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## Cutting Edge

### 3/7 welcomes new leader

**Cpl. Ali Azimi**  
Combat Correspondent

Lt. Col. Daniel J. Wittnam received command of 3rd Battalion, 7th Marine Regiment, from Lt. Col. Edward C. Greeley during the unit's Change of Command Ceremony held at Lance Cpl. Torrey L. Gray Field Feb. 22.

The ceremony was held to honor the passing of leadership from one commander to another. It also provided a venue for the outgoing commander to make final remarks to his Marines and for the oncoming commander to make his first as the new leader.

"Assumption of command is about thanking everybody in your past that has helped shape, mentor and



CPL. ALI AZIMI

Lt. Col. Daniel J. Wittnam takes command of 3rd Battalion, 7th Marine Regiment, from Lt. Col. Edward C. Greeley Feb. 22, during the unit's Change of Command Ceremony at Lance Cpl. Torrey L. Gray Field.

advise you," Greeley said. "Relinquishing command is about thanking those who have supported you during your command."

Greeley, a native of Denver, Colo., started his Marine Corps career in 1995 through the Officer Candidate Class program. His first duty station assignment brought him to the Combat Center as a rifle platoon commander for Suicide Charley. Since then, his role as a leader and teacher has taken him

See **LEADER** page A6

## MCI's no longer required for Sergeants Course

**Lance Cpl. Lauren Kurkimilis**  
Combat Correspondent

Marine Administrative Message 085/13 was released Jan. 21, stating that the Marine Corps Institute Sergeants Course is no longer required for sergeants to be considered Professional Military Education complete. Instead, the MarineNet course, Sergeants Course Distance Education Program, will be the new requirement for sergeants.

The change is to better prepare Marine sergeants for greater leadership roles and responsibilities, according to the MarAdmin.

The new DEP can be found on Marinenet. It was developed by the College of Distance Education and Training in cooperation with Marine Corps University. It will consist of nine sub-courses containing 29 lessons. The sub-courses include administration, communication, warfighting, squad operations, tactical planning and tools, training and leadership.

Enrolling in the DEP through MarineNet will

See **COURSE** page A6

## Maj. Gen. Berger visits Bridgeport

**Cpl. William J. Jackson**  
Combat Correspondent

The Combat Center Commanding General Maj. Gen. David H. Berger, along with his wife, Donna, made their first command visit to the Marine Corps Mountain Warfare Training Center, Bridgeport, Calif., Feb 25.

The couple welcomed the brisk 28-degree weather once they landed at the Minden-Tahoe Airport in Douglas County, Nev.

Berger and his wife then traveled to Pickel Meadows, home of the MCMWTC. During the hour-long van ride Sgt. Maj. James Kirkland, MCMWTC sergeant major, updated Berger on the personnel and the surrounding area, to include the recreational areas Marines and sailors utilize, like Topaz Lake, Squaw Valley and the Walker River. These areas attract high volumes of travelers based on the outdoor life the area promotes.

It's a highly attractive area to the Marines and there are plenty of outdoor activities, Kirkland said.

During the visit, the Bergers spent lunch with Col. J. J. Carroll Jr., commanding officer, MCMWTC. Carroll's wife Brande, and Kirkland also joined for lunch.

Berger and Carroll's casual conversations were filled with stories of their old units, common acquaintances and the experiences the Marines, sailors, civilian employees and their dependents encounter during their duration in

See **VISIT** page A6



CPL. WILLIAM J. JACKSON

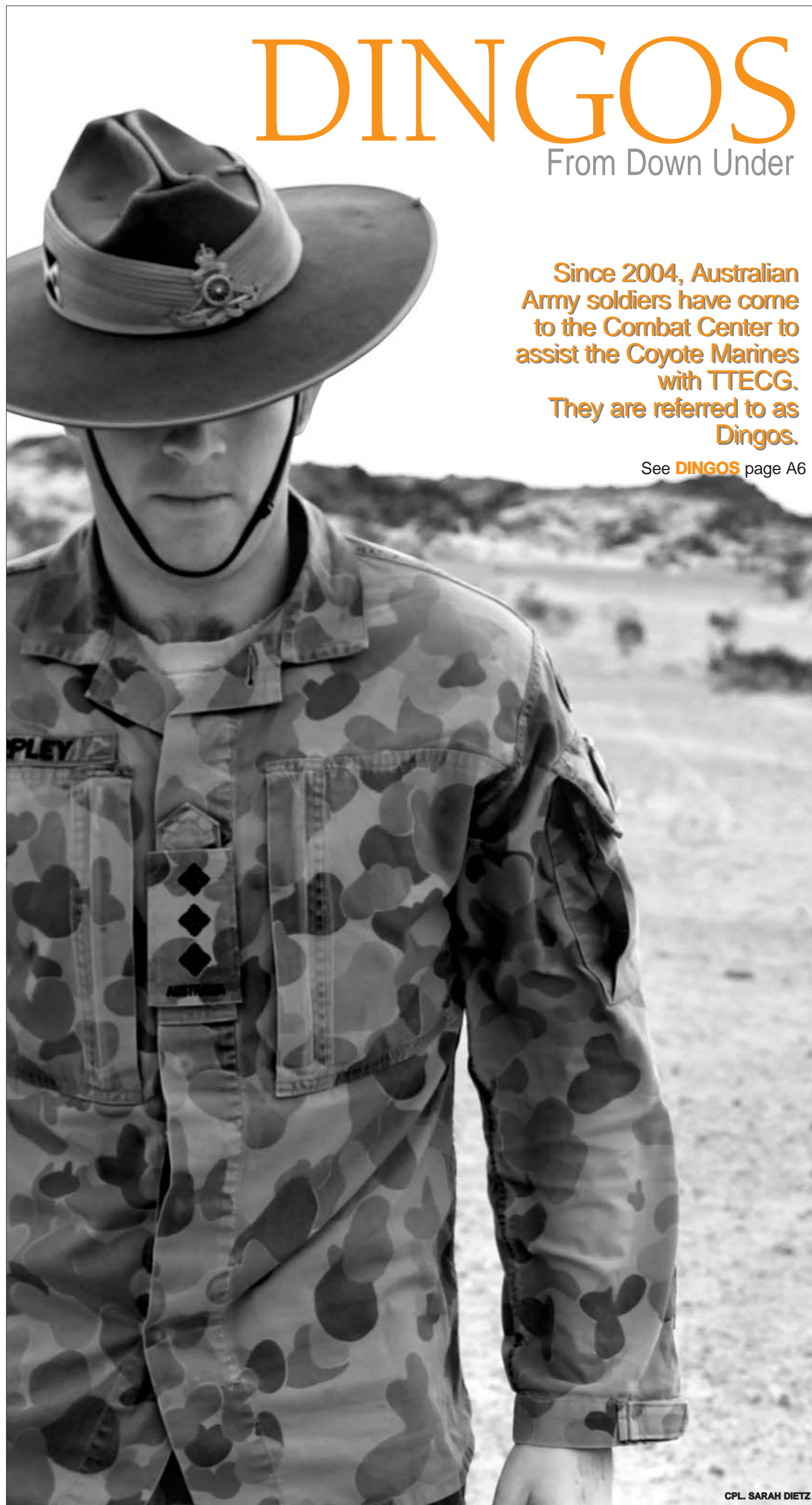
Capt. Kelly S. Breivogel (left), company commander, Company A, 1st Battalion, 9th Marine Regiment, speaks with Maj. Gen. David H. Berger (right), commanding general, MAGTFMC, MCAGCC, at the Marine Corps Mountain Warfare Training Center's Grouse Meadow training area Feb. 25.

