



CHANGE FOR FEMALES

Female Marines prep for PFT change, pull-ups coming

Lance Cpl. Ali Azimi
 Combat Correspondent

Brace yourselves, the physical fitness test season is approaching. After a well-deserved rest during the holidays, Marines return to base with new resolve and begin preparing for the PFT. However, the new year brings change for female Marines with the imple-

training coordinator, West Gym and Fitness Center. Doing multiple sets of pull-ups with a maximum number of repetitions on each set will help build the necessary muscle groups that Marines use when doing the pull-up.

Take a day of rest to help heal the muscles and hit the bars again. Try to beat your personal record. Doing negatives, where



Sgt. Stephany Rector, administrative specialist, installation personnel administration center, Headquarters Company, Headquarters and Service Battalion, completes pull-ups outside of her office on Monday. Rector took 15 minutes to leave her desk, drop her blouse and knock out some pull-ups.

mentation of ALMAR 046/12.

In 2013, female Marines will be given the option of replacing their flexed arm hang with pull-ups for the PFT. The new year is only a transitional period to 2014, when the pull-ups will become a mandatory part of the PFT for all Marines.

This change in the PFT also means a change in how we train and the first step is getting out there and doing it.

The best exercise to raise your pull-up proficiency is pull-ups, said Eric Hollis, high intensity tactical

you start at the top and lower yourself down as slowly as possible, can add additional strengthening in your training program.

If Marines are having difficulty doing one, try assisted pull-ups. Marines can use rubber bands or partner together to help push each other as they complete regular or negative pull-ups.

The standard set for female Marines is a minimum of three pull-ups to pass the PFT and a maximum of eight to score 100 points on the event.



1/4 begins annual Combat Center exercise

Lance Cpl. D. J. Wu
 Combat Correspondent

As Exercise Steel Knight 2013 progresses, members of 1st Battalion, 4th Marine Regiment were at the Combat Center's Range 410 practicing their platoon-sized combined arms live-fire maneuvers Nov. 30.

The exercise is a starting point for the battalion's training while they're at the Combat Center for Steel Knight. 1st Bn., 4th Marines is working alongside the other battalions in their regiment under the umbrella of Regimental Combat Team 5 for the division-level exercise.

Company B of 1/4 conducted the platoon-sized attack as the first step in getting ready for the division level final exercise and getting ready for future deployments.

"This is practice for the bigger picture," said Cpl. Eric Flores, squad leader, Company B, 1/4. "It helps build confidence and helps me become a better leader."

Flores was just one of the battalion's many Marines that are using this training to improve small unit leaders. This stage of the exercise lets platoons, squads and teams of Marines work out their deficiencies and improve cohesion to work better as a team in the long run.

"Keeping my guys alive and completing the mission are my biggest concerns," Flores said. "Ultimately the biggest thing I want to take from this training is the confidence that my Marines have in me. I want to be that go-to leader."

The beginning stages of SK13 include individual units conducting training with the Tactical Training Exercise Control Group. TTECG puts units participating in SK13 through elements of the forthcoming Integrated Training Exercise or ITX, TTECG's new pre-deployment training program.

"This is actually a new version of Steel Knight," said 1st Lt. Jake Crockett, executive officer, Co. B,

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[Above] 1st Lt. Jake Crockett, executive officer, Company B, 1st Battalion, 4th Marine Regiment, waits at Range 410 before Co. B begins its platoon-sized combined arms live fire-maneuver exercise during Exercise Steel Knight 2013.

[Left] Marines with Co. B, 1/4, watch a platoon sized attack from Machine Gun Hill Nov. 30 during Exercise Steel Knight 2013.

7th Marines in Afghanistan

District officials, PRT members discuss improvements in Musa Qal'ah

Cpl. Mark Garcia
 Regional Command Southwest

MUSA QAL'AH DISTRICT CENTER, Afghanistan — Members of the Helmand Provincial Reconstruction Team met with local Government of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan officials and local village elders in an effort to assess governance, security and stability in Musa Qal'ah, Afghanistan, Nov. 29.

Because of the work done by Marines, Afghan National Security Forces, the PRT and local government officials, the future of Musa Qal'ah looks promising.

"We were able to talk about the thriving bazaar," Duncan said. "There are 900 shops in it, and people from all across northern Helmand come to it to buy goods. The economy in Musa Qal'ah is thriving at the moment. People can now move with relative freedom from the district to Lashkar Gah, the provincial capital. They use the bazaar and the Taliban is gone from the district center."

The meeting also marked another milestone by allowing village elders the opportunity to talk with GIROA officials.

"The PRT came down to talk to the acting district governor because he is able to talk to the elders in Musa Qal'ah, and that's who we spoke with today," Lund said. "That's the first time that (village elders) came and talked to GIROA officials. We're trying to get the elders to bring their face forward and support GIROA. Once the village elders put some people in key positions, hopefully they can get additional money to the area

and increase development, increase security and hopefully find an alternate crop to poppy."

During recent years, Musa Qal'ah has undergone drastic changes in an effort to better the lives of the Afghan people living here. The meeting was designed to continue the improvements in the area and to help build upon

them as coalition forces withdraw and authority and responsibilities shift to the Afghans.

"Our mission is to facilitate transition to the Afghan government, and it's important in our role to support them, to see how they're doing, and where

See **ORDER** page A4



2/7 Fox Company pushes forward in Afghanistan

Cpl. Mark Garcia
 Regional Command Southwest

MUSA QAL'AH DISTRICT CENTER, Afghanistan — Marines with Fox Company, 2nd Battalion, 7th Marine Regiment, Regimental Combat Team 7, are currently deployed to Afghanistan in support of Operation Enduring Freedom. For them, it is an opportunity to build upon and continue the illustrious past and traditions associated with their company.

"There's been a lot of Marines throughout history, but there's only been a select few who have had the opportunity to say they were a part of Fox Company, 2nd Battalion, 7th Marines," said 1st Sgt. Christopher Griffith, company first sergeant and Parkersburg, W. Va., native. "To me, that's why it's so important for the men in this company to have such a fond respect for those who came before us."

For Capt. Thomas Harris, company commander, the feeling of being a part of Fox is humbling.

"The battalion, as well as the company, has a pretty impressive

See **LEGACY** page A4

FOODFIGHT

Littleton Chow Hall competes for best hall in the Corps

Lance Cpl. Ali Azimi
 Combat Correspondent

Littleton Chow Hall has won the Best of the West competition the past two years under the current general manager, Eric Cameron. This year's win nominated them for the Maj. Gen. W.P.T Hill Award. The chow hall previously won the award in 2010 and although they didn't win the 2011 award, they have high hopes to bring home the trophy in this year's competition.

The Best of the West is a regional chow hall competition that recognizes the best Marine Corps chow hall in the western region. Littleton Chow Hall was nominated for the Best of the West by Maj. Richard Martinez, director of food services at the Combat Center. Their win year after year is a testament to the consistently great food and service provided by the staff.

