



Lance Cpl. Ali Azimi
 Combat Correspondent

Eleven Combat Center Marines were the honored guests of Palm Vista Elementary School students and staff during a 9/11 Remembrance Ceremony, Tuesday.

"We are honoring the heroes that went forth after the tragedy of 9/11 and to honor those who fell victim to the terrorist acts," said Sgt. Michael Condon, contract specialist, Headquarters Battalion, and base color sergeant.

"We are honoring the heroes that went forth after the tragedy of 9/11 and to honor those who fell victim to the terrorist acts."

— Sgt. Michael Condon

The ceremony not only commemorated those died on the tragic day, but also those who have made the ultimate sacrifice in defense of the country.

The Marines stood alongside other heroes being honored that day, including members of search and rescue teams and police and fire departments.

"Since I've been a principal of elementary schools I've thought it's important that people remember Sept. 11," said Cindy McVay, principal, Palm Vista Elementary School. "It was such a changing point in our lives as Americans."

Each honoree was led by one of the students from the school to the edge of the grassy field located at the center of the school. In front of them stood the

See [9/11](#) page A7

Equestrian & Marine

Bridgeport's animal packing course trains man with beast



SGT. AARON HOSTUTLER

Sgt. Justin D. Head, animal packing course chief instructor, exercises his mustang, Hondo, shortly after grazing. The animal packing course is the only one of its kind in the DOD and teaches Marines and other military personnel how to effectively and efficiently work with beast of burden to transport munitions, supplies and wounded personnel to and from areas inaccessible to mechanized and air transportation. The course, offered at the Marine Corps Mountain Warfare Training Center, Bridgeport, Calif. teaches an introduction to animal packing, an anatomy of pack animals, animal packing techniques, casualty evacuation techniques, animal first aid and bivouac considerations.

Farewell 'War Dogs'

■ [2/7](#) embarks on first combat deployment in four years

Sgt. Heather Golden
 Combat Correspondent

The Marines, sailors and families of 2nd Battalion, 7th Marine Regiment, said and hugged their goodbyes Wednesday morning as the War Dogs left for their first combat deployment since 2008.

The unit is headed to the familiar sands of Afghanistan, but this deployment's mission is far different from their last, said Staff Sgt. Ira Prah, deputy family readiness officer, 2/7.

"The last time in 2008 was a very kinetic deployment for the battalion," Prah said. "There was a lot of fighting going on. The mission this time is to partner with the Afghan National Security Forces to get them into a position where they are ready to take over."

The unit has spent the last several months preparing for this new purpose, traveling all over the state to get the best training possible. The Marines and sailors completed mountain and team building exercises at the Marine Corps Mountain Warfare Training Center, Bridgeport, Calif.; and infantry immersion training at Marine Corps Base Camp Pendleton, Calif. The unit even sent a handful of Marines to San Diego State University to gain a basic proficiency in the Pashtu language. Of course, the War Dogs completed weeks on desert-based exercises here at their home base, as well.

"The last time, we were there to take over and stabilize

See [FAREWELL](#) page A5



SGT. HEATHER GOLDEN

Lance Cpl. Philip Villaire, rifleman, Company G, 2nd Battalion, 7th Marine Regiment, hugs his mother, Gigi Madamba (left), and his girlfriend, Danielle Boushey, before he boarded a bus and deployed to Afghanistan Sept. 12.

Family, friends welcome 'First Team' back home

Lance Cpl. Brian Smull, infantryman, 1st Battalion, 7th Marine Regiment, meets his daughter, Kara, age 2 months, for the first time Sept. 8 during his unit's homecoming at Del Valle Field. He deployed while his wife, Jessica, was still pregnant. The families and friends of 1/7 waited until past midnight to welcome home their Marines and sailors.



SGT. HEATHER GOLDEN

First time EMV

■ [MWSS-171](#) begins historic desert training

Lance Cpl. D. J. Wu
 Combat Correspondent

Members of Marine Wing Support Squadron 171 came to the Combat Center for the first time for Enhanced Mojave Viper Training.

The squadron based out of Marine Corps Air Station Iwakuni, Japan, took part in convoy operations training at Rang 205 as part of their EMV training, Sept. 7.

"This is the first EMV that my unit has participated in," said Lt. Col. Howard Eyth, commanding officer, MWSS-171. "We saw an opportunity to deploy a company sized element from Iwakuni to Twentynine Palms."

This training is not part of a pre-deployment workup, but part of the unit's annual training. MWSS-171 is continuing their training at EMV in the upcoming weeks.

The unit was here practicing their aviation ground support, specifically their motor transport operations.

"The Marines are here training in the motorized operation training course," said Capt. Roy Agila, logistics officer, MWSS-171. "They're here getting better at their (military occupational specialty,) which is operating a motor vehicle



LANCE CPL. D. J. WU

Marine Wing Support Squadron 171 based out of Marine Corps Air Station Iwakuni, Japan, practiced vehicle convoy operation near the Combat Center's Noble Pass training area Sept. 11,

and suppressing fire, (among other things.)"

The Marines practiced their mounted convoy operations with the help of the Tactical Training Exercise Control Group.

TTECG had an opening in their training schedule and there took full advantage of the opening, Eyth said. They wanted to get as much training as they could when they were out here for EMV.

The limited training area at the Iwakuni Air Station doesn't give the Marines of MWSS-171 an opportunity to train in live-fire scenarios and in larger scale operations.

"The quality and the scope of the training packages that are available in Twentynine Palms cannot be replicated in

See [FIRST](#) page A5

This Week in Combat Center History



Reprinted from the Observation Post dated Sept. 15, 2000 Vol. 46 Issue No. 37

Happy birthday, Wolfpack!

James T. Conway
Major General, USMC
Commanding General
1st Marine Division

The 1st Marine Division extends its warm wishes and congratulations to the Marines and Sailors of the 3rd Light Armored Reconnaissance Bn. on the occasion of their 14th anniversary of service to Corps and country.

Activated on Sept. 11, 1986, this proud battalion was one of the first Marine units to receive the LAV from General Motors. In the first few years of its existence, the battalion found itself in California, on Okinawa and then back again.

The first combat test came when the 3rd Light Armored Infantry Bn. deployed to Saudi Arabia Aug. 16, 1990 as part of the

7th Marine Expeditionary Brigade of Operation Desert Shield. Jan. 25, 1991, "B" Co. saw combat in the first ground offensive action of the war during an artillery raid with 5th Bn., 11th Marines. Shortly thereafter, during the battle of Umm Hujul, "D" Co., virtually unaided valiantly turned back a major Iraqi attack. While assigned to the 1stMarDiv command post, on G+1 of the ground war, "B" Co. again distinguished itself by decisively repelling an Iraqi counterattack. Exploits such as these continued unit elements of the battalion with Task Force Shepherd entered Kuwait City, and captured the Kuwait International Airport.

While their brothers-in-arms were busy in the desert, Marines of "A" Co., 3rd Light Armored Infantry Bn.

were busy distinguishing themselves in the Philippines helping with security and cleanup in the wake of the eruption of Mt. Pinatubo.

This proud legacy is upheld more recently during Operation Provide Hope in Somalia, in addition to escorting convoys, the Marines delivered over 4,000 metric tons of rice to beleaguered citizens.

March 1, 1994, 3rd Light Armored Reconnaissance Bn. at Twentynine Palms, Calif., where they continue to be on of the finest units in the division.

Marines and Sailors who serve with, or have served with 3rd LAR should be extremely proud of the unparalleled excellence and indomitable spirit of this fine warfighting organization.

Happy Birthday and Semper Fidelis.

TRICARE Prime fees changing Annual enrollment cost rising for most retirees

Brian P. Smith
TriWest Healthcare Alliance

It's that time of year again. TRICARE Prime billing statements have gone out in the West Region. This year, enrollees will be seeing some new numbers in their statements. The individual and family annual enrollment fee rates are increasing.

Are my fees changing?

Yes, the fees are changing for most retiree TRICARE Prime enrollees. Fee-paying enrollees were paying either (depending on the date of enrollment):

- \$230 or \$260 for individual coverage or
- \$460 or \$520 for a family coverage.

These enrollees will see their 2013 fiscal year enrollment rate change to \$269.28 for individual or \$538.56 for family beginning Oct. 1, 2012.

Going forward, a majority of the Prime enrollees could see fee increases at the beginning of each fiscal year. Two categories of retirees will have their rates "frozen." Survivors of active duty deceased sponsors (following the 3-year Transitional Survivor period) and medically-retired service members will pay the same annual fee rate that was in effect the year they enrolled as fee-payers and were categorized as survivors or medically-retired. The freeze remains if Prime enrollment is not interrupted. Beneficiary status and category are recorded in the DEERS (Defense Enrollment Eligibility Reporting System) record.

The fees could change each fiscal year. TRICARE reminds enrollees that you may have another enrollment fee increase later if new fees are included when Congress passes the final FY 2013 budget. If you don't choose an automatic monthly payment option, it's

suggested you make quarterly payments. TRICARE.mil/Costs has more information.

Do I pay fees? How much do I owe this year?

If you paid TRICARE Prime enrollment fees last year, and you're still enrolled, you still owe fees. If you are recently enrolled in Prime as a retiree, you owe fees. You can always check your fees owed by logging into your secure account at TriWest.com.

