

Though the operation yielded few tangible results in the form of illicit activity, Armas said the process was the mission's main success.

"Planning operations together with the ABP has driven them to start working toward their borders, where they're using their mobility assets as a smaller, lighter, faster force under the overwatch of Marines," Armas said.

Battered by 30 years of sustained conflict, Zarif said the people of Afghanistan are tired of war and eager to live in peace. His smile widened and he beamed with pride as he declared himself part of the catalyst within the Afghan forces.

"We want Afghanistan to succeed and to be secure; we want to be able to move around our country without the enemy trying to attack us," Zarif said. "We've gained experience by working with Marines and we're ready to protect our country. The way to peace here is by maintaining security along our borders."

They're grasping the ideas we've given them. They're willing to go out on their own, they aren't hamstrung in proximity to Marines."

— Capt. Jason Armas

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Perry L. Ford, Senior Pastor

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TSULC, from A1

given machine guns, rocket launchers and grenade launchers to train on.

EOD representatives from Marine Corps Base Camp Pendleton, Calif., came to American Mine with updated EOD reports from Afghanistan. Based on the reports, they taught the Marines current counter-IED measures.

"The newer guys learned a lot," said Sgt. Erik Fredrickson, platoon sergeant, Co. F, 2/7. "It was definitely beneficial, and I definitely recommend more courses like these for the future. I think they'd help."

TSULC was also an opportunity for the more experienced leaders to mentor the newer ones.

"For us this is a refresher," Fredrickson said. "We are able to mentor the future team leaders and get them ready for Afghanistan."

The training period gave the upcoming leaders an opportunity to refine and critique specific skills.

The course ended with a demonstration of what the Marines learned during their 12 days of training with the battalion leadership watching the best squad in the group perform.

An evaluation was held Feb. 16, to determine which squad that would be.

Each team and squad demonstrated their skill while patrolling through a small valley, sweeping for improvised explosive devices. Once the valley was clear, the Marines crested a hill and attacked a bunker with multiple targets.

The Marines' communication, tactics and maneuvering were also evaluated.

Before the exercise, an evaluator approached squad leader Sgt. Travis Beattie and asked his scheme of maneuver. Knowing the most suc-

cessful attacks come from teams who can stay flexible, because situations are constantly changing in battle, he replied, "We are going to wing it."

Beattie's squad had the most successful run and was picked to demonstrate the final attack the following day.

With the rest of the class watching, along with the battalion and 7th Marine Regiment leaders, the men who became known by some as the "super squad," conducted the final attack.

A convoy of four humvee vehicles traveled through a valley in the training area. The first vehicle was hit by a simulated IED explosion.

Reacting immediately, the Marines in the third humvee unlatched a tow bar from their vehicle and ran to the aid of the front vehicle, while the Marines in the turrets of the remaining three humvees provided cover fire for them, shooting at simulated enemy targets. When the first vehicle was secured for a tow, a 7-ton vehicle pulled the first humvee to safety.

Lance Cpl. Kyle Koch, squad leader, Co. F, fired his shoulder-launched multipurpose assault weapon at a simulated target, a pile of tires. Koch hit his target so exact, he sent a tire flying hundreds of feet in the air with the explosion. This was followed by an enormous cheer from the observing Marines who had participated in TSULC with him.

The Marines split up. Beattie established a support by fire position on a berm, while three others swept around to the simulated insurgents and cleared the area.

The mission was a success, and for Koch's accuracy, Chief Warrant Officer Christopher Jones, battalion gunner, pulled off his bursting bomb rank insignia and gave it to the lance corporal.



PHOTOS BY CPL. SARAH DIETZ



[Top] Cpl. William Whetzel, squad leader, Company F, 2nd Battalion, 7th Marine Regiment, sweeps the ground for improvised explosive devices, followed closely by Lance Cpl. Juan Travino, team leader, and Lance Cpl. Daniel Orcutt II, machine gunner, Weapons Co., 2/7, during a training exercise at the Tactical Small Unit Leadership Course Feb. 17, 2012, in the American Mine training area.

[Above] Lance Cpl. Daniel Orcutt II, machine gunner, Weapons Co., 2/7, fires at a simulated insurgent Feb. 17.