"Just being nominated is a huge honor in itself," said Cameron. "Our crew does a great job so it is rewarding they get this opportunity to get recognized."

Three evaluators from Headquarters Marine Corps have traveled across America and Japan since Oct. 20 to judge every nominated chow hall for this year's winner.

The evaluators arrived at the Combat Center Nov. 19 to inspect Littleton Chow Hall on their second to last stop before the end of the competition.

Their evaluation began from their first steps into the establishment as they assessed how they were treated upon walking in.

"Starting off, we look at how we are received, the attitude of the personnel," said Maj. Richard Kohler, director, Marine Corps Food Service and Assistance Program, Headquarters Marine Corps. "They don't know who I am yet. Are they happy to be here, are they not? Are they happy to see us?"

As the evaluation proceeded, the inspectors split up looking for different key points within the chow hall, ranging from management to food and service.

The meals being served on the day of the evaluation gave Marines a variety of delicious options including, BBQ ribs, macaroni and cheese, submarine sandwiches and the always popular cheese burgers and french-fries. The tantalizing aroma of the food mixed together in

See **CHOW** page A5

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See answers on page A4

ANYONE FOR TENNIS?

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ACROSS

- 1. Croc's kin
- 6. "Just the facts, ___"
- 10. Belgrade native
- 14. Where you live
- 15. ___ breve (cut time)
- 16. Eggs order
- 17. Correspondence sometimes marked "SWAK"
- 19. Handle, so to speak
- 20. Choir voice
- 21. Quinn of "Reckless"
- 22. Common tip amount
- 27. "Yes __, Bob!"
- 28. They try harder
- 29. Affixed one's John Hancock to
- 30. Bar fare
- 32. Ducked the seeker
- 35. Owner's certificate
- 36. Basilica areas
- 37. Declare untrue
- 38. Byrnes of old TV
- 39. Long green
- 40. Sacagawea was one
- 41. Sudden burst
- 42. Hoe wielder

- 43. Common rifle round, familiarly
- 48. Spine-tingling
- 49. Thumbs-downs
- 50. Send sprawling
- 51. Quick snooze
- 57. Baseball's "Charlie Hustle"
- 58. Touched down
- 59. Upper crust
- 60. Curbside-stand drinks
- 61. Tune from Shankar
- 62. Keyed up

DOWN

- 1. Eight pts.
- 2. Blood-typing letters
- 3. "Mazel ___!"
- 4. Laudatory lines
- 5. In the family
- 6. Photo finish
- 7. Illinois city
- 8. Drink on draft
- 9. Bang up
- 10. Onetime Seattle hoopsters, for short
- 11. Give the slip to
- 12. Staff anew
- 13. Sportscaster Musburger
- 18. Gen. Robert ___
- 21. Like the Gobi
- 22. Punished for littering, maybe
- 23. Teed off
- 24. Ricky's landlord
- 25. CBS exec William
- 26. Spacewalks, in NASA lingo
- 27. "Us" or "them"
- 30. ___ Domingo
- 31. Forum greeting

- 32. Johanna Spyri heroine
- 33. The Dow, e.g.
- 34. Henna user
- 36. Like a buttinsky
- 37. Cost of belonging
- 39. Remote control button
- 40. Is caught in the rain, say
- 41. Acts the bellyacher
- 42. Fare for Muffet
- 43. Penta minus one
- 44. Judean king
- 45. Maya Angelou's "Still ___"
- 46. Disassemble, aboard ship
- 47. Must, informally
- 51. Wide partner
- 52. Bribery suffix
- 53. Suffix with project
- 54. "The House of Incest" writer
- 55. Horsehead-shaped pcs.
- 56. "Told you so!"

This week in
Combat Center History



Reprinted from the Observation Post dated Dec. 6, 1991 Vol. 36 Issue No. 45

Volcano shuts down nation's oldest overseas military post

SSGT. SCOT JENKINS
Observation Post

The United States formally turned over its oldest and once-largest overseas base to the Republic of the Philippines Nov. 26. The military ended its nearly century-old occupancy at Clark Air Base because it was buried by volcanic ash from Mt. Pinatubo earlier this year.

Filipino base employees wept and embraced departing Americans at the end of a two-hour ceremony where the American flag was lowered for a final time. About 15,000 Filipinos lost their jobs because of the closing.

"The long-standing U.S. military presence is ending," said MGen. William Studer, 13th Air Force commander.

The 250 remaining Americans left for Subic Bay naval base, 30 miles away, where they were to depart for new assignments. In recent years, Clark was home to about 20,000 troops, military dependents and Defense Department civilians.

"As we witnessed the lowering of the American flag for the last time at Clark Air Base, I, like all of you, am struck by the drama of the occasion," said Frank Wisner, U.S. Ambassador to the Philippines.

The departure of the Americans at the huge military complex, comes less than six months after Pinatubo's eruption which covered the base, located eight miles northeast of the mountain.

The tons of volcanic ash and debris helped American officials to decide not to seek an extension of the base lease which expired last September.

"In one sense, the mountain in its explosive force changed history," Wisner said. "In a deeper sense it did not. Nothing, not even the force of the most destructive volcano to strike this earth in decades, can alter the history of the achievements of Americans and Filipino men and women who lived and worked and sometimes died on these grounds over the past 89 years."

The Philippine government has yet to decide what they will do with the complex, but Philippine Defense Secretary Renato de Villa indicated during prepared remarks at the ceremony, that he was confident about the facility's future.

3/7 heads to Panama for jungle experience

CPL. LISA PRATHER
1st Marine Division

Marines from 3rd Bn., 7th Marines departed the Combat Center last Friday for jungle warfare training at the Jungle Operations Training Center, Ft. Sherman, Panama.

Jungle warfare training is part of the standard training cycle in the Marine Corps, but space is limited and the 1st Marine Division is allocated only one slot per year per battalion, according to Sgt. Maj. James Gray, battalion sergeant major.

However, an extra space opened up this year and the battalion seized the opportunity to refresh themselves with this training.

"Most of the Marines in this unit are pretty experienced in jungle warfare," said Gray. "Before the war in the Persian Gulf, many of them were in the Philippines. But this is always valuable training to have and we took the opportunity when it came up."

The battalion will be in Panama approximately three weeks. The primary focus of training will be on fire

team and squad level operations, but will eventually build up to incorporate company- and battalion-level operations.

Training will include survival tactics and operations in a jungle environment -- basic jungle training to improve combat readiness, according to Gray.

While in Panama, the battalion expects to receive visits from MGen. James Myatt, 1st Marine Division commanding general, and LtGen. Henry C. Stackpole III, deputy chief of staff for Plans, Policies and Operations, Headquarters Marine Corps.

"Training in Panama tends to be very high visibility for units," Gray said. "Everybody tends to be watching you."

Because of the area's volatile nature, units training in Panama are automatically put on a contingency and may be called upon to participate in any international emergency situation that arises.