What changes will I have to make?

As long as you make your payments by the due date on the statement, your TRICARE Prime enrollment continues. If you have signed up for automatic electronic payments through TriWest, you don't have to change anything. Your payments will be automatically adjusted to the appropriate new amounts:

- monthly allotment from retired pay
- monthly electronic funds transfer from your checking or savings account
- monthly credit/debit card payment.

What if I disenroll?

You can choose to disenroll and use your TRICARE Standard coverage. You will have an annual deductible and out-of-pocket cost shares. As a retiree, you may voluntarily disenroll at the end of the enrollment year (September 30). If you enroll again, your coverage will not be continuous and will start either the month after you enroll or the month after that (based on the 20th of the month rule).

Prime enrollment fees are changing this year. Stay on top of your enrollment and help avoid any missed payments by signing up for automatic electronic payments through TriWest.

OFF-LIMITS ESTABLISHMENTS

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

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

In Oceanside:

- Angelo's Kars, 222 S. Coast Hwy, Oceanside, Calif., 92054
- Angelo's Kars, 226 S. Coast Hwy, Oceanside, Calif., 92054

In Twentynine Palms:

- Adobe Smoke Shop, 6441 Adobe Rd.
- STC Smoke Shop, 6001 Adobe Rd.
- K Smoke Shop, 5865A Adobe Rd.

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 Yucca Valley:

- Yucca Tobacco Mart, 57602 29 Palms Hwy.
- Puff's Tobacco Mart, 57063 29 Palms Hwy.

In National City:

- Dream Crystal, 15366 Highland Ave.
- Sports Auto Sales, 1112 National City Blvd.

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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See answers on page A4

UP IN SMOKE

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ACROSS

- Stallone macho man
- Baseball's Dizzy or Daffy
- Guitarist Atkins
- WWII sea menace
- Choir voice
- Blood: Prefix
- Crayon color, up in smoke
- Came to rest
- Editor's "let it be"
- Golf's "Slammin' Sammy"
- Doing nothing
- Attendance fig., often
- Communicate silently
- Business attire, up in smoke
- Everyday article
- MTV target viewer
- Mediterranean nation
- Leprechaun's land
- Chefs' protectors
- Figure skater Katarina

DOWN

- Chafes
- Touch on
- "Encore!"
- Playful talk
- Mel in Cooperstown
- Rhett Butler's last word
- Hamburg's river
- "Relax, soldiers!"
- From Scandinavia
- Feller in the woods
- Committed a grid infraction
- Jannings or Gilels
- Mall bag
- Have great respect for
- Several reps, in the weight room
- ___ State (Idaho)
- Severe spasm
- Bank job
- Architect I. M.
- Emcee's task

DOWN

- Cooking oil source
- Riverbank romper
- Sharon of "Valley of the Dolls"
- Guam, e.g.: Abbr.
- Elementary particle
- Habitual spasm
- Rose family shrub
- ___ Lanka
- Wrap up
- Online novice
- Hostilities ender
- Plum variety
- Brubeck's music
- Nobelists Wiesel
- School on the Thames
- Controversial apple spray
- Low-lying area
- Sunrise direction
- Sinclair competitor, once
- Kublai ___
- Dubya's deg.

Whatever you're looking for, you can find it in the **Observation Post Classified section**

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WHAT I'VE LEARNED

THE NEW KID ON THE BLOCK

Meaghan Bischoff

Headquarters Battalion,
Family Readiness Officer
Age 25, Starkville, Miss.

INTERVIEWED AND PHOTOGRAPHED BY
SGT. HEATHER GOLDEN
September 11, 2012

> **I've been the FRO here since** Aug. 1. It's a new experience for me.

> **I grew up in Mississippi** and Pennsylvania. It wasn't an easy early childhood.

> **I was adopted** when I was 8. My little sister was 4. She was taken in by her father's family. We still talk, like every day.

> **My adoptive parents are** family friends. They (the State) threatened to take us from my biological mother, and my grandmother couldn't take us.

> **My adoptive mother drove down** from Pennsylvania to get me. She did the adoption paperwork practically overnight.

> **I'm still in contact with** my biological mom. The lines of communication were always open if she wanted. We're a lot closer now. Once I had kids, I think it was easier. She spoils them rotten.

> **Looking back on it now**, I was happier with my adoptive parents. It was a more stable environment. I went to school every day. Dinner time was always at 6 p.m. It was a much safer neighborhood. I rode my bike every day.

> **I don't have a lot of memories from before** I was adopted. But, I do remember times being locked out of the house all day, no food or anything. And I remember having to take care of my 4-year-old sister. One night, all I could find was a can of Pringles and that was dinner.

> **My mom's biggest thing she takes credit for is** my education. When she got me, I barely had a kindergartner's education level, but I was in the third grade. By the end of that year, I was reading at a 5th grade level. That's her thing. She always said she taught me five grades in one year.

> **When I see my dad now, he always tells me**, "You would have never been where you are now if you'd stayed back there." He's right. I probably wouldn't have a college education. Sometimes I doubt if I'd even be able to read now otherwise.

> **Throughout college, I held down three jobs** at all times. In many, many different fields.

> **I've been married for almost five years.** This is our second duty station. We met in college. He was commissioned the day after he graduated.

> **We got married the day after** he graduated The Basic School. It was a Thursday. Did you realize if you get married on a weekday, it's cheaper?

> **I don't wear my husband's rank.** He wears it. I didn't earn it. I won't even mention his rank unless someone asks.

> **Being officer or enlisted** doesn't really matter to me. I'd be proud of him either way.

> **We have two daughters.** One is 3 years old. The other is 7 months old. My poor husband. It's a house full of women.

> **We love the pool on base.** That's our thing. We always see the free movie at the base theater on Saturday. Then we head straight to the pool. We love the bowling alley, too. That's our Sunday night thing. We're so predictable.