# DINGOS

From Down Under

Since 2004, Australian Army soldiers have come to the Combat Center to assist the Coyote Marines with TTECG. They are referred to as Dingos.

See **DINGOS** page A6



CPL. SARAH DIETZ

# MARCH is WOMEN'S History Month

Check out next week's OP for stories about prominent women at the Combat Center.

# THINGS TO KNOW

## Navy-Marine Corps Relief Society

The Navy-Marine Corps Relief Society is a private non-profit charitable organization sponsored by the Department of the Navy and operates more than 200 offices at Navy and Marine Corps bases throughout the world.

The mission of the Navy-Marine Corps Relief Society is to provide, in partnership with the Navy and Marine Corps, financial, educational, and other assistance to members of the Naval Services of the United States, eligible family members, and retirees when in need.

The society provides need-based financial assistance to eligible recipients to include interest-free loans and grants, scholarships and interest-free loans for education. In addition, the society also offers financial counseling, budget for baby workshops, thrift shops and visiting nurse services.

NMCRS helps active duty and retired active and reserve sailors and Marines, eligible family members of active duty and retired active and reserve sailors and Marines who have died, reservists on extended active duty greater than 30 days, widows and mothers, 65 years or older, of deceased service members who have limited resources and no family to provide for their welfare.

The society helps ex-spouses who have not remarried and whose marriage to a service member lasted for at least 20 years while the service member was on active duty.

The society enjoys an active partnership with the Navy and Marine Corps and benefits extensively from the active involvement of the command structure at the installations where the society maintains a presence.

For more information about the Combat Center's NMCRS contact 830-6232.

## 2013 Intramural Volleyball season

The 2013 Intramural Volleyball season is scheduled to start March 15. The league is open to active duty service members, their families and DOD employees. Registration and the mandatory coaches meeting will be at Bldg. 1341 March 5 at 12 p.m. For more information call MCCS Sports at 830-4092.

## 4 Ways to Lower Your Risk for Heart Disease

**Shari Lopatin**  
TriWest Healthcare Alliance

One out of every four women dies from heart disease in the U.S., according to the National Heart, Lung, and Blood Institute.

It's the top killer of U.S. women and men.

Heart disease begins with damage to the lining inside the heart's arteries. Certain factors contribute to this damage, including smoking, high cholesterol, high blood pressure and high blood sugar.

However, you can help lower your risk for heart disease, and here are the top four ways to do it:

1) Maintain a healthy weight

The U.S. Department of Health and Human Services says that being overweight raises your risk for developing heart disease. Therefore, make sure that you maintain a healthy weight—or Body Mass Index (BMI)—for your height.

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention offer a BMI calculator on their website. After typing in your height and weight, the BMI calculator will show if you're within a healthy weight range. Should you discover you need to lose weight:

- Look at ways to exercise more throughout the week
- Consider decreasing your meal's portion sizes
- Eat more fruits, vegetables, and lean meats (such as poultry or fish)

2) Try to quit smoking

Smoking is a major risk factor for heart disease. The nicotine in cigarettes increases blood pressure; and high blood pressure damages your heart's arteries. Smoking can also cause blood clotting and may directly damage cells that line arteries in your heart.

3) Monitor your blood pressure—and lower it if necessary

"Years of high blood pressure can lead to heart disease," says the Department of Health and Human Services on its website. "People with high blood pressure often have no symptoms, so have your blood pressure checked every one to two years and get treatment if you need it."

Besides medication, you can lower your blood pressure by losing weight, limiting stress (or coping with it well) and exercising at least two hours and 30 minutes each week.

4) Get tested for diabetes and high cholesterol regularly

Too much cholesterol can clog your arteries and keep your heart from getting the blood it needs. And having diabetes raises your chances of developing heart disease. With both these issues, the only way to detect something wrong is through a blood test.

You can lower cholesterol by losing weight and eating a healthy diet full of fruits, vegetables and whole grains. And while you cannot fix diabetes once it's been diagnosed, you can help prevent it by maintaining a healthy weight and getting plenty of exercise.



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

## SUDOKU 2830-M

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See answers on page A6

## SWIT(C/H)EROO

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### ACROSS

- Greek consonants
- Presidential turndown
- Everyday article
- Oxygen-dependent organism
- Bring in
- Neighbor of Ukr.
- Tree surgeons' assistants?
- Little rascal
- Antarctic waters
- Sitarist Shankar
- The whole shebang
- Mall bag
- Political analyst Myers
- "Told you so!"
- La-la lead-in
- Alternative to contacts
- Lettuce unit
- Plow maker John
- Frugal trawler's motto?
- Arctic or Indian
- Impose, as taxes
- Snake, e.g.
- Ave. intersectors
- Actress \_\_ Dawn Chong
- Five Nations tribe
- At the acme of
- Toronto's prov.
- Land in which Farsi is spoken
- Collapsed
- \_\_ Cruces, NM
- Nag's chauffeur?
- Psyche part
- Get wind of
- Mexican miss, e.g.
- Cub Scout group
- Lucci's elusive prize
- Puts into office

### DOWN

- Prof's aides
- Villain's chuckle syllable
- Mess up
- Sightseeing trip
- Half the "Who's on First?" team
- Electric eye, e.g.
- Poem part
- Lighten up
- Operated a potter's wheel
- Add\_\_ (extras)
- Simple chords
- Jeep's modern kin
- Catches sight of
- Ashe Stadium org.
- Close up again
- Blond shade
- Wine sediment
- Jacob's first wife
- Donkeys have big ones
- U.S. Grant or R.E. Lee
- Pay a casual visit
- Newsman Rather
- Cooled down
- Israel's Begin
- Touch gently
- \_\_ Beach, FL
- Politico Bayh
- "Is it soup \_\_?"
- In need of laundering
- Cause to see red
- Use one's noodle
- Hobo fare
- Take baby steps
- Spin like a well-tossed pigskin
- Hi-fi pioneer Fisher
- Composer Khachaturian
- TV's Nick at \_\_
- Ship's pronoun
- Old \_\_ (London theater)
- Med. specialty
- \_\_ Tafari (Haile Selassie)

