



February 22, 2013

Vol. 57 Issue 07

PLANSMARTER

Combat Center offers event to teach financial fitness

Lance Cpl. Lauren Kurkimilis
Combat Correspondent

This year, Feb. 25 to March 2 is Military Saves week, an annual campaign that promotes financial fitness for service members.

The Combat Center's Personal Financial Management Program is hosting a Military Saves event Feb. 27 starting 8 a.m. at the Sunset Cinema in honor of the week-long campaign. The event will cover the savings deposit program, certificates of deposit, individual retirement accounts and thrift savings plans.

"This is a great opportunity for service members and their families to display the importance of financial fitness throughout our forces," said Army Gen. Martin Dempsey, chairman, Joint Chiefs of Staff.

Military Saves has become institutionalized in the DOD. It is a part of the DOD's Financial Readiness Campaign, America saves and is operated by the non-profit Consumer Federation of America. The CFA developed and tested the program from 2003-2006 and since its launch in 2007.

In 2012, more than 300 organizations participated in the program, which proved to be the largest turn-out to date. This included 253 installations, commands and detachments, 62 financial institutions and 24 non-profit organizations.

The program's success grows each year as more and more service members and organizations participate each year. It uses social marketing to encourage service members to make a plan, set a goal and save automatically.

"A simple \$25 a month into a personal savings account, a small contribution to your thrift savings plan, even avoiding unnecessary use of credit can let you leap to financial fitness," said Sgt. Maj. Bryan Battaglia, senior enlisted advisor to the Chairman, Joint Chiefs of Staff.

During the Military Saves Week, service members take the Military Saves Pledge, a personal commitment that sets them on a path toward financial freedom. They are also given guidance on how to achieve their financial goals with practices like automatic deposits into savings accounts, thrift savings plans and debt management.

In addition to encouraging the individual to change their personal financial behavior, Military Saves also urges leaders and organizations to be aggressive in promoting automatic savings amongst their subordinates. It is geared toward the active duty service member but is also available to guard and Reserve service members, dependents, DOD civilians and contractors, retirees and veterans.

While Military Saves Week is an annual campaign, Military Saves resources are available year-round at www.militarysaves.org and active duty service members and dependents can seek financial advice from the Personal Financial Management Program by calling 830-7342.



A Sabot round goes down range at the Combat Center's Range 500 during Company A, 1st Tank Battalion's annual gunnery qualification Feb. 17.

'1st Tanks' conduct annual qualifications

Stories and photos by
Cpl. Sarah Dietz
Combat Correspondent

Marines with Company A, 1st Tank Battalion conducted their annual tank qualification at the Combat Center's Range 500 Tuesday.

The company ran through Tank Tables 1 through 5 earlier in the week followed by Table 6 Tuesday. The courses of fire involved the use of the M1A1 Abrams Tank's main gun, M240 and .50 Caliber machine guns

during both day and night shoots.

"We are starting off really good and we want to keep that going," said 1st Lt. Matthew Anderson, executive officer, Co. A, after the Table 3 course of fire. "You will continue to see improvements in the fire commands and the way they engage the targets throughout Table 4 and 5."

The tank crews were given multiple scenarios to run through. They shot both stationary and mobile targets, as well as scenarios involving degraded systems, limiting their maneuverability

and systems to assess how they would function in a combat scenario with a malfunctioning tank.

"The engagements are standardized across the Marine Corps," Anderson said. "They will get graded on both day and night portions. Perfect score is 1,000. Distinguished is 900 and above."

Tank Tables 1 through 6 courses of fire were assessed by Battalion Master Gunner, Staff Sgt. Juan Alvarez. His role was to assess crew cohesion,

See **QUAL** page A7

Heavy Metal

BROTHERHOOD

A tank battalion is a brotherhood. They are the only ones who can truly understand each other. Their community is small, powerful and close. They are family.

Sgt. Brian Alloway and his crew have been working together for about two months. Their crew was formed shortly after they returned from Afghanistan in September 2012. The transition was shaky for the crew, but even in their short amount of time, they grew in cohesion.

Alloway, tank commander, White 3, Alpha Company



for 1st Tank Battalion, said that this was the first time he worked with this specific group.

Inside the metal monster is roughly a six foot by eight foot space where the four-man crew controls the tank and works together as a sleek, well-oiled machine.

The driver controls and maneuvers the tank into posi-

See **METAL** page A7

Semper Fi-do



[Above] Chesty, a 9-week-old pedigree English bulldog is soon to become the next Marine Corps mascot after the completion of an obedience training school with a ceremony scheduled for March 29. After obedience school and "recruit training" the young puppy will earn the title Marine, joining the ranks of his well-known predecessors. The future mascot comes from five generations of champion bulldogs.

[Left] Bonnie Amos, wife of Gen. James F. Amos, commandant of the Marine Corps, holds Chesty, the future Marine Corps mascot, during the puppy's visit to the Home of the Commandants, Marine Barracks Washington, D.C., Feb. 14.



Hospital celebrates black history

Cpl. William J. Jackson
Combat Correspondent

The Combat Center celebrated Black History Month with a ceremony held Feb. 15 at the Robert E. Bush Naval Hospital. A congregation of sailors and civilian personnel spent the afternoon recounting significant people who played key roles in founding and continuing the tradition of Black History Month in American culture.

Black History Month is an annual observance in the United States to remember important people and events in the history of the United States. The event stemmed from Negro History Week created by the historian Carter G. Woodson in 1926. Since 1976, President Gerald R. Ford officially recognized Black History Month as a national observance.