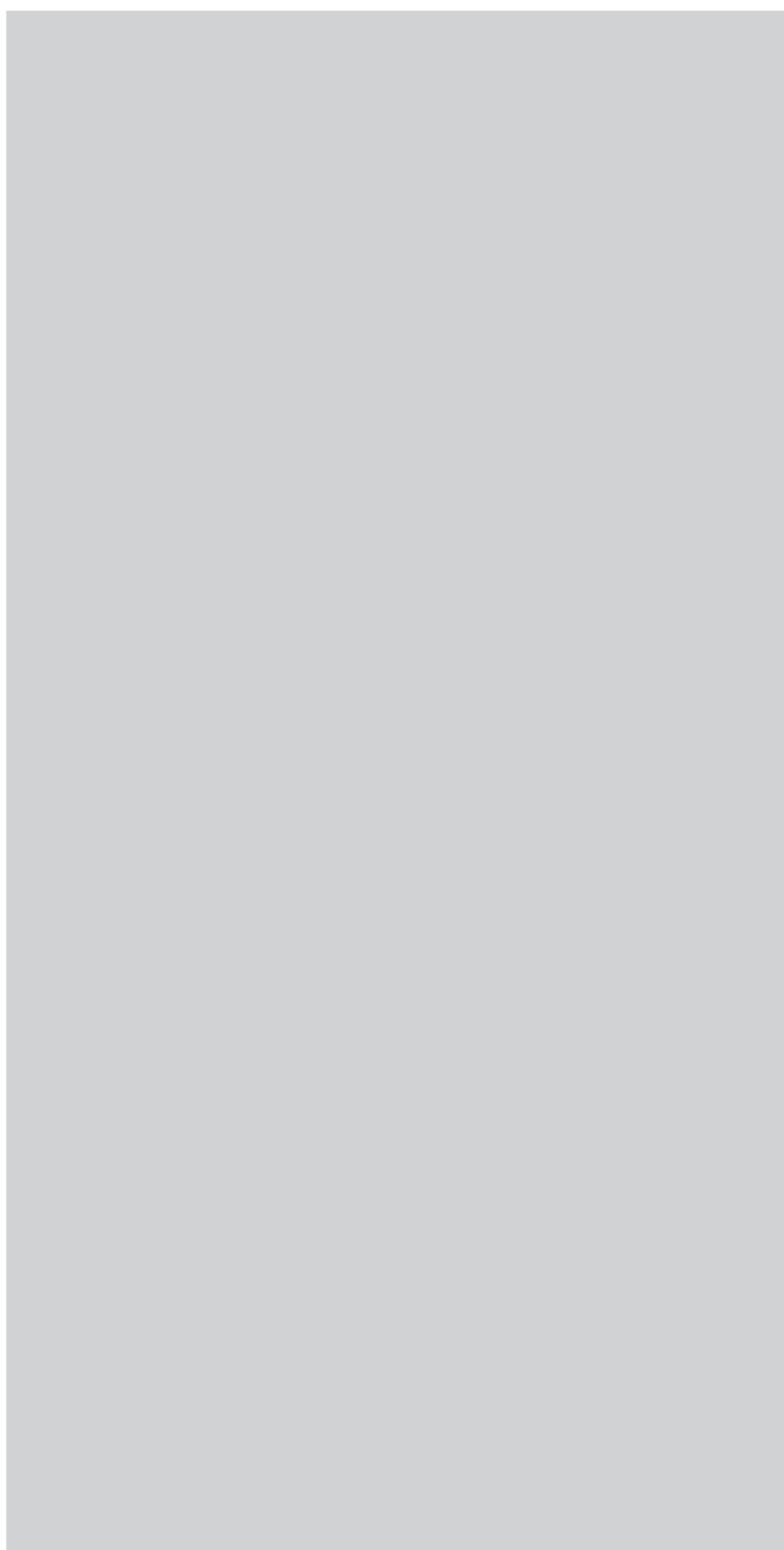
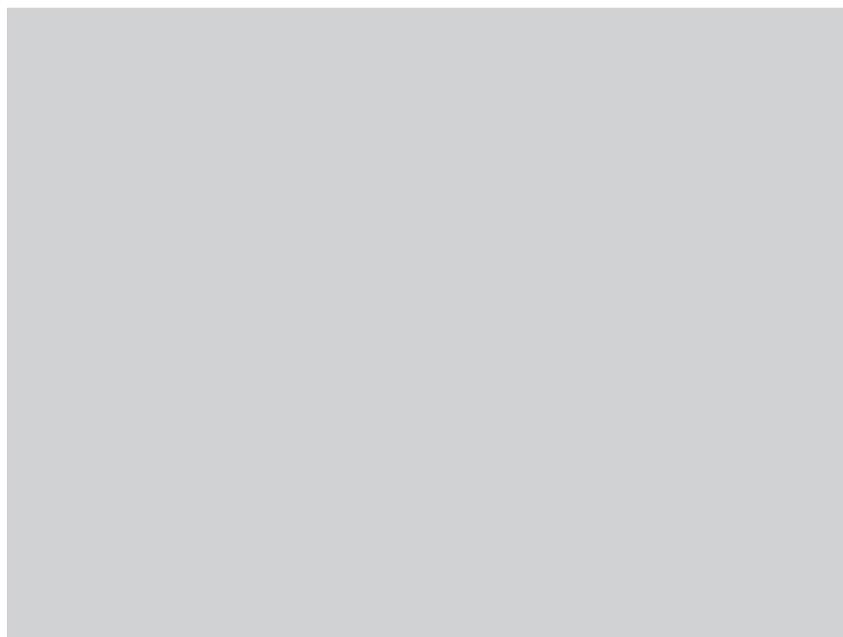
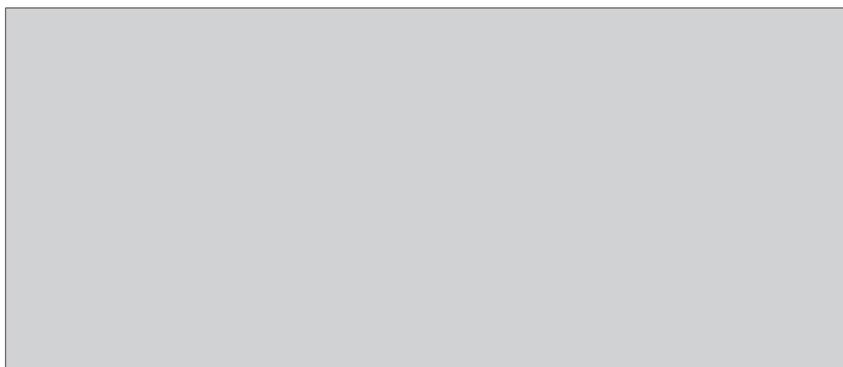
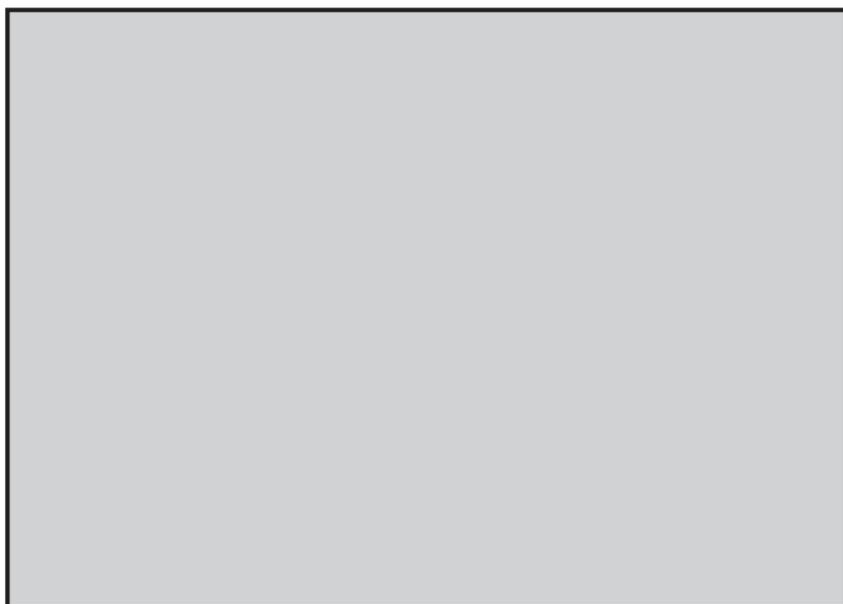
> **We've been through one deployment.** At the time, our daughter was 1-and-a-half. He got back a week before Christmas that year. That was the greatest Christmas present ever.

> **That deployment was what made me** fall in love with the family aspect of the Marine Corps. It was all about military wives going through the deployment together. I'm closer to some of them than my own family. You have to fight every day to thrive, not just survive.

> **I absolutely loved our FRO in Hawaii.** He was so there and so happy doing what he did. I volunteered for him. I knew then that this was something I wanted to do. I want to be there for the Marines and their families. I love helping.

> **A young Marine brought in his wife yesterday.** She was scared to even come onto base. The first time I went onto a base, I drove from Mississippi to Quantico the day after I got married. I was supposed to meet my husband at DEERS, but I didn't know what I was supposed to do to get on base. The guard at the gate totally lit into me. I actually cried. I like to tell that story to new spouses because it shows I used to be in their shoes. I was once intimidated to come on base, too. I know what that's like.

> **I love these moments when** I can see the relief on the spouses' faces when they realize they are not alone as they learn to transition to military life.



Scout Campout

Troop 78 learns outdoor, life skills

Story by Lance Cpl. Ali Azimi

Scouts with the Combat Center's Boy Scout Troop 78 camped at Del Valle Field Sept. 7 for their monthly outdoor activity.

Troop 78 is a part of Boy Scouts of America, a national organization found on many military bases throughout the country.

"Before this, I was a Cub Scout in Virginia," said Mathew Burke, son of Master Sgt. Roy Burke, communications chief, Marine Corps Communication-Electronics School. "I liked being able to come here and continue in the Scouts. I like all the campouts and I like what I get to do."

The organization provides a safe environment for kids to have fun while learning both outdoor and life skills.

Each Scout is instilled with 12 virtues of the scout law. A Scout is trustworthy, loyal, helpful, friendly, courteous, kind, obedient, cheerful, thrifty, brave, clean and reverent. The Scouts apply these principles to everything they do and are the code by which they govern themselves.

Over the course of a month, the Scouts plan and raise funds for an outing. These outings range from activities such as camping and hiking to fishing.

All the planning and set up is done by the Scouts with the Scoutmaster. The Scouts learn to be self-reliant in the wild and society as they organize and conduct their activities.

"These guys are in charge," said Clint Blaul, Scoutmaster, Troop 78. "The adult leadership is basically here to make sure that the kids stay safe."

They demonstrated these skills prior to and during the campout, getting permits for campfires, planning the fundraising events

and doing everything themselves on the field.

The troop spent their day at Del Valle Field practicing skills such as setting up tents, tying knots and cutting wood.

They began by setting up their tents in the center field of the baseball grounds. They each pitched their tents and helped each other overcome obstacles in the setup.

After the tents were raised, the Scouts moved on to tying knots. The Scoutmaster taught the boys different knot tying techniques and how to apply them to fasten anything from a raft to a

tripod for a tepee-like shelter. The Scouts practiced their knot tying skills on lodging poles staged for them on the baseball field. At the edge of the field, the Scouts had a safety area set up, where the lead Scout taught everyone in the patrol how to properly handle hatchets, saws and pocket knives and effectively use these tools in an outdoor environment.

"My favorite part is slicing the wood with the axe," said Burke.

The Scouts got to practice these skills by cutting through wood and making kindling, various products to start a fire.

As the sun set, the Scouts began to set up their campfire a few feet away from second base. The fire was the only bright light in the dark field, providing a great opportunity for both games and scary stories.

The Troop slept in the field through the night and packed up to leave the next day.

"Scouting is a game with a purpose," Clint said. "They learn skills that increase their confidence and they learn leadership that helps them become young men."