## OBSERVATION POST

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**Deputy Public Affairs Officer** - 1st Lt. Sin Y. Kook  
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**Press Chief** - Cpl. Sarah Dietz  
**Editor/Layout, Design** - Cpl. D. J. Wu

- Correspondents**  
 Cpl. William J. Jackson  
 Cpl. Ali Azimi  
 Lance Cpl. Lauren Kurkimillis

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

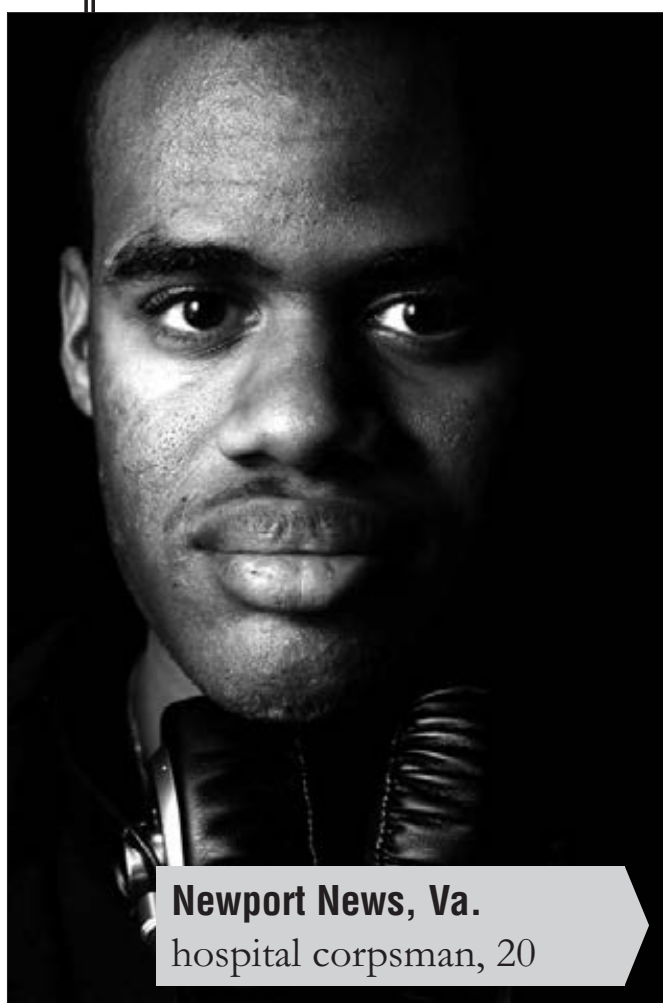
- In Oceanside:**  
 - Angelo's Kars, 222 S. Coast Hwy, Oceanside, Calif., 92054  
 - Angelo's Kars, 226 S. Coast Hwy, Oceanside, Calif., 92054  
**In San Diego:**  
 - Club Mustang, 2200 University Ave.  
 - Club San Diego, 3955 Fourth St.  
 - Get It On Shoppe, 3219 Mission Blvd.  
 - Main Street Motel, 3494 Main St.  
 - Vulcan Baths, 805 W. Cedar St.  
**In National City:**  
 - Dream Crystal, 15366 Highland Ave.  
 - Sports Auto Sales, 1112 National City Blvd.

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- 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



Newport News, Va.  
hospital corpsman, 20

WORTHINGTON IS A SEAMAN IN THE NAVY AND HAS SERVED FOR ALMOST TWO YEARS. HE HAS BEEN WITH NAVAL HOSPITAL 29 PALMS SINCE JUNE.



# Kelly WORTHINGTON

WORTHINGTON ALSO GOES BY HIS PERFORMANCE NAME, DJ NIGHTFIRE, AND HAS BEEN PERFORMING FOR FOUR YEARS.

- > **Growing up** I was really into martial arts and parkour but mostly music.
- > **I grew up** listening to a lot of hip hop; Biggie, Tupac, people like that.
- > **I did drum-line** and percussion in middle school. In high school, I played the vibraphone and marimba. Then my junior year I became drum-line captain and by senior year I was playing everything. I kind of had to be a jack-of-all-trades.
- > **I got into** making EDM (electronic dance music) by getting into hardstyle artists like Showtek, Noisecontrollers, Technoboy, Headhunters and Zadox.
- > **I think I like** the dark beats in it because I'm also into industrial. I also like drum and base, dubstep and trance.



- > **I used to throw** my own raves back in Virginia. I called it Hardstyle Meet-ups. Online, I would find ravers to meet at a park and I would DJ for them. Sometimes there would be as few as 12 people show up and sometimes up to around 40. Either way, it didn't matter. I just wanted to play music.
- > **I go to shows** purely for the music and the people. The dance floor is the safe zone. No one does things out there they shouldn't. Out there, it's all about good people and music.
- > **Hardstyle is my niche.** Everyone I've met who is into Hardstyle is super cool. It's sort of like a family.
- > **I've been in** several (hardstyle) groups. I started off in Knights of the Hardstyle, I was in Hardstyle Devastators and now I'm in the So Cal Hardstylers.
- > **I joined** So Cal Hardstylers in April when I first got here. I found them online and saw they were dedicated, so I threw them a message and said, "Hey, sign me up." They tested me, pretty much with some Hardstyle trivia, and I joined.
- > **We go to raves** together, but it's a lot more than that. For instance, because I DJ, if I wanted to go get a gig out in L.A., it would be really hard, but because I'm in So Cal Hardstylers it would be a lot easier because we network.
- > **Groups like this** are a worldwide thing. Like, when I was in Knights of the Hardstyle, we were based in Virginia but we had members in California, Pennsylvania, Texas and even Japan. The music is a bond we share. We look out for each other like brothers and sisters. It's just rave culture.
- > **Rave culture** is all about PLUR; peace, love, unity and respect. It's a culture that welcomes anybody and everybody that vibes.

Interviewed by Lance Cpl. Lauren Kurkimilis  
February 21, 2013

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CPL. ALEJANDRO PENA

# On muddy roads

Lance Cpl. Chester Sherman, a mortarman from Petersburg, Va., and assigned to Company E, 2nd Battalion, 7th Marine Regiment, reties his boots after changing out of his wet utility uniform following an overnight rainstorm in Shurakay, Helmand province, Afghanistan, Feb. 15. The Marines from Echo 2/7 were supporting Operation Dynamic Partnership, a multi-unit operation to retrograde all U.S. military equipment and personnel from village stability platform Shurakay. Photo by Cpl. Alejandro Pena



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# Getting ski legs

A Marine with 1st Battalion, 9th Marine Regiment, practices cross country skiing techniques at the Grouse Meadow training area at Marine Corps Mountain Warfare Training Center Bridgeport, Calif., Feb. 25. MCMWTC utilizes the Summer and Winter Mountain Leaders Course, Mountain Survival Course, Mountain Scout Sniper Course and many other courses to prepare Marines for high-altitude cold-weather environments. Between five thousand and 16-thousand personnel train at MCMWTC annually.