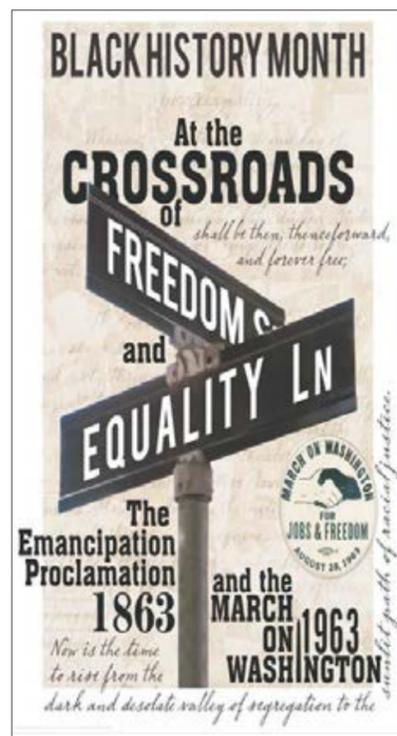
"Respect, appreciation and strength makes a powerful team," said Capt. Jay Sourbeer, commanding officer, Naval Hospital.

To have the best team, there needs to be respect among one another, Sourbeer added.

The ceremony included the singing of the National Anthem by Lt. Cmdr. Gloria Garner, a reading from Martin Luther King, Jr.'s "I Have a Dream," speech by Petty Officer 1st Class Tracy Ashley, and a song and dance routine by Seaman Kamen Ray and Petty Officer 3rd Class Kendra Cruze.

"Today's Navy is one where each individual can play on an even field," said Navy Capt. Sandra Mason, Naval Hospital, after narrating the trials and tribulations of African-Americans in the Armed Forces.

Mason spoke about change and the



overcoming of obstacles in life and the military by African-Americans. She depicted the actions of the first black pilot, the first black general and many other notable advances for African-Americans. Mainly, Mason offered guests a brief account on the significance of Black History Month within American culture.

"Get involved if you want to see change," Mason challenged the crowd at the end of her speech. "It takes all of us."

Community center opens in Vista Del Sol housing



CPL. ALI AZIMI

Daniel Mintz, mayor pro tem, Twentynine Palms, Calif., Maj. Gen. David H. Berger, Commanding General, MCAGCC, MACTFTC and Eric Tili, district manager, Lincoln Military Housing, cut the ribbon for the new Vista Del Sol community center Feb. 15.

Cpl. Ali Azimi Combat Correspondent

The new Vista Del Sol community center is a warm home-like center built for service members and their families. It promotes both family and community bonding and features an array of spacious areas for fun and entertainment.

Maj. Gen. David H. Berger, Commanding General, Marine Corps Air Ground Combat Center, and other distinguished guests from the Combat Center and the city of Twentynine Palms, Calif., were invited to tour the 7,600-square-foot center on Feb. 15.

"This is not the housing from a decade ago," Berger said. "People will ask to come here. I'd be very happy to live here right now."

The new building features a gym with a child care area, media room, game room and a full kitchen. Outside, residents can enjoy a full-size swimming pool, a dog park and a patio with views of both the Combat Center and the national park.

Berger remarked on how impressed he was with the progress that has been made in the living conditions of service members in the last decade.

"I don't know how we've come this far in the past ten years," Berger said. "It's really remarkable."

The tour was followed by a ribbon-cutting ceremony, conducted by Berger, Daniel Mintz, Mayor pro tem, Twentynine Palms, Calif., and Eric Tili, district manager, Lincoln Military Housing. The three men cut the red ribbon with the giant ceremonial scissors, officially opening the facility.

For more photos of the new community center, visit the Combat Center's facebook page at <http://www.facebook.com/thecombatcenter>.

CG recognizes outstanding civilians



COURTESY PHOTO

Maj. Gen. David H. Berger and his wife Donna recognized the outstanding contributions of five Combat Center civilian employees at a hosted breakfast Feb. 15. The honorary breakfast program provides the Commanding General with an opportunity to thank support personnel for their contributions to the Combat Center mission. From left to right: Jennifer Husung, sexual assault prevention and response coordinator; Tatsiana Krupetskiy, financial management analyst; Lovely Budd, financial management specialist; Larry Ward, MCAGCC personnel officer; Donna Berger, spouse of the Commanding General; Maj. Gen. David H. Berger, Combat Center Commanding General; Tony Putnam, vending services manager.

OBSERVATION POST

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Hey Combat Center fans – Spread the word! The Combat Center has its own YouTube channel. Find it at <http://www.youtube.com/user/CombatCenterPAO>.

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See answers on page A8

DASHING

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ACROSS

- Boozehound
- Resort island off Venezuela
- Shooting marble
- Shake off
- Emphatic denial
- Wish undone
- DASH
- Summer cooler
- Cable TV worker
- Spanish hero
- Suffix with project
- Charmer's basketball
- Fancy duds
- Take turns
- Closes in on
- Word before basin or bore
- Vintner's vessel
- Fairy tale start
- A natural, in craps
- Move, in Realtor lingo
- To the ___ degree
- Transparent
- Alternative to a cop
- Temporarily inactive
- Fired on
- On disk
- Moo ___ pork
- St. ___ (West Indies nation)
- They're struck out
- Go out ___ limb
- DASH
- Sitcom diner owner
- Beethoven dedicatee
- ___ voce (softly)
- Keats composition
- Supply base
- Boy Scout unit

DOWN

- Hatcher or Garr
- Appliance for Emeril
- Pols' providers: Abbr.
- Trim to fit, perhaps
- Patches up
- Go for fish
- Lecherous sort
- Exploitative type
- Twice, in music
- Weapons supply
- DASH
- Bemedaled Murphy
- Garden intruders
- Model Macpherson
- Long, crosser
- Cooperstown's Musial
- Bard's "soon"
- Jamboree enclosure
- DASH
- Ill humor
- Rosie's fastener
- Baltic Sea feeder
- MTV viewer, most likely
- Pierce player
- Tugboat blast
- Mower's home
- Aussie bounder
- One way to serve clams
- Aerial show figure
- "Exodus" hero
- Tom Jones's "___ a Lady"
- Replay technique, for short
- In pitch
- Winter woe
- Faucet problem
- Sinclair rival, once
- Sikorsky of aviation
- Not fooled by
- Brussels-based gp.
- Farm fare
- Bullring "Bully!"