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Find it at <http://www.youtube.com/user/CombatCenterPAO>.

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- 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.

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- Village Pub, 266 S. Palm Canyon Dr.

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WHAT I'VE LEARNED

THE SERVICEMAN

Charles Dougwillo, Sr.

Supervisor Recreational Specialist
69, Lynn, Mass.

INTERVIEWED AND PHOTOGRAPHED BY

LANCE CPL. D. J. WU

November 26, 2012

> **You know I can't stand** the Red Sox. I can't stand the Patriots. I can't stand the Celtics and I can't stand the Bruins. But I'm a die-hard Boston sports fan.

> **In high school I tried**

to get a couple of jobs at banks and other institutions. I guess my math skills weren't so great. I got disappointed so...I joined the Navy.

> **I spent 20 years** and six months in the service.

> **Just a little background**, Lynn and Boston in the 1960's, we had all types of races and cultures in my high school class and consisted of over 1,000 students.

> **We didn't think a second of** a person's race, religion, creed or anything else. We were just a modern town.

> **So, I joined the Navy** and went to the Great Lakes and of course I had to go to the Great Lakes during the winter, which was nice.

> **When we grabbed** our t-shirts from the wash racks, icicles would be forming.

> **After boot camp I** was sent to Milton, Fla., which was a training base for twin propellers for Navy pilots.

> **When I got to the South** I went to a store, it was a Woolworth's or something and I went up to the counter. I sat there and I wondered why I wasn't being served. So finally I get somebody's attention and they say to me, "You're sitting in the colored section, you need to be in the white section to get service."

> **That was my first taste** of racial discrimination or whatever you call it. Me coming from the North, we didn't think anything of it. It was quite a bit of shock.

> **I joined the Navy for** the job security. I grew up in the Navy. As a 17-year-old, the Navy became my family.

> **I was on the only ship that** sunk during peacetime, the USS Force. But I was on emergency leave at the time. That was in 1973.

> **When I got out of the Navy**, I worked with the Air Force for about a year.

> **After that, I transferred** to Fort Lewis to the Army and started my GS career. I was a GS-2 in Fort Lewis as a finance clerk.

> **I grew up in the service** and was used to the life. All services, regardless of what branches they are, are their own families.

> **I went to Germany** as a recreational assistant.

> **In Bosnia, we got dressed** in the cold, went to the shower tent, undress in the cold, shower in the cold, dry in the cold and then got dressed again.

> **They had MREs, but** I didn't eat any of them. I lived on soup and bread at the time. I didn't like MREs.

> **As a MWR specialist we were** working 16-18 hours a day. We provided services from the library to the fitness centers and games.

> **I built this one place** in Croatia called the "Glass House." It was an old Croatian restaurant at one point and an old tank factory. We took over and put barbed wire all along the area. It was a safe country, but we still have to have barbed wire around it.

> **Being a civilian and working** for the troops, and that's what it is. Without the troops I don't have a job.

> **We work for them.** In the Army I saw more civilian recognition. For example, all these coins I have are either from 3 Stars, 2 Stars, 1 Stars and sergeants major and most of them are from the Army.

> **I've gotten boxes and boxes** of certificates and letters of appreciation.

> **The branch that still** has the best discipline and that really hinges on its tradition is the Marine Corps.

> **I guess I became a giver.** You really don't get rich in this field. It's not for the money.

> **I want to do as much** as I can to keep providing the programs the Marines and sailors expect of us. I have to keep working, if I don't, o my body would just freeze up.

> **Just to see the** smiles on their faces makes me happy.



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

BIRTH ANNOUNCEMENTS

SOPHIA ANN JONES

Born on: Nov. 9, 2012
Born to: Christopher and Nicole Jones

HENRY RANDAL COE

Born on: Nov. 20, 2012
Born to: Zachary and Linden Babcock Coe

ARIA CHRISTINE ARCE

Born on: Nov. 14, 2012
Born to: Raul Arce III and Staphany A. Arce

LEILA MYLINH PADEN

Born on: Nov. 16, 2012
Born to: Christopher and Ngoc Sa Paden

LEILAH ALLESSANDRA OTERO

Born on: Nov. 13, 2012
Born to: Richard and Yoana Otero

ORDER, from A1

we might be able to help provide advice to the Afghan government on how to better deliver services to the people,” said Matt Duncan, a political officer with the Helmand PRT, and Rochester, N.Y., native. “Musa Qal’ah is light-years ahead of where it was two years ago, and that’s thanks to the work done by the Marines and the Afghan National Security Forces, as well as the Afghan government.”

Staff Sgt. Ben Lund, civil affairs with Fox Company, 2nd Battalion, 7th Marine Regiment, Regimental Combat Team 7, noted the increased security presence in the area and how the ANSF continue to provide stability to the region.

“Security-wise, Musa Qal’ah has probably come twofold. Its security has progressed 100 percent,” said Lund, from Phoenix. “The (Afghan Uniform Police) and (Afghan National Army) operate by themselves with little to no assistance. There are fewer (improvised explosive devices) and the ANA and AUP are finding those IEDS and neutralizing them. They’ll call Marine Corps (explosive ordnance disposal) every once in a while if they need to get rid of something, but for the most part, they handle it on their own. They’re patrolling by themselves, they’re arresting people, and they had a huge drug bust just last week and processed everything and took it to Lashkar Gah by themselves.”

Until coalition forces completely withdraw from Afghanistan, they will ensure development continues in areas such as Musa Qal’ah.

“Musa Qal’ah, from where it was just a few years ago, is a good story,” Duncan said. “You used to not be able to walk out of the (forward operating base) without getting shot at, and nobody would be in the bazaar. The bazaar is thriving now, kids are going to school and a lot of progress has been made here.”



PHOTOS BY CPL. MARK GARCIA

[Above] Village elders, Marines and local Government of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan officials enjoy a traditional Afghan meal after discussing governance, security and stability in the area, Nov. 29.



[Left] Village elders enjoy a traditional Afghan meal after meeting with local GIROA officials to assess governance, security and stability in the area, Nov. 29.



CPL. MARK GARCIA

Sgt. William Whetzel, left, squad leader, Fox Company, 2nd Battalion, 7th Marine Regiment, Regimental Combat Team 7, holds the company’s standard guidon while Sgt. Erik Frederiksen, squad leader, Fox Co., holds the guidon paying tribute to the Marines who came before them.

LEGACY, from A1

battle history,” said Harris, from Ft. Madison, Iowa. “They’ve always done great things in hard places. So it’s eye-opening to have to be responsible for not only the Marines and sailors of the current Fox Company, but also the heritage and legacy of past Fox Company Marines.”

In the Korean War, Fox Co. would cement its legacy in the history books with one battle in particular, The Battle of Fox Hill. The intense fight lasted from Nov. 28 through Dec. 2, 1950. Because of the cold and frigid temperatures, Marines’ weapons would malfunction and grenades would freeze, so the Marines had to rely on hand to hand combat.