Photo by Cpl. William J. Jackson



CPL. WILLIAM J. JACKSON



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



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PHOTOS BY CPL. ALI AZIMI



Australian Army Capt. James Tarpley, Dingo 6, Tactical Training Exercise Control Group came to the Combat Center to aid TTECG in assessing Integrated Training Exercise. He is one of six Australian soldiers at the Combat Center.

**DINGOS, from A1**

They come to the Combat Center not only to aid the Coyote Marines with Tactical Training Exercise Control Group in Integrated Training Exercise assessments, but also here to learn different combat tactics and techniques from the Marine Corps.

There are currently six Dingos attached to TTECG on the Australian Army's 32nd rotation.

"We are here to give another set of eyes and a different perspective on the training," said Australian Army Capt. James Tarpley, Dingo 6, TTECG. "Australia and U.S. are very close allies. This promotes training between our two forces and countries. The benefits far out weigh any budgetary constraints both our countries are going through at the moment."

The U.S. forces work closely with the Australian Army overseas. The Dingos help familiarize the Marines training with their nation's military tactics, and in return, the Australians receive the same benefit from the Marines.

"The main emphasis was because we work together in Afghanistan," Tarpley said. "Australians work quite a lot in Helmand. The key outtake is that there is understanding in our respective techniques and procedures. The way we are in country, in the future in different gears of war, we still understand what each military's restrictions and also their strengths and weaknesses are."

"It's also a benefit that you guys can actually understand what we are saying sometimes. When you hear an Australian accent for the first time in country, people will give blank stares," Tarpley joked.

The opportunity to come to the Combat

Center gives the Dingos a unique outlook on the differences of how the two countries conduct training. The soldiers have a chance to see the positives and negatives in how the two militaries prepare for combat.

"Taking lessons from the training we do and utilize is definitely a huge factor why we are sent here," Tarpley said. "We maintain our standards but we take the lessons of what (the Marines) do better than us and apply them and continue to develop."

"It gives us perspective that we would rarely get back in Australia," Tarpley said. "What we don't have is the budget and the size that the Marine Corps works on. For example, a live fire company attack would be probably two weeks of blank fire drills."

"Seeing it from the U.S. perspective, the techniques and tactics are different, but the biggest thing for us is the exposure to that live-fire component. It's very rare for us to get our hands on," Tarpley added. "It's really good for a junior officer and noncommissioned officer to get that exposure."

The Dingos were sent here, not only to observe training, but also to experience a new training environment not readily available in Australia.

"We are strong allies, there's no feeling of being guarded. Everyone seems to love having Australians here," Tarpley said. "The thing I've been most impressed by is they're very accommodating and upfront with the information. They realize we do things slightly differently, so everything is very accommodating and welcoming. We've all been a little bit confused by the acronyms, though."

**LEADER, from A1**

across the Corps and overseas on multiple combat deployments.

During his speech to the Marines and attendees of the ceremony, Greeley took time to thank a few of the many people who have helped him during his time in command. However, the biggest thanks were to his wife, Jess.

"Your courage is amazing. It's humbling," Greeley said. "You've shown undying support to the family and the battalion. Now it's your turn."

Greeley's successor, Wittnam, also a Colorado native, started his Marine

Corps career much like Greeley in 1st Battalion, 7th Marine Regiment. Wittnam later decided to commission via the Enlisted Commissioning Program as an infantry officer. Throughout his years in the Corps he has led Marines, stateside, in Japan and in combat zones. Before his assignment to the Combat Center, Wittnam served as the operations officer for 5th Marine Regiment and says he is proud to lead the Marines of 3/7.

The battalion's reputation as warfighters precedes them, Wittnam said.

"No battalion has deployed more than 3/7 since 9/11," he added. "I am honored and humbled."

**VISIT, from A1**

the Sierra Nevada Mountains.

"We had eight feet of snow in eight days," Carroll recalled during lunch. "Most recently we had a Jane Wayne Day where they got to shoot M-16s."

Conversation soon turned to the reason for the day's visit. Carroll and Berger began a dialogue about the facilities, training courses and areas before they arrived at Exercise Control.

Berger received a detailed brief about the Winter Mountain Leaders Course 1-13, other courses MCMWTC has to offer and 1st Battalion, 9th Marine Regiment's current training tempo in the mountains.

"Aside from the technical aspects of what a unit gets out of being up here, the small unit leaders, confidence building and team cohesion is just as important and in some cases, more important than any technical part," Berger said. "That is what will establish the baseline for their deployment. If

that command team can pull together his team in 30 days, up here, at least he's on the right road."

Berger continued his tour the next day to key facilities around MCMWTC. He first stopped at the multipurpose building where classes and graduations are held to hear about the renovations and energy saving upgrades the building will hold in the spring of 2013.

"We're going to have 480 kilowatts of solar power," said Navy Lt. Adam Gerlach, resident officer in charge of construction, MCMWTC. "Right now our base capacity is only 12 (kilowatts). That's an order of magnitude difference, around 400 percent. We're going from nine boiler heaters to around one or two. The big thing is the solar; it's huge for this base."

From there, Berger visited the stables where 31 mules, 15 horses and a donkey are held. He spoke with the air officer, Capt. Jonathan Geisler, about the aviation side of MCMWTC and visited squad bays, the motor pool and facilities maintenance.



**COURSE, from A1**

automatically enroll the Marine in all nine sub-courses.

Once the lessons within each sub-course are completed, a randomized end-of-course exam will be generated which will require a proctor in order to take.

The Sergeants Course DEP will take approximately 60 hours to

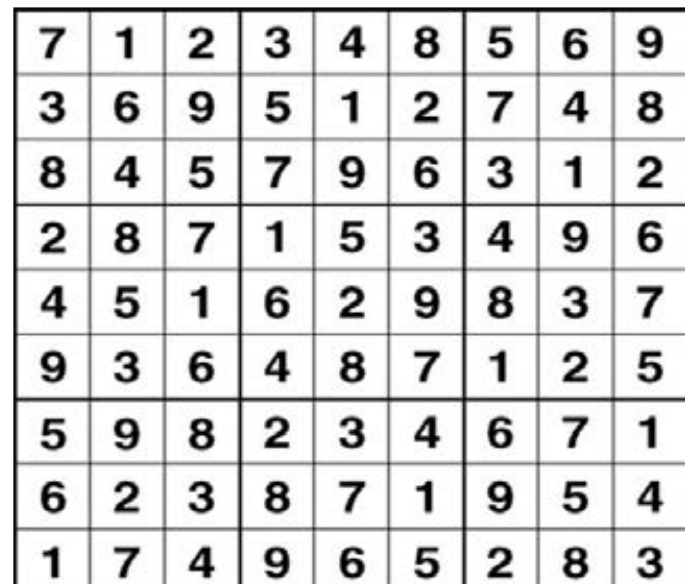
complete. This includes time to study, completion of each exercise and all nine end-of-course exams.