OFF-LIMITS ESTABLISHMENTS

MCI West 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 San Diego:

- Club Mustang, 2200 University Ave.
- Club San Diego, 3955 Fourth St.
- Get It On Shoppe, 3219 Mission Blvd.
- Main Street Motel, 3494 Main St.
- Vulcan Baths, 805 W. Cedar St.

In National City:

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

In Twentynine Palms:

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

In Yucca Valley:

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

In Palm Springs:

- Village Pub, 266 S. Palm Canyon Dr.

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

WHAT I'VE LEARNED



Julian Chenier

San Diego — student, Condor Elementary, 10

- > **I play football**, baseball and that's pretty much it
- > **Basketball is my favorite**, I've been playing for a long time and I get to teach my other team players how to play it.
- > **We have a** basketball hoop in our garage. I play with my brother.
- > **Play basketball**, that's what I do every time there's recess, I get a ball and take shots. I'll never stop playing it. It's my favorite sport.
- > **I want to be a** basketball player when I grow up, or an architect, but I want to be a basketball player.
- > **Kobe Bryant** is my favorite player, how he makes the cuts and lay-ups. I try to play like him.
- > **My dad** was born in LA and we watched his games a lot.
- > **I prefer** playing post.
- > **An architect because**, when I was little I liked to play with Legos. I would always build robots. I still do.
- > **My favorite part** of school is math and social studies.
- > **Math is my favorite** because everything has to do with math. In basketball you need to know how many players you have and how many

CHENIER IS A 5TH GRADE STUDENT AT CONDOR ELEMENTARY SCHOOL.

teams you can have.

> **I like social studies.** History is my thing.

> **I'm in** fifth grade.

> **My favorite video game?** Call of Duty Black Ops, you can talk to different players.

> **If I had a million dollars**, if I had a son, I would save it for my son. I would use the money for his career.

> **My biggest fear** is rattlesnakes, you never see them coming.

> **I find courage** when I get an A on my test.

> **My role model** is my mom and dad. They taught me everything. My mom taught me to speak and my dad taught me all about math.

> **I dance Hip-Hop.** I learn at (Youth and Teen Organization). I've been dancing probably since I was born.

> **I really like** Hip-Hop and rap. I'm not a rapping person though.

> **I like Cartoon Network**, my favorite show is Incredible Crew. It's a new thing. But if I had to pick, I'd say Regular Show.

> **Action and comedy** movies are my thing.

> **If I could live** anywhere I would live in New York. I want to see the Empire State Building. In movies it's beautiful, it looks pretty cool.

> **In Twentynine Palms**, you feel free. In spring and summer you get to go in the pool all day and in the winter it snows in the mountains so you can go and play in the snow.

> **I've been in the snow** in Las Vegas. I threw a snowball at my brother and Dorian. It was like a 30-second fight and then we went sledding the rest of the day.

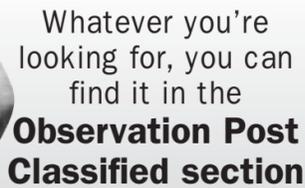
> **I wish there were** more flowers here, so that it would be more beautiful and it wouldn't be such a desert. And maybe more grass.

Interviewed by Cpl. Sarah Dietz

February 18, 2013




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

From down

UNDEER



Australian Tankers qualify with 1st Tanks

Cpl. Sarah Dietz
Combat Correspondent

A tank crew from the Australian Army's 1st Armored Regiment is qualifying at the Combat Center's Range 500 this week and next with Marines with Company A, 1st Tank Battalion.

The soldiers will be conducting Tank Tables 1 through 6 over the course of two weeks.

"We bring a crew over every year," said Australian Army Capt. Michael Hall, second in command of A Squadron, 1st Armored Regiment. "While the rest of our unit is training in crew gunnery skills, we send a crew over here to benchmark ourselves against 1st Tank Battalion in the Marine Corps, because we don't have any other tank regiments in Australia to compare to.

"Where we trained in Australia, it's all vegetated. We can come out here to a new environment, the desert, to learn new skills and acquire tank gunnery techniques in a

different terrain," Hall added.

The Australian tankers came to the Combat Center Feb. 7. Before going to Range 500 to qualify on the tank, the crew ran through multiple drills to familiarize themselves with some of the techniques Marines with 1st Tanks utilize, such as tank evacuation and casualty evacuation.

"It's been a good experience. This is my first time here," Hall said. "We've already learned a lot.

We use all the same doctrine as the Marine Corps but things are set up differently, like ranges and resources."

The new environment has posed different obstacles and learning opportunities for the Australian tankers. They were given a new perspective on techniques and tactics used by the Marine Corps.

"There's been some challenges in the

way they do things differently, but it's nothing that we can't adapt to; the basics and the concept are exactly the same," said Australian Army Sgt. Dean Mosedale, tank commander, 1st Armored Regiment. "The gunnery is better out here. They have a lot more lead-up

tables before the actual qualification table, where as, in Australia, we tend to not have as much time prior to our qualification. It's been a privilege to come out here. Being a tanker is definitely a passion."