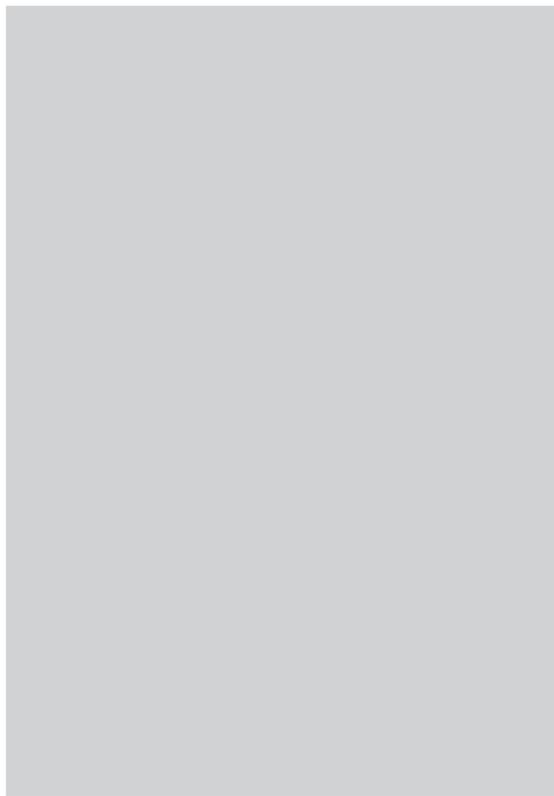
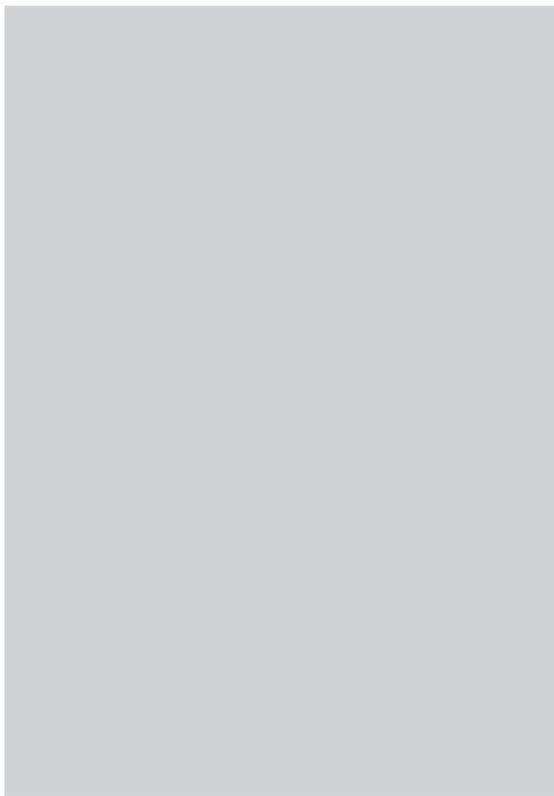
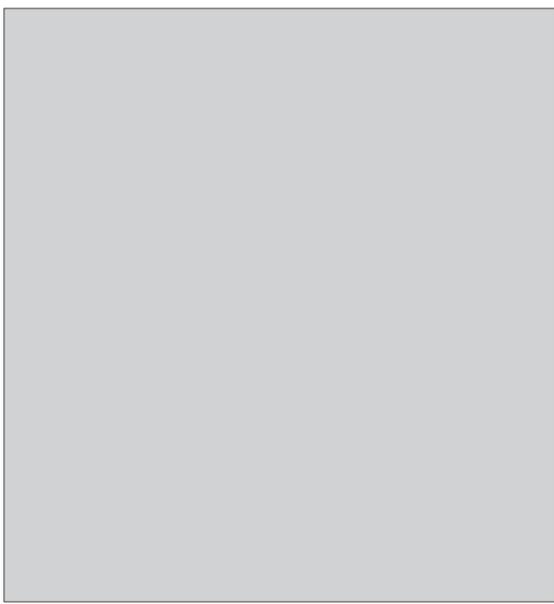
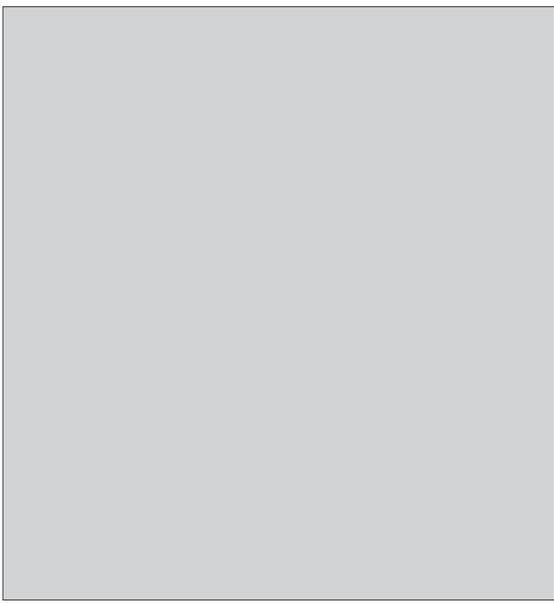
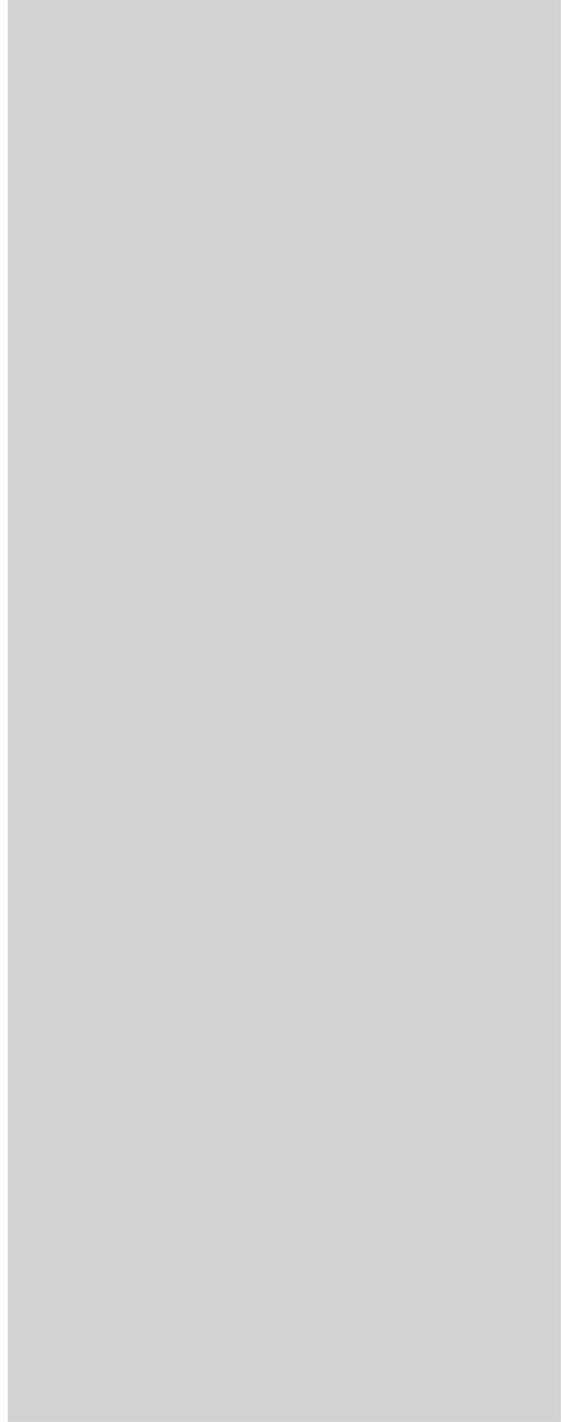
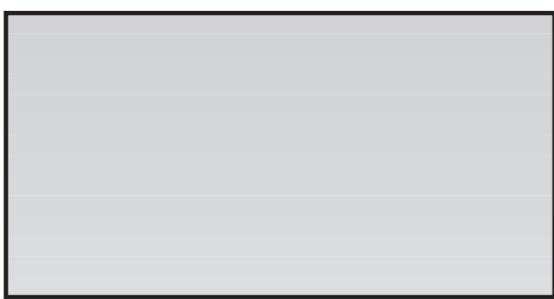
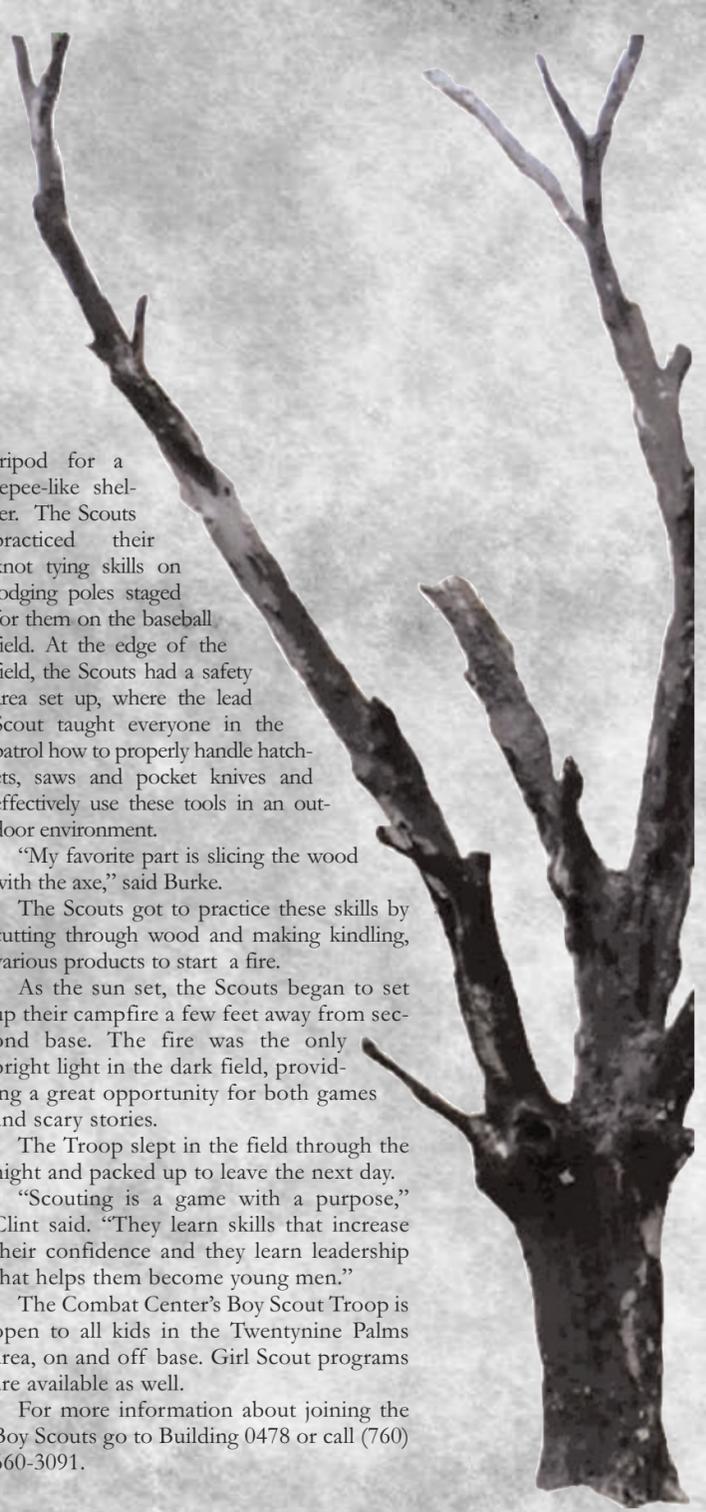
The Combat Center's Boy Scout Troop is open to all kids in the Twentynine Palms area, on and off base. Girl Scout programs are available as well.