The course is available now and once it's completed, the Marine will be considered PME complete for grade and eligible for consideration for promotion.

The current Sergeants Course MCI is still being used. However, it will be discontinued as of July 1,

2013. Those enrolled in the MCI will have until Dec. 31, 2013, to complete the course or they will be disenrolled.

For more information on the Sergeants Course DEP, review frequently asked questions at [www.tecom.usmc.mil/cdet/sergeants\\_course.asp](http://www.tecom.usmc.mil/cdet/sergeants_course.asp) or contact the Marinenet help desk at 1-888-4DL-USMC.



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# The Art of Shooting

Story and photo illustration by  
Cpl. William J. Jackson



**Visualize. Squeeze, don't pull. Exhale. And...Fire.**

*Shooting is mentally demanding. It takes time and discipline. A shooter must be able to control their body enough to recreate a perfectly executed shot. Some shoot their whole lives, while others have barely started, but they all live a lifestyle dedicated to their passion. The Combat Center shooting team takes the best shooters on the base and pits them in competition. They travel as the representatives of the Combat Center. Every Marine is a rifleman, but the members of the Combat Center shooting team are professional riflemen.*

## Chief Warrant Officer 3 Duane Ledford

Ledford grew up in a small country town on a farm in Oregon. His family hunted for food and his mother, Judy O'Daniel, taught him how to shoot when he was a kid. In the early 80's Ledford unknowingly began what would be a long relationship with shooting.

"I was seven when I got a .22 caliber long rifle," Ledford said. "My mom taught me how to shoot. We hunted for winter food to get any additional meat. I was 13 when I hit my first deer."

Ledford eventually left Oregon and joined the Marine Corps. He began shooting in Marine Corps competitions when he was a lance corporal. His first competition was during a unit deployment program to Okinawa, Japan.

"I went and shot intramurals in Okinawa and in my opinion it went pretty well," Ledford said. "I didn't have the option, I was a lance corporal. I shot expert with both weapon systems and it was my first time shooting pistol."

As a career weapons expert,

Ledford's connection with shooting wasn't just a work situation. He brought life into the mix by naming his rifle after his soon to be daughter.

"(A name) that stands out in my mind the most was in 98," Ledford said. "The rifle's name was KC. We were planning on having a daughter and I wanted to name her Kaitlin Cynthia. We ended up having a daughter. Her first name is Kaitlin but her middle name is McKenzie."

Through years of competition shooting Ledford has forged a path as a shooter. He's created a distinctive process that guides him on the firing line in competitions. In a ritual of sorts Ledford doesn't wear his dog tags, watch or wedding ring. He visualizes the upcoming string of fire.

"I've been doing this for a while," Ledford said. "When I'm on the firing line, time doesn't even matter to me. I don't even have to keep track of time. I know my process is going to get me through."

**Ledford doesn't wear dogtags, a watch or his wedding ring when he shoots.**

**Ledford's connection with shooting was connected with his home life. He named his rifle after his soon-to-be daughter.**

**Gallagher's first time shooting a rifle was during bootcamp.**

**Shooting is woven into Gallagher's daily grind. He maps out every moment on the range throughout the day, as he showers or drives to work.**

## Philosophy

## Sgt. Wayne Gallagher

Gallagher first fired a rifle in 2004. He was in bootcamp and was one of three or four experts in his platoon. His previous engagement with a weapon was at 16 years old. He had fired a friend's shotgun once, just for fun.

"It was more of the fear of the unknown (at bootcamp)," Gallagher said. "After a few days, I was comfortable and familiar with firing the rifle. Everything just started falling into place."

Shooting is a repetitive and mental activity. At any point one tiny distraction can create problems for a shooter.

"I enjoy how mentally challenging it is," Gallagher said. "You have to stay focused and ignore all your previous shots. Don't rest on your laurels."

Gallagher was first introduced to competition shooting at Edson Range. He said it was a chance to break up the monotony of dealing with recruits as a coach.

"My first year on the team I only shot the depot competition and the western division. My second year I started travelling more.

I shot the depot again, I shot division, championships, two navy matches and then I came out to (3rd Battalion, 7th Marine Regiment.)"

A competitive shooter can't always be on the range shooting. For Gallagher, he's learned to embrace this truth and push past it. It's woven into his daily grind. Every string of fire he will shoot is played out in his head. He's in the shower and he's mapping his every movement, the entire shot process at the 500-yard line. When he's driving to work he's running through his mental checklist of where every piece of gear is in his cart; it goes in the same place every time.

"When I get to the line I know I have my glove at the base of the cart," Gallagher said. "I know I have my web sling or my leather sling. Everything I have has its own area of the cart. The more you run through the process in your head the more successful you are. Shooting is like 90 percent mental."

Shooting is more than just a week to re-qualify for Ledford and Gallagher. The two Marines have carved out their paths as expert weapons handlers. What started out as a means of eating for Ledford and being qualified in bootcamp for Gallagher has evolved into an everlasting relationship.

"Champions are made in the offseason," Ledford said, alluding to his philosophy on shooting. "Always snap in. You have to control your sights with the trigger. We learn how to use the M16 and M9 but we can apply those fundamentals and those skills to any weapon system in the Marine Corps. The unseen detail is the embodiment of teamwork that the Marines establish after working together for so long."

They have taught and continue to teach Marines basic marksmanship skills. It's not just a job. It's become a part of their lives. It's in the way they speak, the way they think and tell stories.

"Look at the front sight and you're going to have a good time. Look at the target and you're going to have a bad time," Gallagher said, quoting a friend of his. "Consistency is key. Everybody takes bad shots and don't dwell on negative things."

# ‘Cutting Edge’ sharpens skills



CPL. D. J. WU

A CH-46E drops off Marines with 3rd Battalion, 7th Marine Regiment, at Range 410A as part of a squad supported attack Feb. 26.

**Cpl. Ali Azimi**  
 Combat Correspondent

Marines with 3rd Battalion, 7th Marine Regiment, conducted a series of day and night live-fire squad supported attacks at Range 410A Feb. 26.

Squad sized exercises are integral to sharpening the skills of Marines for any upcoming deployment they may face.

“In Afghanistan a lot of the operation are at the squad level,” said Sgt. Dominic Epkey, squad leader, Company K, 3/7.

Training at the squad level also allows squad leaders to see the proficiency of their Marines.