Along with the training, the Australian soldiers and the Marines have begun to build relationships.

"This is the first time I've seen them out here in the field with us," said Cpl. Jose Hernandez, gunner, Company A, 1st Tanks. "We train with them and that's pretty tight.

The U.S. and Australia combine forces during war, that's pretty cool."

"They're pretty lively," said Sgt. Jesse Cowgill, gunner, Headquarters and Services Co., 1st Tanks. "When it comes down to it, they are willing to do what's needed for training. They've done good and are pretty professional."

The two militaries continuously seek to improve the relationship between the two nations by sharing knowledge, experiences and techniques developed by the individual forces.

"We are here to benchmark our skills against someone who has been using the platform for a long time and also to share a bit of knowledge on techniques and procedures," Hall said.

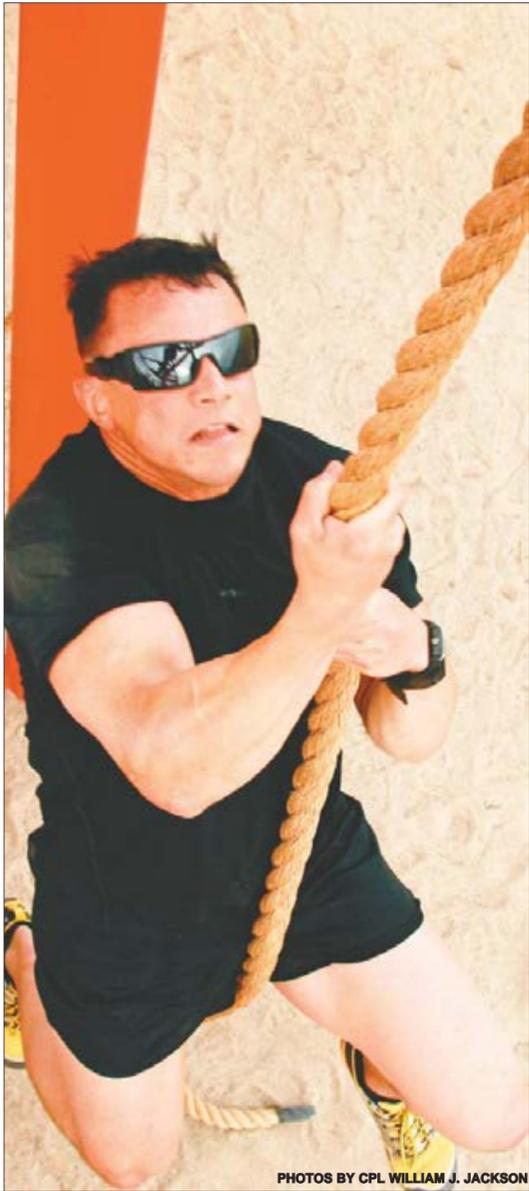
Another international exchange will take place later in the year, where a company from 1st Tanks will be given the opportunity to travel to Australia for a similar experience.

"We sort of trade, so you guys can come over and learn how we operate in the bush land," Hall said.

"We are here to benchmark our skills against someone who has been using the platform for a long time and also to share a bit of knowledge on techniques and procedures."

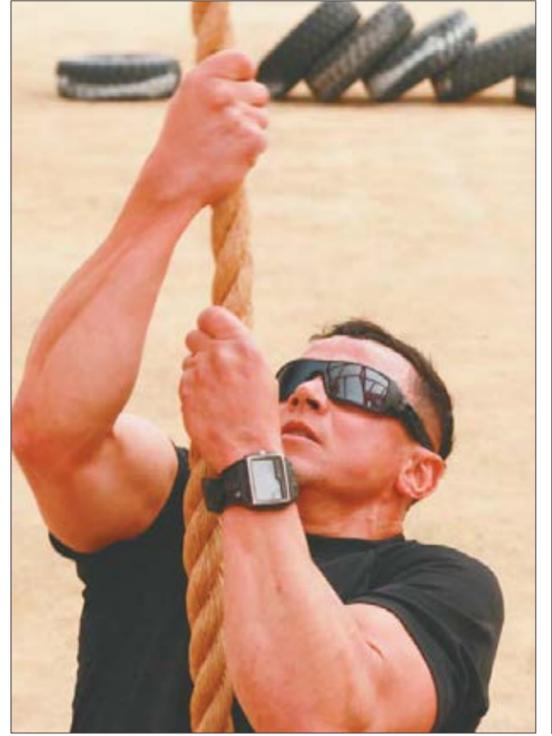
— Australian Army Capt. Michael Hall

Climb that rope



PHOTOS BY CPL WILLIAM J. JACKSON

Capt. John Collins, weapons company commander, 1st Battalion, 7th Marine Regiment, uses the Del Valle obstacle course Feb. 19. The obstacle course is open all day for individual and unit physical training demands. The course can also be used in coordination with the High Intensity Tactical Training program to improve strength and endurance. Physical trainers are available for unit training by appointment and can facilitate a workout with additional equipment, such as medicine balls and kettle bells, and show proper technique to maximize the HITT workout. Call the West Gym and Fitness Center at 830-6451 to unlock equipment or to makes an appointment.



**See page B2 for
Sunset Cinema
movie
schedule**



MUSD visits Combat Center

Combat Center School Liaison Marie Hernandez hosted a group of Morongo Unified School District personnel and two Board of Education members for a tour of the Combat Center Feb. 15. The group learned how Marines and sailors train for urban operations on Ranges 200 and 215, participated in a simulated combat convoy scenario and a driving simulation at the Battle Simulation Center at Camp Wilson, and ate lunch with Marines and sailors at the Warrior Club at Camp Wilson. They also learned how the installation recycles ordnance and other items collected from its training ranges and took a driving tour of Mainside.