[Left] Marines participating in the TSULC line the mountainside, waiting for the final exercise to begin Feb. 17. The 2/7 Marines participated in a two-week course where they learned combat tactics specific to their primary jobs and cross-trained on weapon systems unfamiliar to them. The course taught the Marines the value of leadership in combat situations and gave them tools to use as they develop their own leadership styles.



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WeekINPhotos

Urban Combat



CPL. JUSTIN R. WHEELER



CPL. JUSTIN R. WHEELER

[Above Left] HAT YAO, Kingdom Of Thailand — Royal Thai Marines advance toward the objective while U.S. Marines with the 31st Marine Expeditionary Unit provide security during the multilateral amphibious assault here Feb. 10. The Marines were conducting a multilateral amphibious assault with Royal Thai Marines and Republic of Korea Marines during Exercise Cobra Gold 2012.

[Above Right] HAT YAO, Kingdom Of Thailand — Marines from Battalion Landing Team 1st Battalion, 4th Marine Regiment, 31st Marine Expeditionary Unit, and Republic of Korea Marines fire at simulated targets during the multilateral amphibious assault here Feb. 10.

GRANT, from A1

students in kindergarten through 3rd grade.

Students will be given touch-pads preloaded with the course curriculum. The new equipment will extend learning hours and keep the parents more involved in their children's education, Baumgarten said.

The touch pads are wireless-capable, and the information on them is available online. This feature will allow deployed service members to check on their child's progress and exchange messages back and forth similar to the way email works. The students can retain that extra level of normalcy by sharing their schoolwork with both parents.

"This allows the classroom to go beyond the barriers of a community, beyond geographical barriers," Baumgarten said. "A lot of times, the biggest thrill for children is coming home and showing off what they did in school that day."

This is the second grant of its kind the district has received. The first grant was used to support all of the district's schools, but placed an emphasis on "advanced placement,

professional learning communities and response for intervention," Baumgarten said. It was also used in the development of computer labs at five elementary schools and Twentynine Palms High School.

The DoDEA grant program supports public schools with a large population of military-connected students.

"The Department of Defense is strongly committed to ensuring the children of military families receive an excellent education that prepares them for successful careers and to be active contributors to their communities and the nation," said Marilee Fitzgerald, acting director, DoDEA. "Our partnerships with public schools serving military-connected families are an important part of that commitment."

"We are fortunate to have military dependent students among the children in our district," said James Majchrzak, superintendent, MUSD. "They contribute to all aspects of our student body. To be able to avail ourselves of this grant helps not only our military students, but the entire district."

The MUSD has already received the grant, and parents can expect to see the implementation of the touch-pads by this spring.

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LANCE CPL. DANIEL WETZEL

The MARINE CORPS TRIALS

Wounded Warriors compete for spots at Warrior Games

By Lance Cpl. Daniel Wetzel

Headquarters Marine Corps

Injured Marines, veterans and allies joined together to commence the 2012 Marine Corps Trials at Marine Corps Base Camp Pendleton, Calif.

Practices for the Trials kicked off Feb. 16 and competitions are being held Feb. 17-22. The top 50 performing Marines will earn the opportunity to compete in the Wounded Warrior Games in Colorado Springs, Colo., in May.

"There's more to life than the injury," said Lance Cpl. Samantha Gaona. "A lot of people think they can't do it anymore, the Trials help us know we still have a lot in us."

Gaona, a cancer survivor and first-time Trials participant from San Antonio, is competing in wheelchair basketball and air rifle shooting.

Gaona said her goal is to make it to the Warrior Games.

"I was told this was going to be tough," Gaona said. "The practices are getting more difficult, but it's not that hard."

Cpl. Anthony McDaniel's goal is to be on the All Marine Team and then the Paralympic Team for wheelchair basketball.

"Just because you got injured, your life doesn't have to stop," McDaniel said. "You may not be able to do the exact things you used to, but you can do similar things, and have a lot of fun doing it. As long as you don't want to stop yourself, you can do whatever you want to do."