Command is key for live-fire maneuver, according to Epkey. It’s important to be confident that his team leaders will carry out the tasks he assigns them.

The exercise started with a helicopter insert at a nearby landing zone. The Marines departed the helos and made their way to the range, where they

grabbed their ammo and headed toward their objective.

The squads utilized mortars and machine guns as they maneuvered through the trenches and suppressed the simulated enemy fire.

The Marines faced many obstacles, such as concertina wire and the rough rocky terrain while suppressing and evading the simulated fire from the enemy.

They were also forced to deal with simulated casualties. Squad leaders took charge and assigned Marines to evacuate the casualty as others provided security for them.

Working together, 3/7 Marines were able to meet their objectives and successfully finish the exercise, but their day was not done yet.

With practice and repetition of the live-fire maneuvers the squads will continue to get better, said Espkey.

Their day-time shoot was followed by a night portion, pushing Marines to train further to harness their skills.



CPL. ALI AZIMI

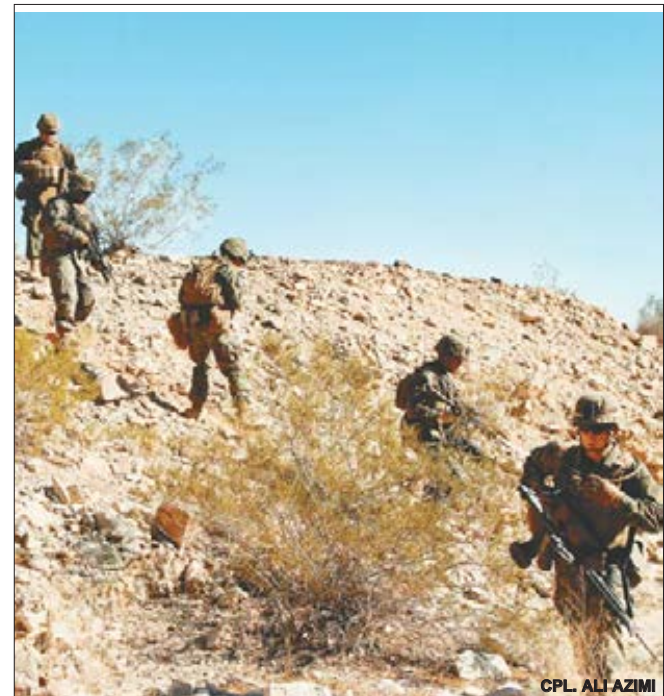
Cpl. David Letera, infantryman, Co. K., 3/7, acts as a simulated casualty during a squad supported attack at Range 410A Feb. 26.

**[Far right]** Marines with Co. K, 3/7, maneuver through Range 410A during a squad supported attack Feb. 26.

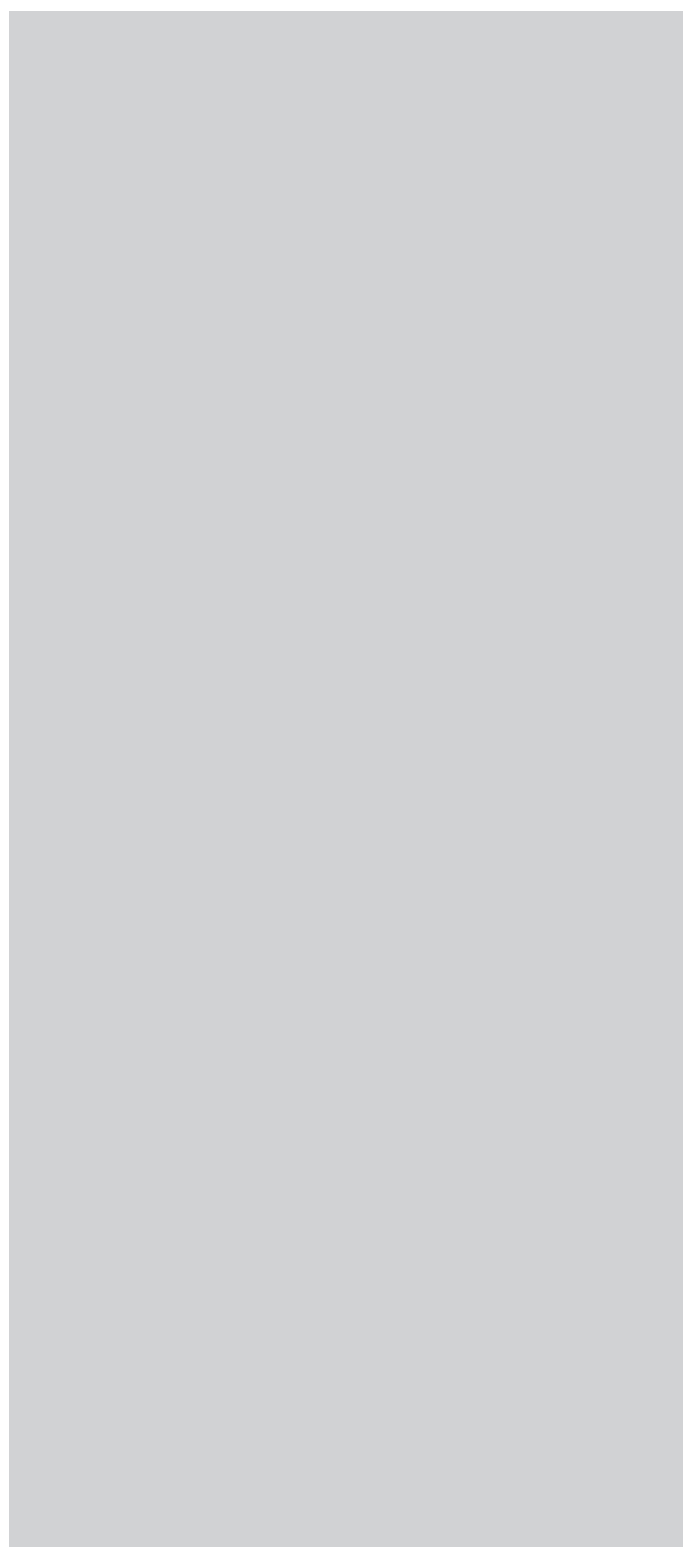
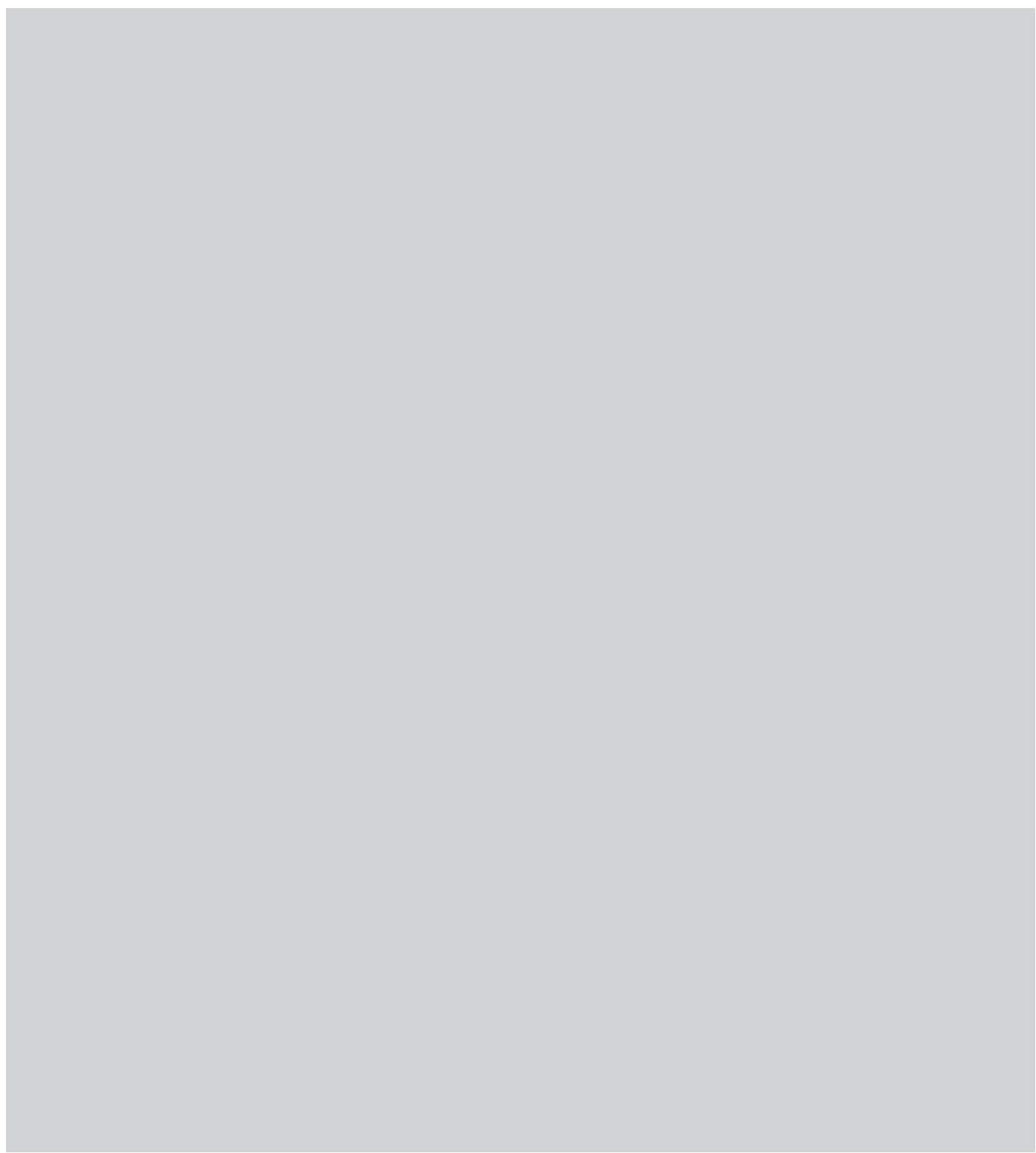