PHOTOS BY KELLY O'SULLIVAN

[Top, left] Twentynine Palms Elementary School Principal Kristie McMahan prepares to take aim during a combat convoy scenario at the Battle Simulation Center Feb. 15.

[Top, right] MUSD Board of Education members take a break from touring the Battle Simulation Center at Camp Wilson on Feb. 15. With them are Stan Jenkins, who showed the group how the Mine-Resistant Ambush-Protected vehicle rollover simulator works and tour guide Michael King.

[Above] MUSD personnel and school board members listen as tour guide Michael King talks about how Marines and sailors train on Range 200 and other military operations on urban terrain (MOUT) facilities during a tour of the Combat Center on Feb. 15.

[Right] Chris Proudfoot, a retired Marine colonel and MUSD Board of Education member, shows fellow board member Karalee Hargrove how to use a training rifle at the Battle Simulation Center Feb. 15.

 <p>Visit the official MCAGCC facebook page at http://www.facebook.com/thecombatcenter</p>	 <p>The Combat Center has its own YouTube channel. Find it at http://www.youtube.com/user/CombatCenterPAO.</p>	 <p>The Combat Center has its own Flickr photo and video streams. Find them at http://www.flickr.com/thecombatcenter</p>
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METAL, from A1

tion, while the loader pulls a round and places it into the chamber. Then the gunner places the cannon on target and waits for the command to fire.

The tank commander directs and oversees it all. He has a 360 degree view of the battlefield. He directs the driver, sets up sectors of fire for the gunner, and sets the tone for his crew. He communicates with other tank commanders with him as he oversees all activity in his tank, keeping his Marines on point.

The gunner has a unique responsibility in the tank. He takes care of the loader and driver, as well as takes charge of maintaining the tank.

"It's a big responsibility to keep track and maintain a tank," said Cpl. Jose L. Hernandez, gunner, White 3, Co. A, 1st Tanks. "It's my responsibility to take care of the driver and loader as well; anything wrong with them I have to report it up. Not only am I filling a billet, I'm taking care of a tank and I'm taking care of two Marines. It's a big responsibility but I like responsibility."

"As a tank commander, I need to be hands off because the gunner's billet, it's really 'his tank.' I just let him know what needs to get done," Alloway said. "In the beginning, it was kind of shaky, I didn't have a lot of confidence in him but he proved himself to me. They carry it out and get it done."

The new crew recently completed their annual tank qualification. The time on the range has given the crew an opportunity to work out the kinks in their teamwork.

"To be honest, the only training we've had

before this was between me and the gunner," Alloway said. "That got us flowing, a good TC-gunner combination. (Feb. 12) was the very first time all four of us were in the tank together on the range."

Each movement the tankers make needs to be fast and in rhythm. Moving too slow or not in sync with the rest of the crew could mean the difference between life and death in a combat situation. As the White 3 crew develops their skills, personal improvement is a major part in the crew's success.

"Every time you learn something new you know you're going to mess up," Hernandez said. "When I got put in as a gunner, I knew what was to be expected. It was nerve wracking but little by little I started learning from everybody else by their inputs and mistakes."

White 3's crew started a team flow. There are quarrels among them like the average crew, but in their developing team, they look to fix the kinks early on.

"We all get mad and yell at each other when things go wrong, but we all know it's in the heat of the moment," Hernandez said. "We know what we are capable of inside a tank. If we have a fault, we work on it and try to perfect it. In our off-time, we maintain the tank and we get together as a crew and see what happened, this is what needs to happen and we talk about the next day."

Alloway and his crew continue to seek improvement. In doing so, they grow closer as a unit.

"We are far from perfect," Alloway said. "We got to keep the flow going. We have a good idea of how we are doing right now."



GUNNERY SGT. LEO SALINAS

Marines with Company A, 1st Tank Battalion, watch a crew of their fellow tankers shoot on Range 500 Feb. 15. The Marines were in the midst of their annual tank qualification which ended Tuesday.

QUAL, from A1

grade their accuracy and present the multiple scenarios the crews had to shoot.

This was the first time many of the tank crews have worked together since their return from deployment to Afghanistan September 2012.

"We were in different platoons in Afghanistan," said Sgt. Brian Alloway, tank commander, White 3, Co. A. "We identified everything quickly, we worked as a crew, we worked on speed and efficiency. Crew cohesion and communication played a big part."

The qualification has given the newly

formed crews the opportunity to exchange their knowledge and fine tune their skills to accomplish better cohesion inside the tanks.

"Biggest thing is knowing your position very well and then putting it together with the crew," said Lance Cpl. Miron San Miguel, driver, White 3, Co. A. "Knowing what you have to do exactly and how it ties in to everything else is what really causes everything to run smooth."

The unit will be at Range 500 for another week, helping a group of Australian Army soldiers qualify on the M1A1 Abrams tanks as well, swapping knowledge and experience between the two militaries.