McDaniel was hit by an improvised explosive device and suffered a bilateral above-knee amputation and below-elbow amputation. He plays wheelchair basketball and participates in the 100-meter and 200-meter wheelchair race.

The Trials are part of the Wounded Warrior Regiment's Warrior Athlete Reconditioning Program, which provides opportunities for Marines to engage in both physical and cognitive activities outside the traditional therapy setting.

"I was focused on rehabilitation but the WAR program helped me get out of the hospital," McDaniel said. "It helps you maintain your physical fitness without you knowing it through all the new sports. They helped me come out of that shell and isolation by trying new things."

This year's Trials had more than 300 participants from seven countries.

British Royal Marine Cpl. Matthew Webb from Taunton, U.K., said he competed in events he never would have done before at the Trials.

"It's giving me a chance to complete personal goals," Webb said. "It's great to be in a competition again."

Competitions include swimming, wheelchair basketball, sitting volleyball, track and field, archery, cycling and more. Most of the athletes are competing in more than one competition and many are trying these sports out for the first time.

The top 50 Marines from this year's trials will go on to the Warrior Games to compete against the other military branches to prove their warrior spirits.



LANCE CPL. DANIEL WETZEL



SGT. MARK FAYLOGA

[Top] Gunnery Sgt. Tony Russo catches a rebound during the East vs. West wheelchair basketball game Feb. 17 at the 2012 Marine Corps Trials, Marine Corps Base Camp Pendleton, Calif.

[Above] Cpl. Anthony McDaniel stretches before practice for the 2012 Marine Corps Trials at Camp Pendleton Feb. 14. McDaniel, a bilateral leg amputee and below-elbow amputee, will compete in the track and wheelchair basketball competitions during the trials. McDaniel, an artilleryman, was injured after stepping on an improvised explosive device Aug. 31, 2010. McDaniel is one of more than 300 injured Marines, veterans and allies competing in the second annual trials, which include swimming, wheelchair basketball, sitting volleyball, track and field, archery, cycling and shooting.

[Left] French Staff Sgt. Jocelyn Truchet and U.S. Marine Staff Sgt. Erwan Camel, Wounded Warriors with the Allies Team, rest on the pool and listen to the instruction of Coach Sheila Taormina, a 1996 Olympic gold medalist, during practice for the 2012 Marine Corps Trials at Marine Corps Base Camp Pendleton, Calif., Feb. 15.



Liberty Call

Black-and-white silent-movie sensation sparkles and shines



COURTESY PHOTO

A silent black-and-white movie with subtitles, featuring two French stars far off the American movie map. A romantic saga that's both a paean to the movies and a retro-glow throwback to the way films were made nearly a century ago, it's nominated for 10 Oscars.

NEIL POND

AMERICAN PROFILE

"The Artist"

Starring Jean Dujardin & Bérénice Bejo
Directed by Michael Hazanavicius
PG-13, 100 min.

A silent black-and-white movie with subtitles, featuring two French stars far off the American movie map—not exactly the stuff that typically plays big down at the Mainstreet USA multiplex.

But "The Artist" is making American audiences cheer—and creating quite a buzz as the Feb. 26 Academy Awards approach.

A clever, whimsical, touching and spirit-lifting romantic saga that's both a paean to the movies and a retro-glow throwback to the way films were

made nearly a century ago, it's nominated for 10 Oscars.

The "artist" of the title is a dashing superstar actor, the fictional George Valentin (Jean Dujardin), at the top of his swashbuckling, silent-movie game in the late 1920s just as movie studios are making the transition to sound. A couple of chance encounters with an aspiring young actress, the unflappably upbeat Peppi Miller (Bérénice Bejo), sparks their mutual attraction.

But George is married, and fate puts them on two divergent paths. As Peppi becomes a "talkies" sensation, George stubbornly refuses to abandon the format that has made him famous. In just a few years, she's become Tinseltown's new "It" girl, the face and voice of a new era, and he's a Hollywood has-been, a sad-sack shadow of a

silent-movie yesteryear.

An earlier scene on a staircase sets the stage for what's about to happen. She's all smiles and sunshine, headed up; he's frowning under a dark cloud, going down.