CPL. ALI AZIMI

**[Right]** Pvt. William Brown, rifleman, Co. K, 3/7, provides security for mortarmen during a squad supported attack at Range 410A Feb. 26.



CPL. ALI AZIMI







# CAN'T *be* BROKEN

Story and photos by  
**Lance Cpl. Lauren Kurkimilis**

*Lady Justice was born to be butchered. Her life was created for the purpose of harvesting estrogen from her mother during pregnancy. Lady Justice, a newborn foal, was labeled a by-product of this industry to be sold for slaughter. Her fate changed when she was rescued by an organization called Anamali, who found her a home at Vandenburg Air Force Base, Calif. She was cared for and given a life of worth.*

Cpl. Stephen Kirkwood III spent his childhood around horses on his grandparents' farms in Holland, Mich. His father was an Army Ranger and in 2008, when Kirkwood was 18, he left home to follow his family's military tradition and joined the Marine Corps.

*During her time in the Air Force, Lady J performed security sweeps along the shoreline and in wooded areas unreachable by vehicle. She was an integral part of military operations and even helped discover a marijuana farm worth \$3 million on the outskirts of the base. Lady J eventually developed white line disease in her hoof and after 10 years of loyal service was considered no longer fit for duty. It looked as though her fate was once again uncertain.*

Kirkwood was assigned to 3rd Battalion, 7th Marine Regiment and came to call Twentynine Palms home. In Sept. 2011, he deployed for the second time to Afghanistan. While on a foot patrol, Kirkwood was seriously injured when he was hit by an IED. He took shrapnel to the legs that caused him to lose 20% of the flesh in his left knee and 10% of the tendon. His life and military career were forever changed.

*Since Lady J was no longer able to earn her keep at the Air Force base, she was taken in by the Jack Auchterlonie Memorial Equine Sanctuary in Twentynine Palms where she and many other retired and disabled horses are cared for and rehabilitated.*

Kirkwood is now in Wounded Warrior Battalion West and stationed aboard the Combat Center. When he and his peers are given the chance to work with the horses at JAMES, two unique stories collide and an unexpected friendship is born.

## ***A friendship found***

Although Kirkwood helps to care for many of the other horses on the ranch, he took to Lady J almost immediately because of the challenge of her size and demeanor and now she holds a special place in his heart.

"Lady Justice caught my attention from the start," Kirkwood said. "I don't know, I think it's from the way she looks. She's big and intimidating, but she's soft and sweet too. She really just drew me in."

Kirkwood has become comfortable with Lady J and learned her personality very well.

"She's very laid back and when you get to grooming her," Kirkwood said. "It's like she knows she's a princess in some way. She just loves the attention. When she's in her stall, she looks calm and she looks relaxed but as soon as we get her in the turnout, she wants to go. She gets very anxious to please me and follow my commands. She's got energy but not so much to where she can't stand still. She's experienced."

After two years of living at the sanctuary, the owners and staff of the ranch have completely cleared Lady J's white line disease and she is now able to saddle-up again.

"I haven't gotten a chance to ride her," Kirkwood said. "They don't have a saddle big enough for her yet. But looking at the way she walks, at her stride, I can tell she would be a very smooth ride. The way she sways her hips when she walks would be easy to follow. When you ride a horse, you don't put your feet in the stirrups and try to stand and you don't just try to stay perfectly still. You have to move with the horse and develop a rhythm."

## ***Building a bond***

Lady J and Kirkwood have spent the past month developing their trust for one another. This is an integral part of horsemanship.