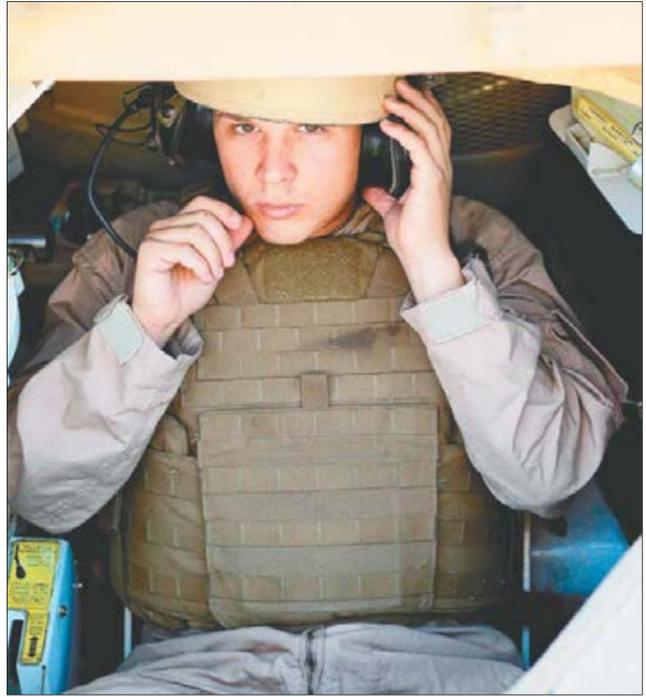
CPL. SARAH DIETZ

Tanks with Company A, 1st Tank Battalion, prepare the vehicles before their Table 5 exercise Feb. 17. Table 5 involves the use of the M1A1 Abrams Tank main gun, M240 and .50 caliber machine guns with both stationary and mobile targets.



WeekINPhotos

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BIRTH ANNOUNCEMENTS

JACKSON NICOLAS BOULTON

Born on: February 18, 2013
Born to: William and Jeorgina Boulton

NATHANIEL JAMES CASE

Born on: February 9, 2013
Born to: Charles and Lorraine Case

LILY JULIET ZINAIDA MERRELL

Born on: February 16, 2013
Born to: Matthew and Tricia Merrell

AUBREY MICHELLE GRIEASHAMER

Born on: February 6, 2013
Born to: Scott and Brittanny Grieashamer

ALEYNA ANJALI NUNEZ

Born on: February 15, 2013
Born to: Edwin and Laura Nunez

JADALYNN CASSIDY BLATNICK

Born on: February 4, 2013
Born to: Justin and Jordan Blatnick

ISABELLA ROGERS

Born on: February 15, 2013
Born to: Jonathan and Nicole Rogers

LEONA RENEE BALCENA

Born on February 2, 2013
Born to: Jeromian and Jennifer Balcena

ARABELLE SELENE BAUZA

Born on: February 12, 2013
Born to: Juan and Lauren Bauza

TALON DAVID SAVOIE

Born on: January 25, 2013
Born to: Aron and Shelby Savoie

AVA ROSE NEAR

Born on: February 11, 2013
Born to: Richard and Lindsay Near

MONROE RAE TIPTON

Born on: January 24, 2013
Born to: Jared and Kimberly Tipton



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The Power of Flowers

Story and photos by
 Lance Cpl. Lauren Kurkumilis
 Combat Correspondent



The florist is watching a moment. A young boy is peering into a large glass cooler with gold trimmed doors. His grandfather is there, guiding the boy with sagely advice on which of the vibrantly colored flowers to pick. The choice on color is not as important as making the choice in the first place.

"Now pick which ones you'd like to give your mother," says the grandfather. "Make sure they're special."

The florist smiles. She knows no matter what, they will be.

The florist is Faith Arwick. As owner of A New Creation Flowers and Gifts, she has seen this tradition before.

"He's teaching him how to be a gentleman," she said. "Obviously, the man wants his daughter to know that she's special, but more importantly he's showing his grandson this is what you do for the women you love."

The beginning of the year, between Valentine's Day and Mother's Day, is a time when the age-old tradition of giving flowers is the busiest. For Arwick, it's not only a year-round commitment; it has been a life-long passion.



BLOSSOMING OF A FLORIST

Arwick grew up on Long Island, N.Y., and in some form or another has worked in the same industry since she was young.

"My first job was at a greenhouse in Cutchogue, N.Y.," Arwick said. "I just pulled weeds, because I was only 13. We would go around to all greenhouses, there were about 100 of them, and by the time we were done going through them all we'd have to start all over again."

"It's funny because it seems like every job I've ever had has had something to do with plants," Arwick continued. "The next job I got was another greenhouse and that's where I learned to do cuttings and things like that."

During Arwick's junior and senior years of high school, she and her peers were given the opportunity to spend half their day in their core curriculum and then the other half could be spent at a near-by trade school. She naturally chose to study Ornamental Horticulture.

"The school was great," Arwick said. "We got to learn everything there was to know and we competed in floral design competitions in the state. Most of my teachers knew the people I worked for so, it was almost like I was expected to know more than the rest of the class."

SETTING HER ROOTS

Arwick's road to owning her own flower shop began in a restaurant.

"It's funny," she said. "When I would get off work I would come over to this little flower shop and ask if I could just help and do things here

and there because I didn't want to forget everything I'd learned."

Over the years, Arwick came to work at multiple area flower shops. In 1989, she began working for Country Corner's flower shop where she remained for 14 years until she bought the store, became the owner and named it A Natural Creation Flowers and Gifts.

Arwick has been a member of Oasis Community Church for 13 years. After her mother passed away, her father moved to Twentynine Palms and began attending the same church, where he would eventually meet his new wife.

"Clara, my father's wife, is great," Arwick said. "I saw her at church once, before my father met her and I noticed she had scratches all over her legs. When I asked her what happened, she told me she had fallen out of a tree while climbing it with her nephews. My first thought was that she would be perfect for my father and then, without me playing match maker, they met and eventually got married."

Arwick was so supportive of her father's new love, she felt honored to make a bouquet for Clara and a boutonniere for her father to wear in their wedding.

"They went to Vegas for their wedding," she said. "I think they were trying to elope but we all came anyways. Her bouquet was mainly blue delphinium and veronica flowers with a variety of others. It was really different and pretty."