How this captivating knot works itself out is but one of the movie's many charms. The two leads, Dujardin and Bejo light up the screen with charisma. It's easy to believe them as silver-screen idols from a bygone era.

The story, of a couple obviously meant for each other but held apart by the wide rift of their circumstances, is universal. It doesn't need many words, in any language. And the absence of spoken dialogue (until the very end) stages the movie in a purely visual way that makes every moment even more compelling.

Some familiar American

faces are sprinkled in, including John Goodman as a cigar-chomping studio mogul. James Cromwell plays George's loyal longtime valet. Penelope Ann Miller is George's unhappy wife, sinking in a loveless marriage that's become like the quicksand in a scene from George's latest movie.

And for dog fanciers, George's faithful Jack Russell Terrier, his companion both onscreen and off, steals scenes as well as hearts.

There are certainly flashier movies, noisier colors and bigger stars. But very few of them sparkle and shine like this little black-and-white, nonverbal marvel, which marches along majestically to its musical soundtrack but little other sound of any kind. It's a real jewel. In the case of "The Artist," silence really is golden.

Combat Center Clubs

Excursions Enlisted Club

Friday: Social Hour with food, 5 - 7 p.m. followed by DJ Gjettblaque, 8 - 11 p.m., Ladies Night
Saturday: Variety Night, DJ Gjettblaque 8 - 11 p.m.
Thursday: Social Hour, 7:30 - 9:30 p.m.

Bloodstripes NCO Club

Friday: Social Hour with food, 5 - 7 p.m.
Wednesday: Free gourmet bar food, 5 to 7 p.m.
Thursday: Social Hour, 7 - 9 p.m.

Hashmarks 29 SNCO Club

Friday: Social Hour, 5:30 - 7:30 p.m.
Monday-Friday: Lunch from 1030 a.m. - 1:30 p.m.
Monday: Steak night and full menu, 4:30 - 8 p.m.
Tuesday: Social Hour, 5 - 7 p.m.
Thursday: Social Hour, 5 - 7 p.m.

Combat Center Officers' Club

Monday: Steak night, 5 - 7:30 p.m.
Monday-Friday: All-hands lunch, from 11 a.m. - 1:30 p.m.
Thursday: Taco Night, 5 - 7 p.m.

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

Local Events

Town Hall Meeting held by County Supervisor Neil Derry

When: Saturday, Feb. 25, 10 a.m. to 11:30 a.m.
Where: Twentynine Palms Community Center
74325 Joe Davis Dr., Twentynine Palms, Calif.
For more information call 228-5400
or visit <http://www.facebook.com/supervisorderry>

The Sumner Brothers

Country, folk, blues and root music
When: Thursday, March 1, 8 p.m.
Where: Pappy and Harriet's
53688 Pioneer Town Road, Pioneer Town, Calif.
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<http://www.pappyandharriets.com>

Free Line Dance Lessons

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Where: Willie Boy's Saloon and Dance Hall
50048 29 Palms Hwy, Morongo Valley, Calif.
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Lower Desert

Randy Travis

Country superstar is celebrating 25 years
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Where: Spotlight 29 Casino Resort
46-200 Harrison Place, Coachella, Calif.
For more information call 866-377-6829 or visit
<http://www.spotlight29.com>.

Willie Nelson

Living American legend
When: 8 p.m., Friday, March 9
Where: Fantasy Springs Resort Casino
84-245 Indio Springs Parkway, Indio
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<http://www.fantasyspringsresort.com>.

Melissa Manchester

Live music performance
When: 8 p.m., Saturday, Feb. 25
Where: Agua Caliente
32-250 Bob Hope Dr., Rancho Mirage
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Larry the Cable Guy

Live blue collar comedy performance
When: 8 p.m., Friday, March 23
Where: Morongo Casino Resort and Spa
49500 Seminole Drive, Cabazon, Calif.
For more information call 800-252-4499 or visit
<http://www.morongocasinosort.com>.