For more information about joining the Boy Scouts go to Building 0478 or call (760) 660-3091.



LANCE CPL. ALI AZIMI

Boy Scouts with the Combat Center's Troop 78 camped out at Del Valle Field Sept. 7 as part of their monthly outdoor activity.



FAREWELL, from A1

areas. Now, we're talking joint patrols. The commander's intent is to shift it all over to the Afghans," Prahl said. "We should not be participating in big, Marine-only operations like we have had in the past."

Unit leadership is also expecting these next seven months to be calmer than dur-

ing the last combat deployment.

Even so, saying goodbye wasn't any easier, said Juana Brown, wife of Lance Cpl. Tyrone Brown, team leader, Company G, 2/7. This will be the Browns' second deployment faced as a couple.

"There are lots of tears today," Juana admitted. "I hope this is his last one."

The Wagners, a family of five deploy-

ments under their belts, agreed. They were there to see off their Marine, Lance Cpl. Andrew Wagner. The most current generation of military vets in the family includes Lance Cpl. Wagner, his brother, Phillip, who is a former Marine, and their older sister, who is an Army captain.

"With us, the first deployment per kid is always the hardest," said mom Wanda

Wagner. "And this is Andy's first."

For more photos and periodic updates on the War Dogs' time in Afghanistan, check out the Combat Center's official Facebook page at <http://www.facebook.com/thecombatcenter>. War Dog families can also find information by registering with the unit's eMarine site.



SGT. HEATHER GOLDEN



SGT. HEATHER GOLDEN

[Left, top] Cpl. Eric Duroskey, squad leader, Company G, 2nd Battalion, 7th Marine Regiment, and his fiancée, Jenna Hanshe, share last moments together Sept. 12, before Duroskey boarded a bus and left for Afghanistan.

[Left, Bottom] Kiley Wilson-Stewart, age 10, reaches up toward her stepdad, Petty Officer 3rd Class Bradley Stewart, hospital corpsman, 2/7, minutes before his bus pulls out and the unit heads to Afghanistan Sept. 12.

[Right] Cpl. Jarrod Larosa, assistant team leader, scout sniper detachment, Co. E, 2/7, holds his sleeping 2-week-old son Kael, Sept. 12, during the last hour before Larosa had to board a bus and deploy to Afghanistan. Kael was delivered by cesarean section just in time for Larosa to meet him before he left.



SGT. HEATHER GOLDEN

FIRST, from A1

Japan or anywhere else in the PACOM area of operations," Eyth said. "There are no field training environments in Iwakuni. The ability of coming out here and being able to do live-fire and maneuver and motorized vehicle operations is unique."

The Combat Center's ranges gives more than 50 Marines of the motor transport company the chance to work as a whole unit in their maneuver exercises.

"The training we get out here in Mojave Viper is like day and night to what we have in mainland Japan," Agila said.

"We look forward to repeating this experience, when our schedule allows," Eyth said.



Vehicle Recovery

Marine Wing Support Squadron 171 perfects skill

Story and photos by Lance Cpl. D. J. Wu

The motor transport section of Marine Wing Support Squadron 171, based out of Marine Corps Air Station Iwakuni, Japan, conducted vehicle recovery training near Combat Center's Noble Pass training area Sept. 11.

Vehicle recovery training is a part of MWSS-171's motor transport training during their training cycle at Enhanced Mojave Viper.

"The scenario we're practicing today was on a humvee needing to be recovered," said 1st Lt. Robert Arellano, company commander, Headquarters and Services Company, MWSS-171. "Their job is to secure the site, recover the vehicle and then tow back the humvee."

The motor transport Marines are focusing on all aspects of the job. They came to the Combat Center to accomplish their annual training requirements as well as expand on their capabilities.

"This is my third time at Twentynine Palms for training," said Cpl. Joshua Velasquez, motor transport operator, MWSS-171. "This is the first for the unit, but it was interesting

to see how they handled it."

The convoy left Camp Wilson to find the downed humvee in the Noble Pass training area. While on their way, they had to keep a tactical mind set and be on the alert for possible improvised explosive devices.

There was also a change to this convoy. Instead of having their platoon commander lead the exercise, three of the unit's non-

commissioned officers were in charge of the unit's movement.

"We have three sergeants leading the convoy today," Arellano said. "We wanted to transition the responsibility of the convoy commander to the NCOs."

The training experience at the Combat Center is unique for the Marines of MWSS-171. This is the first time that a unit from the 1st Marine Air Wing came to train in EMV.

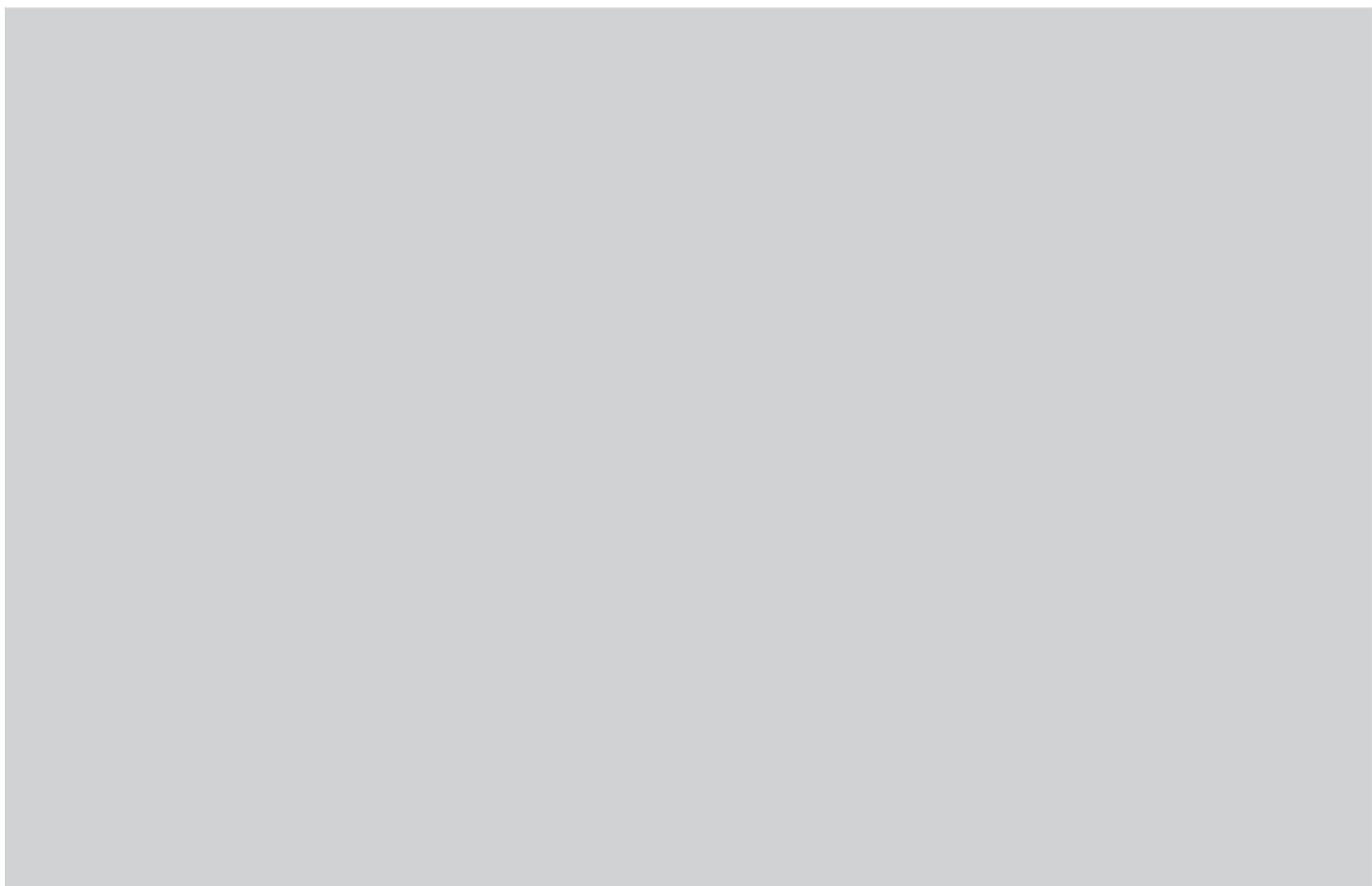
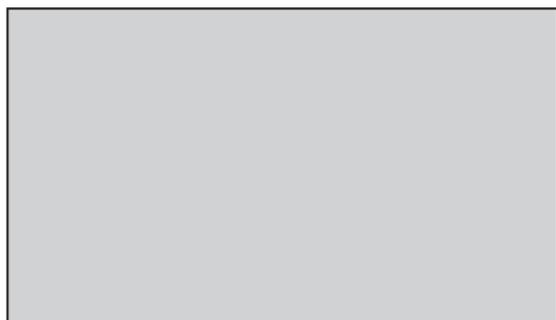
"I think we're getting pretty good training out here," said Lance Cpl. Mark Karwatka, motor transport operator, MWSS-171. "This place is a lot different than Iwakuni. We don't get this kind of training out in Japan. It's a different environment so we get to learn new things."