BRANCHING OUT TO THE BASE

Arwick has been a part of the community for decades and has provided flowers for the Combat

Center equally as long.

"I remember going out to Camp Wilson once to deliver flowers a long time ago," Arwick said. "I remember thinking it took so long to get out there and I couldn't believe it was just a bunch of tents out there."

There is nothing greater than making a bouquet and getting to deliver it to that person, Arwick said. When you see the look on their face, you know that you've not only made their day, but brought them closer to their loved one.

Through her years of arranging and delivering flowers for Marines, Arwick has come to see the appreciation they have for their loved ones.

"I love it when Marines send their wives or girlfriends flowers while they're deployed," Arwick said. "Once, a guy came in and set it up so his wife received flowers and a card once a month for every month he was gone. The best part was wrote letters to her on six different cards so that she would have a personal, handwritten letter from him each month. I didn't get to see her reaction when she read the cards, but I saw her excitement every time we brought her the flowers."

This year, her shop has also provided flowers for events like the Daddy Daughter Dance, the Wounded Warrior Dinner and created presentation bouquets for changes of command and memorials. During the week of Valentine's Day, Arwick received and delivered orders for more than 300 arrangements to the base.

"Some people don't always know what sort of flowers to get," Arwick said. "I love figuring out what they are imagining, because then I have the chance to bring it to life."



Liberty Call

Jason Bateman, Melissa McCarthy put comedic spin on a serious subject



COURTESY PHOTO

NEIL POND

"Identity Thief"

Starring: Jason Bateman and Melissa McCarthy
 Directed by Seth Gordon
 Rated R, 112 min.

Jason Bateman and Melissa McCarthy put a crazy, comedic spin on an all-too-serious subject in this rollicking romp about a mild-mannered businessman who gets taken for the ride of his life when he falls for an "identity theft" phone scam.

Before Sandy Patterson (Bateman) knows what's happening, a woman he's never met (McCarthy) in a far-away state is using his "unisex" name to live it up. She buys a car and a jet ski, fills her Florida house with cheesy impulse purchases, treats a barroom of strangers to rounds of expensive drinks and skips merrily between self-indulgent spa appointments.

When Bateman's character discovers what's going on, a police detective offers him little assurance that the long arm of the law can bring a swift end to his troubles. So Sandy decides to take matters into his own hands. He'll go to Florida to confront the perpetrator who's using his name, draining his bank account and complicating things at his brand new job.

And he'll bring the female "Sandy" back to Colorado with him to confess to her crimes and set his life back in order.

His wife (Amanda Peet) worries he might be biting off more than he can chew. "You don't chase criminals," she says. "You're not Batman." Don't fret, Sandy says, showing her a police printout "Sandy" with her mug-shot photo and stats. "That number's her height. I'm going after Bilbo."

The movie doesn't really hit its comedic stride until Bateman and McCarthy meet — "collide" is more like it — in Florida, and then the saucy, sassy, spicy laughs start rolling.

McCarthy, who's starred on TV's sitcom "Mike & Molly"

since 2010 and was a breakout ensemble player in hit comedy "Bridesmaids" in 2011, finally gets her time to shine in a leading movie role. A gifted, sharp-witted, self-confident comedian who here throws all of her generous physicality into her part, she dances, sings, tumbles, shouts, runs, kicks, punches, coos, crawls, draws and spews a constant string of laugh lines.

Bateman, the "straight man" by contrast, still gets plenty of funny things to say and do.

Describing what happens would spoil much of the "buddy comedy" and "road movie" surprises. But I can divulge that Sandy and "Sandy" become unlikely traveling companions and even allies of sorts, fleeing from a bounty hunter, cops, and a couple of shady criminal characters with whom "Sandy" has become involved in her fraudulent credit-card scheme.

Eric Stonestreet, who plays Cameron on TV's "Modern Family," has a couple of side-splitting scenes as a swinging cowboy barfly that will probably make a lot of viewers forget his swishy gay television role.

The movie takes a turn to the sentimental toward the end, when "Sandy" reveals some personal issues that help explain how she turned out the way she did. And the movie touches on what makes a person's "identity" beyond simply what he or she happens to be named.

It's not perfect, and it doesn't live up to the gold standards set by other movies of its ilk, notably "Planes, Trains and Automobiles" and "Midnight Run," two classic, fan-favorite films from the '80s to which "Identity Thief" owes a specific tip of its hat.

But Bateman and McCarthy have a genuine chemistry, they seem to truly enjoy each other's company, and they make for a couple of often hilarious traveling companions for anyone else interested in taking a wild 'n' crazy road trip on the lighter side of a topic that, as a lot of folks have discovered, is usually no laughing matter.

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.

Gypsy

When: March 8 through April 6
 Where: Theatre 29
 73637 Sullivan Rd., Twentynine Palms, Calif.
 For more information call 316-4151
 or visit <http://www.theatre29.org>

Lower Desert

Willie Nelson

Legendary country musician
 When: 8 p.m., Saturday, March 1
 Where: Fantasy Springs Resort Casino
 84-245 Indio Springs Parkway, Indio
 For more information call 800-827-2946 or visit <http://www.fantasyspringsresort.com>.

Charlie Wilson

American R&B singer performs
 When: 8 p.m., Saturday, March 2
 Where: Spotlight 29 Casino Resort
 46-200 Harrison Place, Coachella, Calif.
 For more information call 866-377-6829 or visit <http://www.spotlight29.com>

Joan Rivers

Comedic performance
 When: 9:00 p.m., Friday, March 8
 Where: Morongo Casino Resort and Spa
 49500 Seminole Drive, Cabazon, Calif.
 For more information call 800-252-4499 or visit <http://www.morongocasinosort.com>.