During the battle, 250 men with Fox Co. endured -30 degrees Fahrenheit temperatures, held their position against an entire regiment of enemy forces and eventually pushed them back. When the final shots of the battle were fired, only 85 men in the company were able to walk off the battlefield on their feet, the rest were wounded, captured or killed in action.

During The Battle of Fox Hill, two men would be awarded the Medal of Honor. The company’s sacrifices would also be recognized in the book “The Last Stand of Fox Company,” a book that Griffith refers to as his Bible. The Marines of Fox Co. would again add to their legacy during the Korean War with three more Marines receiving the Medal of Honor.

To pay tribute to the Marines who have come before them, Griffith keeps a company guidon created by a former Fox Co. Marine and Korean War veteran in his office. Displayed on the guidon are six informative plates honoring former Fox Co. Marines. Five plates are for Marines who went above and beyond the call of duty and received the Medal of Honor during the Korean War from 1950 to 1953, and one for the creator of the guidon. For the past two

years, the guidon has gone with the company wherever they have gone. From Calif., Okinawa, Australia, the Philippines and Afghanistan, the guidon has been with them the entire way.

“The guidon is more than a piece of material, it’s a symbol. It’s a symbol of unit pride,” Griffith said. “It’s the pinnacle of my career to be able to be the first sergeant for Fox Co., 2/7.”

Harris reinforced what Griffith said and noted the sacrifice made by the Marines whose names are displayed on the guidon.

“The guidon adds even more to the weight of the responsibility of this company,” Harris said. “It’s a solemn reminder for all of us of the good deeds done by good Marines.”

For junior Marines in Fox Co., the feeling of pride and honor is mutual.

“It’s an honor to be a part of Fox Co. honestly,” said Lance Cpl. Miguel Davila, machine gunner with the company. “The history and traditions go back pretty far, and then to also be a part of 1st Marine Division and what they’ve done throughout history is pretty cool. I get pride out of being part of Fox, 2/7.”

On their current deployment, the company has taken a step back and allowed the Afghan National Security Forces operating in the area the chance to reclaim their country’s security. It is a mission that will only help solidify the company’s legacy.

“We have a unique mission,” Harris said. “It’s absolutely different than the mission that battalions have faced in previous engagements throughout history. This will still add to our legacy. We still have the opportunity to go forward and execute the mission that was asked of us by the nation.”

While deployed, Fox Co. will continue to maintain security and allow the ANSF to operate independently ensuring they receive any assistance that might be required.

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[Right] Maj. Richard Kohler, director, Marine Corps Food Service and Assistance Program, Headquarters Marine Corps, inspects how Littleton Chow Hall staff members prepare their food during his evaluation for the Maj. Gen. W.P.T. Hill Award.

[Bottom, right] Kohler sits with chow hall patrons for their opinion of the food and service year-round.

[Bottom, left] Kohler speaks with chow hall staff members about food preparation and their day-to-day routine.



PHOTOS BY LANCE CPL. ALI AZIMI



CHOW, from A1

the air as Marines chowed down and the judges made their rounds.

The evaluators made their way through the chow hall observing everything down to their minute details, occasionally sitting down with Marines to get their opinions on the food and service year round.

“When that Marine sits down and puts that plate in front of them, would they pay for that? Would they go out into town and pay for that food? If the answer is no, something is wrong,” said Kohler. “We want Marines to come here. We want them to eat the food here and if they’re not, we want feedback of why they’re not.”

The inspection became more technical in the back of the chow hall, where all the food is cooked and prepared. They look at the labeling and storage of the food as well as supervision of the staff and the gear used in the preparation of the food.

“You make the smallest mistake, you’re chances of winning become very small,” said Kohler. “You are competing at the highest level. It could be the smallest thing. They really have to be at the top of their game.”

The winner of the award is scheduled to be announced in late December or early January. Three individuals from the winning chow hall’s command will travel to Chicago in May to receive the 3-foot-tall traveling trophy. The name of the winner will also be engraved on the trophy and displayed in their chow hall until the following year where it will be up for grabs once again.

KNIGHT, from A1

1/4. “We’re the first ones to go through this version of Steel Knight, where TTECG is validating what they’re calling ITX, which is the new Enhanced Mojave Viper.”

The Marines are going step by step in the exercise. They start with platoon sized attacks and work their way up to company attacks before integrating with mechanized assets.

“It’s a building block approach,” Crockett said. “We want to set them up for success by starting at the platoon level.”

Marines and sailors began the attack at Range 410 with combined arms to make their way through the range’s trench system. Their advance to the enemy position was aided by employing maneuver with fire, breach-

ing procedures and rocket assets.

“All of those things induce some sort of frictions with the Marines,” Crockett said. “Those are major takeaways from this exercise, from rifleman all the way up to platoon commander.”

The Marines of 1/4 will be joining the other battalions of the regiment in later segments of the exercise.

“It’s unique in the fact that the whole regiment hasn’t operated under the same command since like Bataan,” said Crockett.

SK13 is 1st Marine Division’s largest combined arms live-fire exercise and will continue until Dec. 18.

This is the first year the exercise has been conducted simultaneously at Marine Corps Base Camp Pendleton, Calif., and at the Combat Center.



LANCE CPL. D. J. WU

Machine gunners with Company B, 1st Battalion, 4th Marine Regiment, lay down suppressive fire at Range 410 during a platoon-sized combined arms live fire-maneuver exercise during Exercise Steel Knight 2013. 1/4 is participating in 1st Marine Division’s largest combined arms live fire-maneuver exercise.

By Wes Collins

Shocking EXPERIENCE

The holiday season has arrived, and the time for decorating is in full swing. Most of us trim the tree, hang the lights and hook up our air-filled, oversized Santa, Rudolph or whatever else we have in our arsenal of decorations. Here is the problem; we forget that our old friend electricity powers most — if not all — of our holiday decorations. What we fail to realize is most outlets are generally 15-20 amps, so overloading them is easy.

Overloaded outlets increase the potential for shock or electrocution, so here are some helpful hints to keep you safe this holiday season:

- 1 Inspect all electrical decorations for defects or damage. The smallest fray in an electrical cord can have devastating consequences.
- 2 Ensure all bulbs used for lighting decorations are operational and in place. The empty socket in a string of lights exposes users to the potential of electrical shock.
- 3 Daisy chaining (plugging multiple electrical sources in sequence) can cause electrical connections to overheat, resulting in a fire.