MWSS-171 will be training at the Combat Center for one more week before flying back to MCAS Iwakuni, Japan. As the completion of their training drew near, their company commander encouraged them to take in what the Combat Center had to offer.

"You guys are only here for a limited amount of time," Arellano said. "Make the most of the time you have here. You have to enjoy."



Lance Cpl. Mark Karwatka and Cpl. Joshua Velasquez, motor vehicle operators with Marine Wing Support Squadron 171 hook up a humvee to tow back to their compound in an vehicle recovery exercise near the Combat Center's Noble Pass training area Sept. 11.





LANCE CPL. ALI AZIMI

Eleven Marines from the Combat Center were honored guests of the students and staff of Palm Vista Elementary School during a 9/11 remembrance ceremony at the school, Sept. 11.

9/11, from A1

flag pole and approximately 350 ranging from kindergarteners to 6th graders.

The color guard marched in unison toward the flag pole to raise the colors. As the flag began to elevate, honorees saluted while students and staff raised their arms over their hearts.

"I saw the awe in kids faces when the color guard came out," McVay said. "They are almost bigger than life sometimes when they come out and have such passion for what they do."

The principal shared her experience of Sept. 11, 2001, and why we honor those who we had lost and those who pro-

tect us today.

"It's important we remember 9/11 because it's a really big part of American history and a really devastating tragedy," said Marcel E. Williams, 6th-grade student, Palm Vista Elementary.

The name of each Marine and honoree was announced over the speakers and at the mention of their name they bowed down to have a student bestow an appreciative medal around their neck.

At the end of the ceremony, the entire school lined up to thank each of the guests personally.

"It's been a pleasure meeting the kids," Condon said. "I think they were surprised and they really appreciated us coming out."



Honoring the Fallen

Photo and story by Lance Cpl. Ali Azimi

Cpl. Albert Munoz, motor transport operator, Marine Wing Support Squadron 374, sits in the middle of a flag memorial in the Combat Center's Heritage Park Sept. 11.

The Armed Services YMCA set up the memorial at Heritage Park, open to anyone wishing to pay their respects.

Nearly 100 American flags waved across the park. In the afternoon Navy Lt. Jason Owen, chaplain, headquarters battalion, provided

a prayer and heartfelt words followed by a moment of silence for the fallen.

Anyone entering the memorial was provided with a pamphlet listing the names of the heroes lost since the beginning of the millennium.

"Eleven years ago we vowed to never forget those who were lost," said Sadie Fisher, special events and volunteer coordinator, ASYMCA. "This is the ASYMCA's way of keeping that vow."



CFC Starts



SGT. HEATHER GOLDEN

Combat Center Commanding General, Brig. Gen. George W. Smith, is the first to sign his Combined Federal Campaign donation form Sept. 13, 2012, during the base's CFC Kick-Off Breakfast. Smith urged all unit representatives present to take a strongly encouraging approach when talking to their offices about giving.

WeekINPhotos

Honoring the Victims of 9/11



LANCE CPL. CHRISTOPHER JOHNS



CPL TIMOTHY LENZO

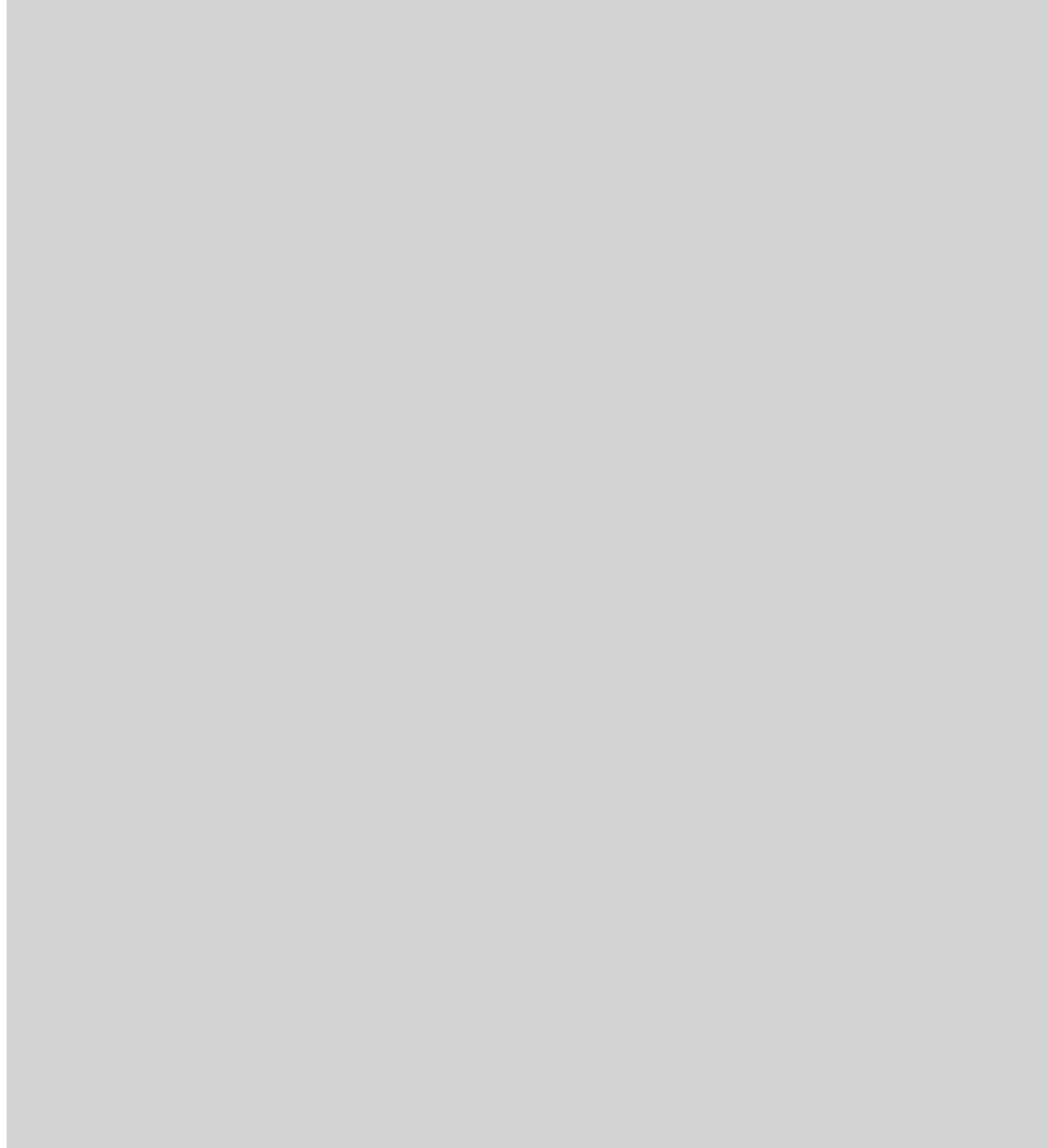
[Above] Joe Jackson, one of the original Montford Point Marines and a Birmingham, Ala., native, converses with a Marine after a morning colors ceremony aboard Marine Corps Air Station Miramar, Calif., Sept. 11.