Sunset Cinema

Friday, Feb. 24

6 p.m. - War Horse, Rated PG-13
9 p.m. - Joyful Noise, Rated PG-13
Midnight - Contraband, Rated R

Saturday, Feb. 25

11 a.m. - Free Matinee Dolphin Tale, Rated PG
2 p.m. - We Bought a Zoo, Rated PG
6 p.m. - The Darkest Hours, Rated PG-13
9 p.m. - The Girl with the Dragon Tattoo, Rated R
Midnight - The Devil Inside, Rated R

Sunday, Feb. 26

2 p.m. - Extremely Loud & Incredibly Close, Rated PG-13
6 p.m. - Red Tails, Rated PG-13
9 p.m. - Awakening, Rated R

Monday, Feb. 27

7 p.m. - Haywire, Rated R

Tuesday, Feb. 28

7 p.m. - War Horse, Rated PG-13

Wednesday, Feb. 29

7 p.m. - We Bought a Zoo, Rated PG

Thursday, March 1

7 p.m. - Contraband, Rated R

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15 Palm Springs-MCAGCC							Friday
Palm Springs Airport	Indian Canyon & Andreas (Casino)	Indian Canyon & Tacheva (Hospital)	Y.V.T.C.	MCAGCC			
7:00	7:10	7:15	7:50	8:30			
15 MCAGCC-Palm Springs							Saturday/Sunday
Base Post Exchange	Building 1664	6th & Bourke	29 Palms Transit Center	29 Palms Staters	Joshua Tree Park Blvd.	Y.V.T.C.	Palm Springs Airport
10:00	10:25	10:30	10:40	10:45	11:00	11:10	11:45
4:00	4:25	4:30	4:40	*4:45	*5:00	*5:10	*5:45
15 Palm Springs-MCAGCC							Saturday/Sunday*
Palm Springs Airport	Indian Canyon & Andreas (Casino)	Indian Canyon & Tacheva (Hospital)	Y.V.T.C.	MCAGCC			
12:00	12:10	12:15	12:50	1:35			
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This Means War (PG13) Everyday: 2:15, 4:30, 6:45, 9:00	Ghost Rider: Spirit Of Vengeance (PG13) Everyday: 2:15, 4:30, 6:45, 9:00	
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Scientific Method

■ Kids show off science skills, get glimpse of future

By Lance Cpl. Lauren Kurkimilis

Condor Elementary School students put their creativity on display during their annual science fair, while the Combat Center Marines put the kids' logic to the test.

"The kids were given about two months to put together their experiment," said Tabitha Harrington, science fair coordinator and physical education teacher. "There were some guidelines, but they could really use their imaginations."

Children in the K-2nd grade category brought in various collections. Rocks, license plates and souvenir smashed pennies were a few of the collections on display.

"The older students made projects that used the scientific method," Harrington said.

Anthony Tarver and Cody Harrington, both age 11, won 1st place for the 4th-6th grade category. Anthony's project questioned if "green" laundry detergent is really better for the environment.

Guest science fair judge Gunnery Sgt. Patrick Crow, chief instructor, Company A, Marine Corps Communication-Electronics School, made a special note of the projects that dealt with today's environmental issues.

"I was impressed by the ability of the kids to follow the

instructions that they got and come up with some unique ideas that are applied to today's society," he said.

Cody's project tested the performance of ink pens in different temperatures.

"They showed good effort and ingenuity. It was nice to see their intellectual curiosity on display," said Lt. Col Timothy G. Burton, commanding officer, Marine Unmanned Aerial Vehicle Squadron 3, and another of the guest judges. "I thought the scientific method that was used on some of the projects would hold up well to critical analysis."

During the open house night of the fair, a couple of Combat Center units showed the kids what science can do and how the basics they learn early can transform into something that saves lives. Kids and their families checked out bomb-detonating robots and an unmanned aerial vehicle.

"Displays like this and the science fair are great for the kids because you never know if it will spark an interest for their future," said Gunnery Sgt. Eric J. Gonzalez, operations chief, Explosive Ordnance Disposal.



LANCE CPL. LAUREN KURKIMILIS

Amari Billingsly (left), age 9, and Ricky Arvey, age 8, learn about the Talon Robot at Condor Elementary School during their science fair Feb. 15. Marines from the installation's Explosive Ordnance Disposal demonstrated the robot's dexterity.

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