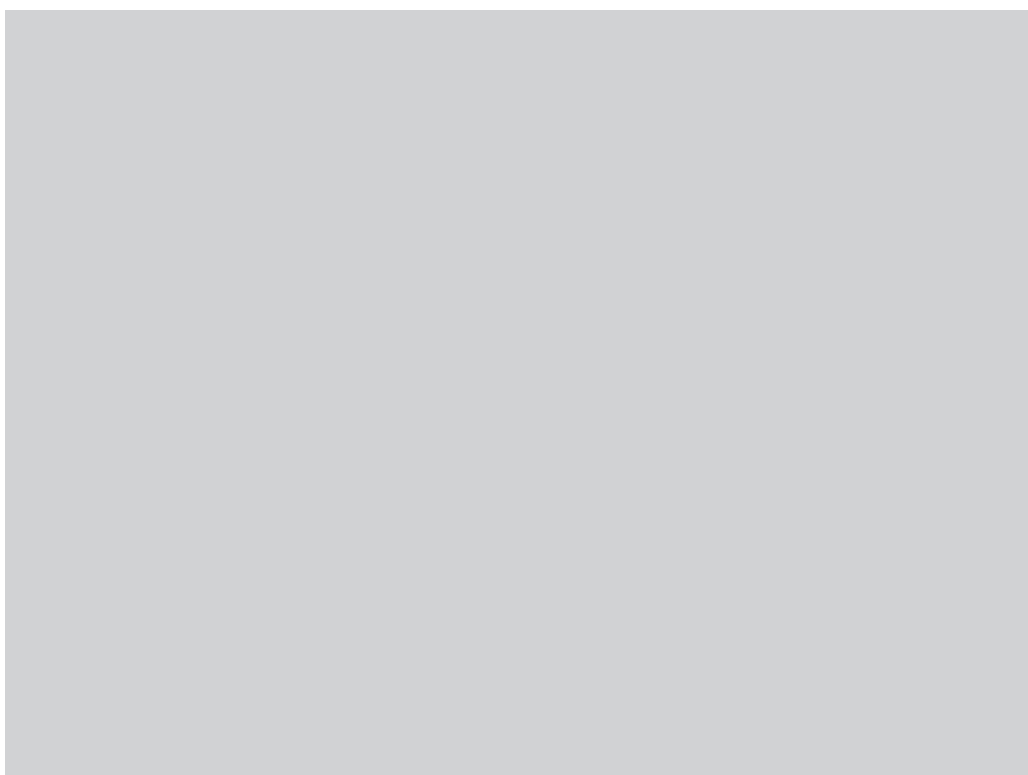
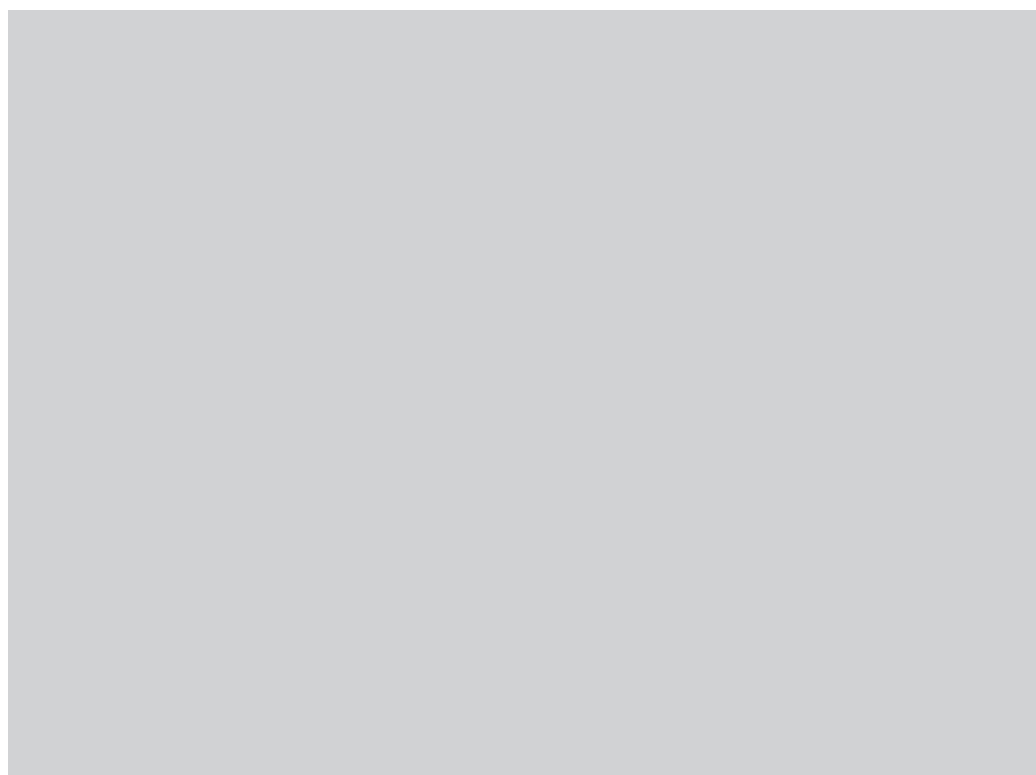
Following the manufacturer's recommendation is the best course of action to alleviate the potential for overload.

One golden rule I live by is to use heavy-duty extension cords designed to carry the intended load. I never use those light-duty cords — you know, the little flat ones sold for as little as \$1.29 at hardware stores. These cords can heat up quickly when they're overloaded and are not good for home decorating.

So, go forth this holiday season and enjoy it without the worries of an electrical fire. Remember, electricity is dangerous and demands respect, so give it the recognition it deserves.

DID YOU KNOW?

Based on data from the National Fire Protection Association and the U.S. Fire Administration, an estimated 240 home fires involving Christmas trees and another 150 involving holiday lights and other decorative lighting occur each year. Together, these fires result in 21 deaths and \$25.2 million in direct property damage. For more information on winter and holiday safety, visit the NFPA website at <http://www.nfpa.org/>. Protect yourself and your loved ones this holiday season.



Visit
the official
MCAGCC facebook page at

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The Combat Center
has its own
YouTube channel. Find it at

<http://www.youtube.com/user/CombatCenterPAO>



The Combat Center has its own
Flickr photo and video streams.
Find them at

<http://www.flickr.com/thecombatcenter>



Petty Officer 2nd Class Michael Haines and his twin brother Sgt. David Haines reunited for an extended period for the first time in five years while deployed to Afghanistan Sept. 12.

Family Reunion

SGT. JOHN JACKSON

Brothers, twins reunite in Afghanistan combat zone

Sgt. John Jackson
Regional Command Southwest

While Sgt. David Haines and Petty Officer 2nd Class Michael Haines do not necessarily compete against one another, the 24-year-old twin brothers often wrangle back and forth as if they were teenagers fighting for a PlayStation controller. Whether, they are trash talking about the other's military branch or arguing about dates of events, the brothers playfully interact like adolescents still living together on a daily basis.

Growing up, the Haines brothers had different interests. Michael ran track, worked and even spent the better part of a year living in Italy with his sister. David spent his free time practicing the piano, playing in a jazz band and taking drama classes at the local college. However, the brothers have always remained close.

The two graduated from Moscow Senior High School in Moscow, Idaho, in June 2006. After spending a few months out of school, David knew he wanted something different.