[Top, right] Major Gen. Charles Gurganus, second from right, commanding general, Regional Command Southwest, Maj. Gen. Gregg Sturdevant, commanding general, 3rd Marine Aircraft Wing (Forward), middle, and Maj. Gen. David Berger, commanding general of Task Force Leatherneck, third from left, bow their heads for a moment of silence during a remembrance ceremony, Sept. 11. The ceremony honored the thousands people killed during the attack 11 years ago.

[Right] Marines with Combat Logistics Regiment 2, 2nd Marine Logistics Group, participate in a 4 mile hike during Enhanced Mojave Viper after paying tribute to victims of September 11th, 2001. on Marine Corps Air Ground Combat Center Twentynine Palms, Calif., Sept. 11, 2012.



SGT. ANTHONY ORTIZ





Marines got Talent

Story by Lance Cpl. Lauren A. Kurkimilis

Deep breath. I can probably just leave and pretend I never did this to myself. No, they have my name. It's too late to turn back now. It's just the audition right? It won't be that bad.

"What's your talent?" the woman asks me.

"I sing," I reply. "And play the piano, well, uh actually the keyboard. I mean I can play both but I'll be playing a keyboard... and singing."

I said that already.

"OK, well where is it?"

"Where's what?"

"Your keyboard. You said you were playing that too, right?"

"Oh yeah, it's in my room, I just got off work and I rushed and, uh, I'm sorry."

I look down at my uniform as if it was irrefutable proof of my argument.

"That's alright just go sing and if you make it, bring it with you to the dress rehearsal," she said politely.

I make my way down the aisle and on to the stage. The theater looks odd, lit by overhead fluorescents and nearly empty. Maybe it's because I'm standing on the stage, by myself. Yea, I feel ridiculous.

"Hi, I'm Kurkimilis, Lance Corporal Lauren... Kurkimilis."

What am I James Bond now? I shouldn't be nervous. I've been on stage before, in high school, like seven years ago. Just sing and get this over with.

"What will you be singing for us?" said one of the judges.

"Bottle it up by Sara Barielles."

I chose the song because it's one I think I could play with my eyes closed. So, hopefully, that will help alleviate my nerves. One could only hope.

"OK, go ahead," he says.

Here goes nothing.

Eyes shut, I let my arms hang motionless by my sides. This awkward posture was accompanied by an uncontrollable knee shaking. I'm pretty sure I sang one of the verses twice but I doubt any of these guys are die-hard Sara Barielles fans, so they probably didn't notice.

When I was done, I opened my eyes and nervously blinked at the judges.

"Usually I have the piano in front of me," I said. "So I didn't really know what to do with my hands."

To be honest, I wasn't worried about not getting selected. I think I was worried about getting put in the show and having to go on stage in front of a lot more than the five people judging the auditions. I'm the type of person who likes to keep to myself, so not many people around here have actually heard me sing. That was about to change.

I was sent an email with the list of contestants who were selected and saw the order of performance. I was dead last.

What does that mean? Did I barely make the cut? Is it just a random order? Am I like the headliner?

I later found out I was just one of the last to audition, thus last scheduled to perform. I'm an idiot.

The day of the show, was the dress rehearsal. This is where the "talent," as we were called, got to meet and practice our acts with all the appropriate equipment, i.e. my keyboard.

I thought I would have an edge on the competition with my piano playing but I was wrong. There were two other piano acts. One was Joshua Toles, who wrote and performed a deep and beautiful song about his faith and the other was a Zachary Kam who ended up going on after me and played the four-chord song by Axis of Awesome, an Australian comedy-rock band. For those unaware of this hit sensation, it's a song that rolls dozens of hit songs into one, with expert comedic timing, and all played with just four chords.

I was surprisingly calm during the first half of the show, but once the intermission was over, the panic crept in. I watched the acts before me and as each passed I wasn't sure if I was more excited or nervous.

I need to call my dad, he will calm me down.

So with no regard whatsoever to what time it was in Florida, I called him.

"Hello?"

I could tell he had been sleeping.

"Hey popps. Did I wake you up?"

"No, no. I was awake."

Liar.

"Well, I'm just in a talent show on base and don't make fun of me but I'm kind of nervous."

"You're nervous? Really?"

"Yea dad, will you do me a favor? Will you just come on stage with me?"

"Uh, yea, of course."

After the master of ceremonies introduced me I walked on stage, put my dad down on the top of the keyboard and sat down.

I looked at the crowd and said, "Well, my dad taught me how to play piano and uh he's on the phone right now. So, if this is bad, we can just blame him."

Someone in the audience yelled, "Hi dad!"

I could faintly hear my dad laughing through the phone and suddenly I felt OK.

I sang and played well. I even put the chorus and verses in the right order. I am definitely no Sara Barielles, but even my dad, who is by far my most honest critic, said it sounded great.

Most of the acts were singers. The overall winner, Andrew Burch, played guitar and sang an original. The second place winner, Chris Martin, sang an alternative rock song and hand crafted his costume with arm straps, sunglasses and biker gloves. A real crowd pleaser.

Zachary Kam, also known as the four-chords guy, tied third with Joel Daniels, who presented, by far, my favorite act. He went by the stage-name, "Marine Sandpiper," a bag pipe player who wore a desert MARPAT kilt with boots and played Lady Gaga's "Bad Romance."

I didn't place or win an MCX gift card but I was still really glad I did it. All-in-all the experience introduced me to a few new and like-minded people on base and gave the Marines an opportunity to show

their individuality in a world of uniformity.



[Kurkimilis] Lauren Kurkimilis sings and plays "Bottle It Up" by Sara Barielles on the piano at Marines Got Talent Sept. 7. The talent show was held by the Single Marine Program and Marine Corps Community Services.

[Daniels] Joel Daniels plays "Bad Romance" by Lady Ga Ga on the bag pipes at Marines Got Talent Sept. 7.

[Linares] Jose Linares performs a break-dance routine at Marines Got Talent Sept. 7.

[Burch] Andrew Burch sings and plays an original song on the guitar at Marines Got Talent Sept. 7. Burch took first place, winning a \$200 Marine Corps Exchange gift card.

Photos by Sgt. Heather Golden



Check out a video of full performances next week at <http://www.youtube.com/user/CombatCenterPAO>.



Liberty Call

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

Monday: Margarita Mondays
Thursday: Thirsty Thursday, 7 - 10 p.m.
Friday: Karaoke Night 6 - 9 p.m.

Hashmarks 29 SNCO Club

Friday: Steak night, 4:30 - 8 p.m.
Monday-Friday: All-hands lunch
Monday: All-hands steak night, 4:30 - 8 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

Anne of Green Gables

When: Now - Sept. 22
Where: Theatre 29
73637 Sullivan Rd., Twentynine Palms, Calif.
For tickets and information call 316-4151 or visit <http://www.theatre29.org>

Wild Roses with Marc Orell

Former Dropkick Murphy's band-member performs
When: 8 p.m., Friday, Sept. 21
Where: Pappy and Harriet's Pioneertown Palace
53688 Pioneertown Rd., Pioneertown, Calif.
For more information, call 365-5956.

Free Line Dance Lessons

Learn to dance to traditional country music
When: 5 - 9 p.m., every Sunday
Where: Willie Boy's Saloon and Dance Hall
50048 29 Palms Hwy, Morongo Valley, Calif.
For more information, call 363-3343.

Lower Desert

Olivia Newton John

Timeless singer performs
When: 8 p.m., Saturday, Sept. 15
Where: Fantasy Springs Resort Casino
84-245 Indio Springs Parkway, Indio
For more information call 800-827-2946 or visit <http://www.fantasyspringsresort.com>.

Joe Walsh

Former Eagles guitarist performs
When: 8 p.m., Saturday Sept. 29
Where: Spotlight 29 Casino Resort
46-200 Harrison Place, Coachella, Calif.
For more information call 866-377-6829 or visit <http://www.spotlight29.com>.

Ian Anderson

Professional flutist plays
When: 9 p.m., Friday, Oct. 19
Where: Agua Caliente Casino Resort Spa
32-250 Bob Hope Dr., Rancho Mirage
For more information call 888-999-1995 or visit <http://hotwatercasino.com>.

Sinbad/Zapp

Comedian performs
When: 8:00 p.m., Friday, Nov. 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, September 14

6 p.m. - Moonrise Kingdom, Rated PG-13
9 p.m. - Seeking a Friend for the End of the World, Rated R
Midnight - Batman: Dark Knight Rises, Rated PG-13

Saturday, September 15

10:30 a.m. - Free Matinee Tangled, Rated PG
12:30 p.m. - Ice Age 4, Rated PG
3 p.m. - Ice Age 4 3D, Rated PG
6 p.m. - Madea's Witness Protection, Rated PG-13
9 p.m. - Savages, Rated R
Midnight - The Watch, Rated R

Sunday, September 16

12:30 p.m. - Diary of a Wimpy Kid: Dog Days, Rated PG
3 p.m. - Step Up Revolution, Rated PG-13
6 p.m. - Ice Age 4 3D, Rated PG
9 p.m. - The Watch, Rated R

Monday, September 17

7 p.m. - Savages, Rated R

Tuesday, September 18

7 p.m. - Ice Age 4 3D, Rated PG

Wednesday, September 19

5:30 p.m. - Diary of a Wimpy Kid: Dog Days, Rated PG

8:30 p.m. - Batman: Dark Knight Rises, Rated PG-13

Thursday, September 20

5:30 p.m. - Madea's Witness Protection, Rated PG-13

8:30 p.m. - Seeking a Friend for the End of the World, Rated R

Stallone, other action icons shoot-'em-up in gung-ho guy-fest



COURTESY PHOTO

Part of the movie's high-caliber charm is that despite its ridiculously high kill count, there's a vein of humor running throughout the script (Stallone was one of the writers). There are almost as many quips zipping around as bullets.