Rhythm of the Dance

The National Dance Company of Ireland performs
 When: 8 p.m., Saturday, March 9
 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>.

Sunset Cinema

Friday, February 22

6 p.m. — Jack Reacher, Rated PG-13
 9 p.m. — Gangster Squad, Rated R
 Midnight — A Haunted House, Rated R

Saturday, February 23

10:30 a.m. — **Free Matinee** Toy Story, Rated PG
 12:30 p.m. — Silver Linings Playbook, Rated R
 3 p.m. — Texas Chainsaw, Rated R
 6 p.m. — Django Unchained, Rated R
 9 p.m. — A Haunted House, Rated R
 Midnight — Zero Dark 30, Rated R

Sunday, February 24

12:30 p.m. — Mama, Rated PG-13
 3 p.m. — Broken City, Rated R
 6 p.m. — Texas Chainsaw, Rated R
 9 p.m. — The Last Stand, Rated R

Monday, February 25

7 p.m. — Gangster Squad, Rated R

Tuesday, February 26

7 p.m. — Zero Dark 30, Rated R

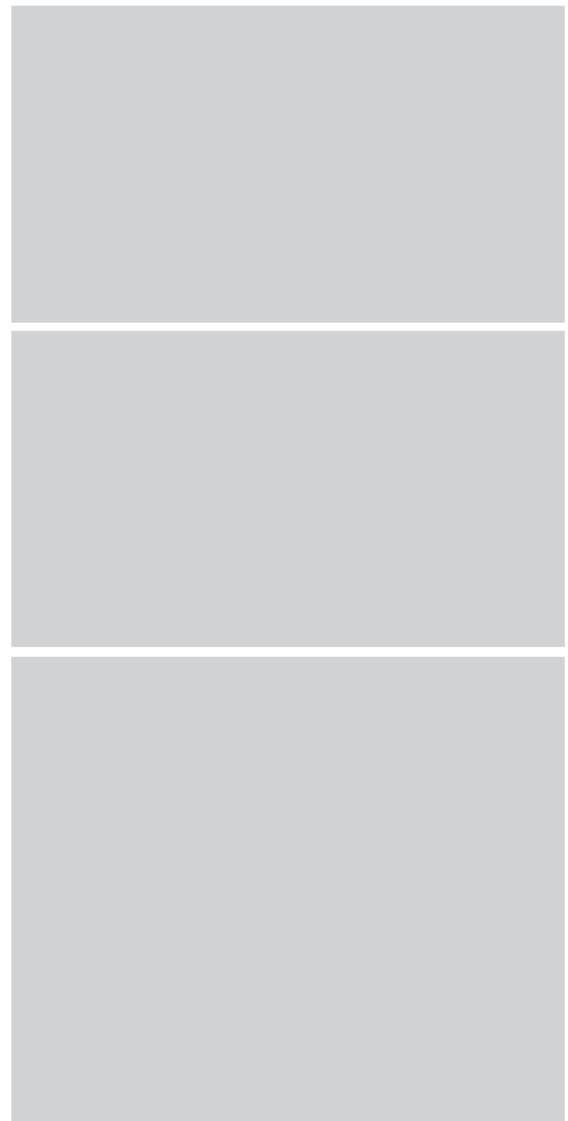
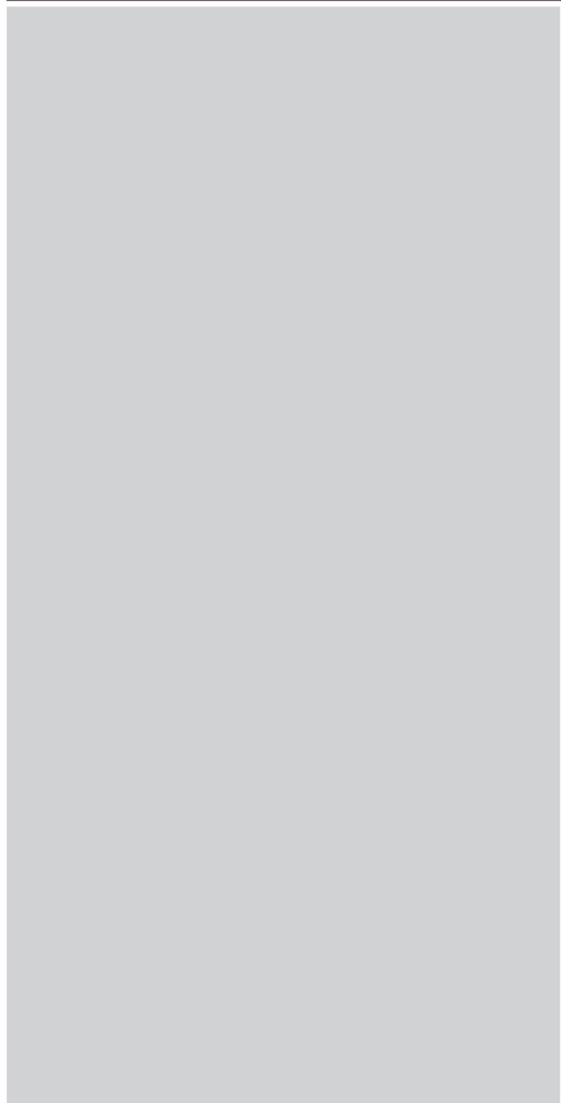
Wednesday, February 27

7 p.m. — Django Unchained, Rated R

Thursday, February 28

5:30 p.m. — Jack Reacher, Rated PG-13
 8:30 p.m. — Silver Linings Playbook, Rated R

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