"I needed a change of pace," David

said. "My brother-in-law was trying to talk me into the Navy, but the Navy didn't really interest me. The Marine recruiter was right next door and totally sold me."

During January 2007, David left Idaho to become a Marine, and his twin brother was thinking about doing the same.

"I always wanted to join," Michael said.

"I had gotten married right out of high school. When we found out that my wife was pregnant, I knew I needed to take care of my family, and I could finally do what I wanted."

For the past five years, Michael and David have shared two duty stations. However, they have not been stationed together at the same time. The brothers have both been assigned to units in Okinawa, Japan, and are both currently assigned to units at Camp Pendleton, Calif.

David, the Afghan National Army

development chief, Afghan National Security Force Development, I Marine Expeditionary Force (Forward), deployed from Camp Pendleton to Afghanistan during February 2012. His brother, who is a hospital corpsman, checked into his current unit, 1st Battalion, 1st Marine Regiment, during April 2012 and

deployed to Afghanistan during the summer of 2012. This is the first time the brothers have deployed to a combat zone and the first time they

have been together in five years, except for a few days during Christmas leave.

"It's pretty interesting," Michael said. "We always kept missing one another at our previous duty stations. It's pretty cool that we are here together though."

Although being deployed in the same area is nice for the brothers, David has found himself on the edge

of his seat the past few months.

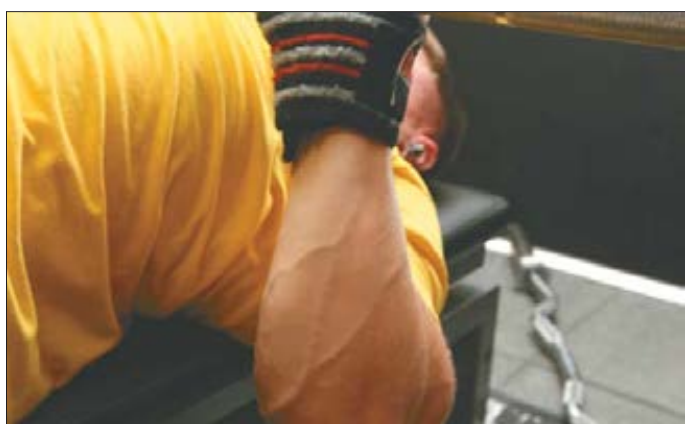
"I was really looking forward to (Michael) getting here, but to be honest it has made me a bit anxious," David said. "Being a part of the MEF and knowing about the kinetics in the area and seeing casualty reports, I was always making sure it wasn't my brother or his unit that was getting hit. It makes it a bit different tracking those things, especially having your twin brother out there."

Michael is wrapping up his approximate 90-day deployment and will be headed back to Camp Pendleton in the coming days. However, until he redeployes, the brothers look forward to spending some time together.

The two enjoy being a part of the U.S. Armed Forces, and both are thinking about pursuing an officer career in their respective branches. With 15 or more years remaining in the military, it may mean many long waits before uniting again, but the brothers will always remain close. The twins will take whatever opportunity they have to talk to one another, even if it is on the other side of the world.

"We kept missing one another at our previous duty stations. It's pretty cool that we are here together though."

— Michael Haines



POWER WITH A PASSION

■ Combat Center Marine breaks records in weight lifting sport

Story and photos by Lance Cpl. Ali Azimi
Combat Correspondent

In his first year competing in powerlifting, Sgt. Cody A. Lefever broke three records in his weight class during the International Power Lifting League World Championship held in Las Vegas Nov. 9. The 26-year-old competitor broke two state records for California and an IPL record for the 148-pound weight class.

Lefever stands at 5 feet 5 inches and weighs approximately 160 pounds before cutting weight for competitions. The Denver native, trains year-round in addition to Marine Corps physical training sessions and his duties as the store manager for Marine Corps Community Services at the Combat Center.

On Nov. 9, he stepped onto the platform in his second competition, his first being at Marine Corps Base Camp Pendleton, Calif., in the beginning of the year. Lefever lifted 407 pounds in the squat and 275 pounds in the bench press.

His chance to break a record came during his 3rd attempt at the deadlift. Any state record must be broken by a competitor's third lift, said Lefever.

Aware of the previous record of 507 pounds, he informed the judges of his record breaking attempt and asked for weight to be added to the bar for a total of 512 pounds.

"I went into it and I knew what lifts I had to do in order to achieve what totals I wanted and what rankings I wanted nationally," Lefever said. "I designed my whole training cycle before that to be able to prepare me to hit these lifts."

Lefever's trained for that moment. He lifted the bar and broke the Calif. dead-lift record, and in combination with his bench press and squat, his total score of 1,196 pounds beat the old state record by just six pounds. He did not stop there.

"I told them I wanted to go for a 4th attempt and I told them I wanted to do 529," Lefever said. "They told me I had like 5-minutes to recover, but I was really in the zone, so I told them just give me two minutes and I'll be ready to rock."

After his two minutes of rest, Lefever made his 4th attempt and lifted the bar. His 529-pound lift increased the 512-pounds he just set and it also broke the IPL record of 523 pounds. His dead-lift score stands as the 4th highest across all the power lifting associations in the United States this year and his total score is ranked in 8th place.

Although Lefever has proven himself to be one of the country's top ranking competitors in his weight class, he was not always the heavy lifter he is today. He has only been lifting for four years, and training competitively for the past two.

Before joining the Marine Corps, Lefever had never done any weight training. He spent his free time mountain biking, skate boarding or BMX riding.

"In high school, I was 110 to 130 pounds. I didn't weight train or anything," Lefever said. "I've always been the kind of person that looks for a new challenge."

It was this drive to challenge himself that led him to the Marine Corps. He joined in 2005 as an infantryman and served as security forces in Washington D.C. It wasn't until his first deployment to Ramadi, Iraq, in 2008 when he started lift-

"It was a new challenge. It was something interesting to me, so I thought I'd go in there and see what I can do."

- Cody A. Lefever

ing weights.

"Before then I never lifted weights, I just did regular Marine Corps physical training," Lefever said. "It was a new challenge. It was something that interested me, so I thought I'd go in there and see what I can do."

"Honestly, for my first two years, I was like the average gym goer," Lefever continued. "I thought I knew what I was doing, but in the grand scheme of things, looking back where I was then as to where I am now and what I know now versus then, I was absolutely clueless. I thought I was building muscle and I thought I was getting stronger, but in reality I wasn't going anywhere. I was just spinning my wheels."

Lefever's experience in the gym increased with time as he talked with other lifters and was inspired by their capabilities, he said. He began sticking to a program, recorded his progress and did so consistently.

In 2011, he realized his potential for competitive lifting.

"I remember looking up the Calif. records for powerlifting and I saw that I was pretty close to some of them. That inspired me to reach out and try to contact other powerlifters. They pretty much told me to 'put up or shut up,'" Lefever said. "If you're going to say that you're strong, then you've got to get on the platform. You can say, 'I can dead-lift 500 pounds and the record's only 400.' Well then, why don't you hold the record?"