NEIL POND

"The Expendables 2"

Starring Sylvester Stallone, Bruce Willis & Jean-Claude Van Damme
Directed by Simon West
Rated R, 103 min.

Do you think movies are too mushy? Does romantic comedy make your eyes roll? Have you ever wondered if a motorcycle could be revved off a rooftop to blow up a helicopter, how effective a kitchen skillet would be in hand-to-hand combat, or what testosterone looks like when it's expanded to critical movie mass?

If those questions have ever run through your head, well, friend, here's your flick, a galloping, gung-ho guyfest about a group of muscle-bound mercenaries on a mission of international importance requiring nerves of steel, fists of iron, biceps the size of bowling balls and seemingly bottomless buckets of bullets.

Rather than simply continuing the explosively successful trajectory of its 2010 succes-

or, "The Expendables 2" further pumps the pulpy parade of vintage '80s and '90s action all-stars. In addition to Sylvester Stallone, returning to center stage from the first movie, there are also appearances by Chuck Norris, Bruce Willis, Dolph Lundgren, Jean-Claude Van Damme, kung-fu master Jet Li and even "The Terminator" himself, Arnold Schwarzenegger—who gets to say his iconic "I'll be back" line not just once, but twice.

Rounding out the beefcake are British actor Jason Statham (also back from the first "Expendables") and former Ultimate Fighting Championship bruiser Randy Couture. Liam Hemsworth (the younger brother of Chris, who played Thor in "The Avengers") and Chinese actress Yu Nan are newly aboard as the group's latest recruits.

Sent on what should be an easy-in, easy-out mission to retrieve some highly sensitive data from an airplane crash before it falls into the wrong hands, the Expendables are met with a deadly ambush, which adds a new item to their to-do list: revenge.

They'll get to that, of

course, right after saving the world.

It's all a bunch of hyper-violent, over-the-top cheese, just like the hyper-violent, over-the-top slabs of rock-'em, sock-'em, blast-'em baloney Stallone, Norris, Van Damme et al used to churn out back in the glory days of "Rambo," "Lone Wolf McQuade" and "Delta Force."

Those movies might not have been masterpieces, but that did quite well at the box office, thank you very much. And "The Expendables 2" has proven to be no slouch at the multiplex, either, which suggests that a lot of folks have a soft spot for seeing aging action stars back in action, or enjoy watching things blow up, or like it when really bad guys get sliced, diced, pummeled, pulverized or otherwise dispatched by really good guys.

It's worth nothing that the credits list close to 100 stuntmen; this is a VERY active action movie. Bodies fly through the air like circus acrobats, plummet from buildings, fall, sprawl and splatter. It's a ballet of highly coordinated, operatically

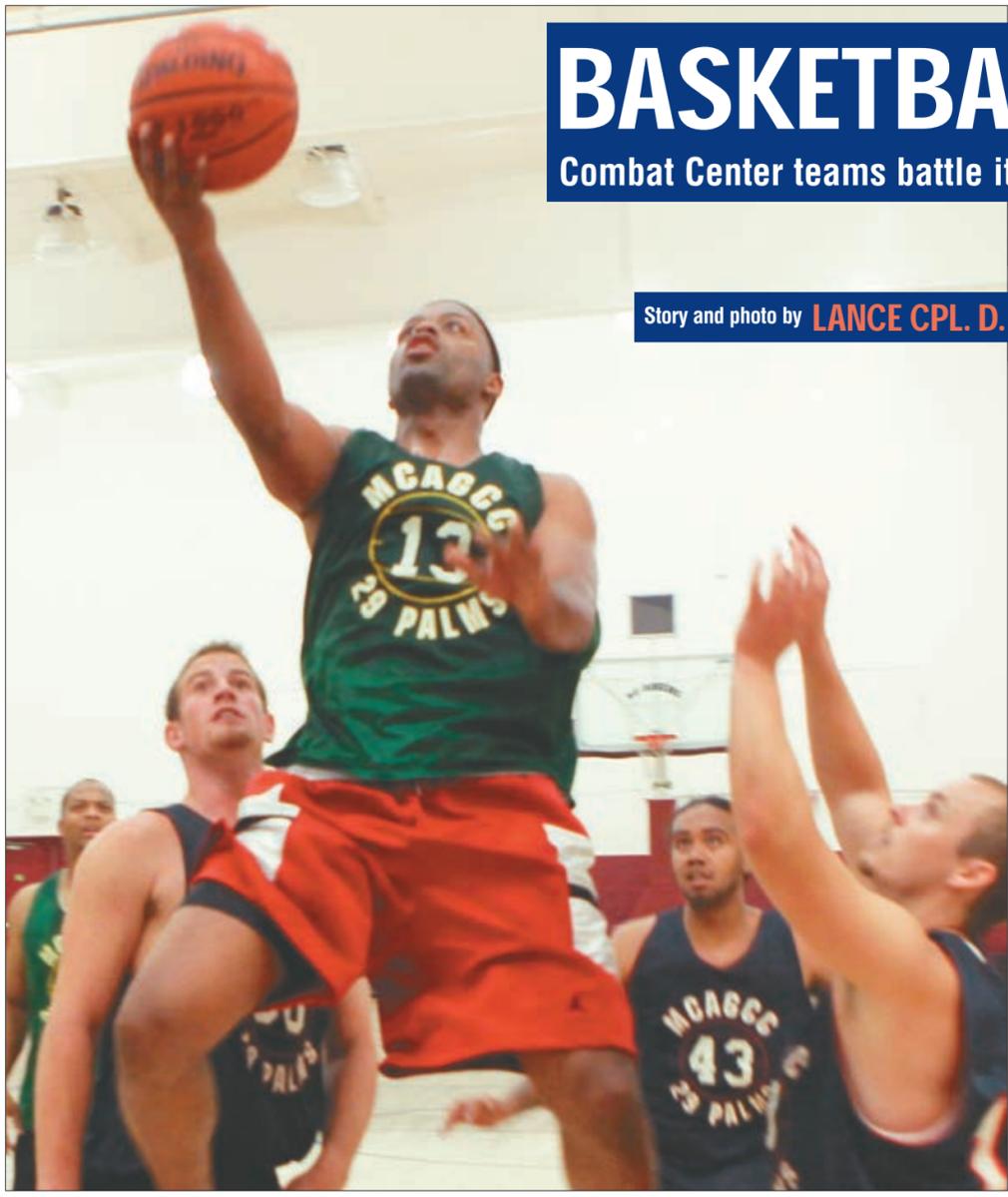
orchestrated, shoot-'em-up mayhem.

Part of the movie's high-caliber charm is that despite its ridiculously high kill count, there's a vein of humor running throughout the script (Stallone was one of the writers). There are almost as many quips zipping around as bullets.

And everybody seems to know they're making a movie that harkens back to the movies they used make years ago. All the big-name main actors play characters that are, like the actors playing them, well aware they're not as young as they used to be.

At one point toward the end, Stallone's team leader eyes a battered airplane from another era, one that's obviously seen better days and is clearly in need of repair. "That thing belongs in a museum," he says. Schwarzenegger gets to deliver the punch line. "We all do," he says.

Maybe someday. But for now, "Expendables 2" is a demonstration of the action-movie mojo that this group of slightly rusty cinema commandos can still muster when duty calls.



BASKETBALL SLAM

Combat Center teams battle it out in tournament

Story and photo by **LANCE CPL. D. J. WU**

The month-long Basketball Slam Tournament came to a close on Sept. 6, when Too Tight beat Old School 76 - 71 at the West Gym and Fitness Center.

game. They got too comfortable with their lead and Old School slipped back in to make it a close game.

"We made the game closer than they should have been," White said. "It shouldn't of been that close."

The game was neck and neck by half time. Old School and Too Tight traded leads in the second half. They both wanted to win and neither team gave up.

Too Tight's win solidifies them as a winning team in basketball. They now hold the championship title for the intramural league and the slam tournament.

"I'm ecstatic about winning the tournament," White said.

"There's no better feeling than winning. All the credit goes to the players. All I can do is give them direction and then they have to execute."

- Samuel White

"We didn't play as hard as we should of," said Samuel White, coach of Too Tight. "Half the time I think we played to the level of our competition. But when we needed to score and when we needed to win, we did."

Too Tight went out to an early lead in the beginning stages of the first half of the

"There's no better feeling than winning. All the credit goes to the players. All I can do is give them direction and then they have to execute."

The teams were 2 of 16 who played in the month-long tournament. They made their way through a round-robin contest and went into the tournament bracket as the top two teams.

Old School's Franco Robinson drives the ball to the hoop during the Basketball Slam Tournament Sept. 6. Too Tight beat Old School 76 - 71 during the final game of the month-long tournament.