Lefever began focusing on the three lifts. Every other exercise he performs is geared to make himself stronger in those events.

Today, he continues his training five days a week, Monday through Friday, fitting in his lifting around his work as well as his regular Marine Corps physical training.

"On PT days I go to the gym early, four to five in the morning. I'd train for an hour, hour and a half, and then go to the workout," Lefever said. "I still have to pass the (physical fitness test) and (combat fitness test), I'm not exempt from that."

His hard work both in the sport and in the Marine Corps has paid off. Currently in his second enlistment and ranked as one of the best dead-lifters in the nation, Lefever will be changing duty stations to Camp Pendleton before the end of this year. There, he will be joining the base's powerlifting team and continuing his aspiration to compete.

"The thing about powerlifting is the strongest lifters are the guys who have been doing it the longest," Lefever said. "Being in my first year of powerlifting, I can see myself doing this the next 20 to 30 years, or even longer."





Gunnery Sgt. Jared Hoversten, Samantha and their daughter Kaydence are reunited following his deployment in 2010. Jared is currently on a year-long deployment to Afghanistan and now leaves behind his newborn son, Maverick, in addition to Samantha and Kaydence.

LINEAGE OF DETERMINATION

COURTESY PHOTO

Mother, daughter share deployment experience decades later

Story by Cpl. Chelsea Flowers Anderson

At the start of Operation Desert Storm, a young Marine was sent to the fight, leaving behind his wife, son and newborn baby girl. His wife, Susanna Garcia, had to rely on letters and the occasional phone call for the 10-month deployment.

Now, 23 years later, Susanna's daughter, Samantha, finds herself raising her own two children alone while her husband, Gunnery Sgt. Jared Hoversten, is deployed to Afghanistan.

Although times and technology have changed since Susanna's husband deployed, countless Marine wives like her daughter, Samantha, are still coping with the age-old difficulties of a deployed spouse.

More than a month ago, Regimental Combat Team 7 deployed to Afghanistan, and Samantha was left at the Combat Center, with a two-month-old son, Maverick, and two-year-old daughter, Kaydence.

This isn't the Hoversten family's first experience with a deployment. Jared, who has been on five deployments total, deployed in 2009 and then again in 2010 when Kaydence was just four weeks old. This time, though, Kaydence is more aware of what's going on.

"The hardest part has been that Kaydence is older now," Samantha said. "Our son doesn't really know what's going on, which is the same as the deployment when Kaydence was little. But it's just hard because Jared knows how much he is missing. Yesterday I sent him a video of our son laughing for the first time. It's just disappointing when he misses that kind of stuff."

Samantha does her best to keep her husband informed of what is going on back at home as well as send pieces of home to him in care packages.

"It's only been about a month, and I think we've sent like four packages already," Samantha said. "We send him tons of artwork from Kaydence. I'm always looking up little projects for her to do. We take a lot of pictures and I print them out and send them to him so he can have pictures hanging up in his room. I bake a lot, so I sent him and the guys cupcakes in mason jars and sent him some brownies and stuff like that. We keep sending him all this stuff so it's a little bit more like home for him and also keeps us busy as well."

Luckily, thanks to technology, the family can still feel connected beyond pictures and artwork sent in care packages.

"This deployment we've gotten really lucky," Samantha said. "We didn't get to talk much last deployment, but this time he gets to Skype us pretty much daily because he has Internet in his room."

During Operation Desert Storm, this daily interaction is something Susanna never experienced while her husband was deployed.

"The distance and tour lengths are basically the same, however communication methods have advanced so much since 1989," Susanna said. "Back then it was snail mail with an occasional phone call. Money was tight. Our combined income wasn't very much, so making long distance phone calls wasn't an option. Now there's Skype."

Thanks to Skype, Kaydence's day is now centered on talking to daddy.

"He calls usually around eight in the morning when Kaydence is just waking up," Samantha said. "That's when he's just getting ready to go to bed. Then he calls again around (4 p.m.) our time when he's getting ready to go to work."

Even with daily talks with Jared, being apart still takes its toll on everyone in the family.

"Nighttime is really hard," Samantha said. "Jared put her to bed before. We had a bedtime routine going. After our son was born, I would be with the baby, so Jared would put her to bed. So lately it's been really hard. She wants to come into my bed. She points to his pillow, and she'll pat his pillow and start crying."

Luckily for Samantha, though, she has someone who understands just what she's going through and is there to help on those extra difficult days.

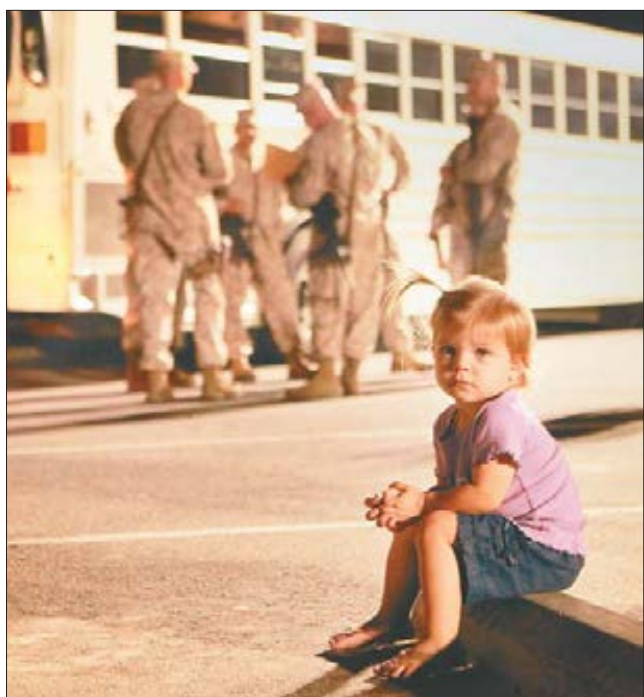
"During Jared's first deployment, it was very hard on all of us because I could only visit them on the weekends about once a month," Susanna said. "On this deployment, I have a full house now. Plus I get to hold my grandchildren every day and kiss them good night each night. I'm here to change dirty diapers, help with their baths and potty training, deal with the terrible twos again and spoil my babies just like grandparents are supposed to. There's nothing better than having family around you when you have to be separated from loved ones for long periods of time."

Although deployments never get easier, Samantha has learned that the key to survival is in the day-to-day.

"I just try to take it one day at a time because if you sit there and look at it, a year is a long time to do a countdown," Samantha said. "We're trying to get a (rest and recuperation) date so we have something closer to look forward to. Having a countdown to something sooner than next October would be a lot easier."

Through the remaining 11 months of the deployment, much will happen in the lives of Samantha and her kids. Kaydence will celebrate her second birthday, and Maverick will turn one. Christmas will come and go. Samantha will bake goodies and pack countless care packages to send a piece of home to her husband. Kaydence will likely continue to think every Marine in uniform is her daddy. And Jared will continue to accomplish the Marine Corps mission in Afghanistan until he gets to hold his family in his arms again.

Kaydence Hoversten sits in front of buses shortly before RCT-7, 7th Marines, leaves for their deployment to Afghanistan Oct. 9, at 7th Marines Regimental Headquarters.



CPL. WILLIAM J. JACKSON



COURTESY PHOTO

Samantha and Jared Hoversten pose on their wedding day in August 2011. Jared, who is currently on his fifth deployment since 2005 with RCT-7, will be deployed to Afghanistan for a year.

"I just try to take it one day at a time because if you sit there and look at it, a year is a long time to do a countdown."

- Samantha Hoversten



Combat Center Clubs

Excursions Enlisted Club

Monday: Margarita Mondays
 Thursday: Rockin' Karaoke 7-10 p.m.
 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.

Bloodstripes NCO Club

Monday: Margarita Mondays
 Thursday: Warrior Night 4:30 - 9 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 from 11 a.m. - 1:30 p.m.
 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

Free Line Dance Lessons

Learn to dance the night away
 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.

Don't Hug Me Christmas Carol

When: Now til Dec. 15, check website for times
 Where: Theatre 29
 73637 Sullivan Rd., Twentynine Palms, Calif.
 For more information call 316-4151
 or visit <http://www.theatre29.org>

367-3577 For Advertising

Lower Desert

Pacquiao vs. Marquez 4

Fighters take the ring
 When: 6 p.m., Saturday, Dec. 8
 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>.

Journey

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

Mariachi Divas

Quintet performs
 When: 9:00 p.m., Saturday, Dec. 15
 Where: Morongo Casino Resort and Spa
 49500 Seminole Drive, Cabazon, Calif.
 For more information call 800-252-4499 or visit
<http://www.morongocasinosresort.com>.

Ohio Players and The Family Stone

American funk groups perform
 When: 8 p.m., Saturday, Dec. 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>.

Sunset Cinema

Friday, December 7

6 p.m. - Hotel Transylvania, Rated PG
 9 p.m. - Argo, Rated R
 Midnight - Paranormal Activity 4, Rated R

Saturday, December 8

10:30 a.m. - Free Matinee The Santa Claus, Rated PG-13
 12:30 p.m. - Here comes the Boom, Rated PG
 3 p.m. - Hotel Transylvania 3D, Rated PG
 6 p.m. - Taken 2, Rated PG-13
 9 p.m. - Alex Cross, Rated PG 13
 Midnight - Sinister, Rated R

Sunday, December 9

12:30 p.m. - Hotel Transylvania 3D, Rated PG
 3 p.m. - Fun Size, Rated PG-13
 6 p.m. - The Hobbit, Rated PG-13
 9 p.m. - Silent Hill Revelation, Rated R

Monday, December 10

9 p.m. - Cloud Atlas, Rated R

Tuesday, December 11

7 p.m. - Silent Hill Revelation 3D, Rated R

Wednesday, December 12

5:30 p.m. - Argo, Rated R
 8:30 p.m. - Paranormal Activity 4, Rated R

Thursday, December 13

5:30 p.m. - Hotel Transylvania, Rated PG
 8:30 p.m. - Taken 2, Rated PG-13

Spunky fantasy tale puts edgy twist on familiar storybook characters



COURTESY PHOTO

Santa, the Easter Bunny, the Tooth Fairy and the Sandman comprise an international league of unique superheroes, the Guardians, sworn under the ancient, mysterious gaze of the moon to keep the lights of hope, optimism and belief glowing in kids around the world.

NEIL POND

"Rise of the Guardians"

Starring the voices of Alec Baldwin, Hugh Jackman & Chris Pine
 Directed by Peter Ramsey
 PG, 97 min.

Do you believe in Santa Claus?

For children, there should only be one answer to that question—and the Guardians want to keep it that way.

What if mythical characters that have fueled childhood imaginations for centuries were real, and they've been working together closely to protect the innocence and dreams of those who believed in them?

That's the premise of "Rise of the Guardians," in which Santa, the Easter Bunny, the Tooth Fairy and the Sandman comprise an international league of unique superheroes, the Guardians, sworn under the ancient, mysterious gaze of the moon to keep the lights of hope, optimism and belief glowing in kids around the world.

When an evil force, the Boogymen (Jude Law), rises from the shadows and begins turning children's peaceful, glowing dreams into dark, galloping nightmares, the Guardians must bring aboard a new member, Jack Frost, and scramble like never before to prevent a

childhood apocalypse.

The fanciful computer-animated movie is based on a series of children's books by William Joyce, who got the idea for the Guardians storyline from his young daughter, who asked him a simple question: "Has Santa Claus ever met the Easter Bunny?" (Joyce's daughter, Mary Katherine, died of a brain tumor before the movie was completed, and film's end credits include a dedication to her.)

The Guardians aren't your standard superheroes, and they certainly aren't your typical storybook characters. Santa Claus, or "North" (voiced by Alec Baldwin), the hulking Slavic commander of the group, oversees his polar command center with NAUGHTY tattooed on one massive, muscular forearm and NICE on the other.

The Easter Bunny (Hugh Jackman) is a surly Australian speedster who navigates the globe in a warren of subterranean tunnels — and who absolutely hates, hates, HATES being mistaken for a kangaroo.

The Tooth Fairy (Isla Fisher) oversees a legion of hummingbird-like helpers in the procuring every "lost" tooth of every kid in the world, replacing it with a coin or goodie of some sort, and lovingly cataloging it away, along with the memories it holds, for safekeeping.

The Sandman, who doesn't speak, is responsible for spinning gorgeous, cotton-candy-like dreams from his golden cloud in the nighttime sky and sending them whirling over the nogginns of sleeping children everywhere.

But the core of the story, and its heart, is found in Jack Frost (Chris Pine), the mischievous teenage sprite of winter, who's fundamentally different from the rest of the Guardians in a heart-wrenching way he spends most of the movie trying to discover — and overcome.

"Guardians" is a rich, wondrously woven children's tale, with children's characters, and it's obviously marketed toward to children. But its story is sometimes moody, dark and scary, and very young viewers might be frightened by the very things in the movie that the Guardians work so hard to keep children from being frightened of.

But don't let that keep you and your kids away, especially if you've got children old enough to appreciate a unique fantasy tale featuring some familiar characters with a spunky, edgy new twist.

The animation is luscious and often spectacular, the storytelling spellbinding and several notches above standard kids' cinema fare, and the message one that will touch the hearts of anyone—of any age — who can reconnect with the magical childlike power of believing.

Relax with the paper
 Hi-Desert Star
 The Desert Trail
 The Observation Post

Hi-Desert Publishing Co.
Your community newspapers working to serve you better

The Combat Center has its own YouTube channel
 Find it at

<http://www.youtube.com/user/CombatCenterPAO>.

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


LOOKING for local entertainment?
 See page B2 for our **LIBERTY CALL section**