"The horse has to trust you to make proper decisions when telling it what to do and you have to trust the horse to listen," Kirkwood said. "The whole work up to riding builds that bond, builds that trust between you and the horse. It goes both ways."

Kirkwood has developed a specific routine with caring for Lady J.

"Usually I'll groom her and then I'll pick her hooves, basically getting



her comfortable with me," Kirkwood said. "I'll pet her down and I try to just stay calm, not make any sudden movements. If I'm brushing her or anything, I always keep one hand on her so she knows where I'm at. Horses have a pretty big blind spot so she needs to know where I am. If I do that, she'll look after me and make sure not to step on me."

It took weeks of familiarization before Kirkwood was ready to take the 1,900 lb Lady J out of the stable.

"Once I had her out in the turnout and I had her lunging," Kirkwood said. "When you're lunging a horse, they're running but you're sending them out and you're telling them when to turn around. When you do that, the horse starts to understand that you're the one giving the commands so you're the leader. And eventually, because horses are pack animals, they see you as the leader and they will have respect for you. They'll look to you for guidance, for security."

Despite Lady J's massive size, she is known to be gentle and sweet. Even the owners noted that she has grown fond of Kirkwood and is happy to be in his company.

"When I got done lunging her and took her out of the turnout, she was right there behind me, almost asking, 'What do I do next?'" Kirkwood said. "She wanted to please me."

## ***Healing hearts***

"I think that coming to this ranch helps give us a better perspective on other people's injuries or illnesses," Kirkwood said. "You can't just go into Wounded Warrior Battalion and look at someone who is ill and not injured for instance and think, 'You're just ill, not injured? Oh, you're fine.' You can't judge them like that. Well, it's the same thing here. A horse may not be injured but maybe they've been abused. So that horse may look normal to the eye, but in fact, they're ill too."

These Marines are a part of the horsemanship program hosted by WWBn and visit the sanctuary twice a week to care for the horses, develop the unique bond between man and beast and will eventually come to ride them.

"I've had horses my whole life," said Kirkwood, "I really like working with Lady Justice. It relaxes me and when your mind is relaxed so is your body. When your body is relaxed you can actually learn to heal."



# Liberty Call

## 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.morongocasinoresort.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, March 1

6 p.m. - Les Miserables, Rated PG-13  
 9 p.m. - A Haunted House, Rated R  
 Midnight - Zero Dark Thirty, Rated R

### Saturday, March 2

10:30 a.m. - Free Matinee Toy Story 2, Rated PG  
 12:30 p.m. - Mama, PG-13  
 3 p.m. - Texas Chainsaw 3D, Rated R  
 6 p.m. - Broken City, Rated R  
 9 p.m. - The Last Stand, Rated R  
 Midnight - Hansel and Gretel, Rated R

### Sunday, March 3

12:30 p.m. - The Impossible, Rated PG-13  
 3 p.m. - Gangster Squad, Rated R  
 6 p.m. - Hansel and Gretel 3D, Rated R  
 9 p.m. - Parker, Rated R

### Monday, March 4

7 p.m. - Zero Dark Thirty, Rated R

### Tuesday, March 5

7 p.m. - Hansel and Gretel 3D, Rated R

### Wednesday, March 6

7 p.m. - The Last Stand, Rated R  
 8:30 p.m. Texas Chainsaw, Rated R

### Thursday, March 7

No Movie Playing, Gary Sinese & Lt. Dan Band Preparation

# Latest Nicholas Sparks romance adaptation is full of surprises



COURTESY PHOTO

## NEIL POND

### "Safe Haven"

Starring: Julianne Hough and Josh Duhamel  
 Directed by Lasse Hallström  
 Rated PG-13, 115 min.

A young woman runs down the street and into the night, frightened and fleeing from something — or someone. She's carrying a large kitchen knife.

Before you can say, "Hey, that's Julianne Hough in a brown wig!" she's lobbed off her hair, dyed it blonde, cloaked herself in a hoodie and ducked onto a bus headed south — just seconds ahead of the frazzled Boston cop desperately trying find her before she can slip away.

"Safe Haven" makes the eighth of author Nicholas Sparks' wildly popular, fem-centric romance novels, including "The Notebook," "Message in a Bottle," "A Walk to Remember" and "Dear John," to get the big-screen treatment. Like most of its predecessors, it's set in a Southern coastal community, features an attractive young couple who meet, court and fall in love under stressful circumstances, share at least one mega-passionate kiss, get caught in a rainstorm, and frequently paddle off in a canoe.

All of that happens in "Safe Haven," which could very well be the name of the quaint South Carolina seaside burg (it's actually Southport) where Hough's character, going by the alias of Katie, hops off the coach. There she meets the hunky widowed general-store owner Alex (Josh Duhamel) and his precocious daughter, a dollop of pure, pint-sized sunshine, and his withdrawn son, who's still having trouble emerging from behind the clouds after the untimely death of his mom from cancer.

Katie (whose makeup looks amazing, by the way, after a night of sleeping on the sand) tries hard to keep a low profile, but is eventually drawn to Alex's sheer good-guy-ness. (Surely you're not surprised.) She buys a gallon of "Fresh Start" paint (get it?) to cover up the kitchen floors in the secluded woodland cabin in which she's going to begin her new life.

At this point, however, we still don't know much about

her old life. But flashbacks reveal bits of domestic-nightmare "Sleeping With the Enemy" DNA with every peek behind the curtain. The movie also interrupts the idyllic day-to-day rhythms of Southport to remind us of the threatening, escalating investigation by the police detective (David Lyons) in Boston, who's disturbingly obsessed with tracking Katie down...

Meanwhile, Katie also makes a new friend, another young, curiously rootless woman named Jo (Cobie Smulders, Robin on TV's "How I Met Your Mother"), who becomes her confidant, cheerleader and soul mate. "Life is full of second chances," Jo tells her.


"Second chances" may be the main theme of this story, but "surprises" comes in a close second. Of course, no one in Southport knows who Katie really is — and boy, are they ever surprised when they find out...or think they've found out...or find out what...oh, whatever. But there are other surprises, too, and one of them is a real golly-whopper.

"Safe Haven" takes its own sweet time to get to where it's going, often moving along at the pace of that leisurely paddled canoe, at least until the final 20 minutes, when it arrives at the big, explosive, action-y roll call of everything and everyone, in one place, at one time, plus fireworks.

But acclaimed Swedish director Lasse Hallström ("The Cider House Rules," "Salmon Fishing in the Yemen," and one other Sparks-to-screen adaptation, "Dear John") is certainly no slouch behind the camera, and he seems to be giving his audience exactly what his audience wants. "Safe Haven," released on Valentine's Day, has all the elements of a perfectly calibrated crowd-pleaser, especially for the females to which Sparks' novels are targeted.

But many males may also be able to relate, in a perverse way, to the scene in which Katie is coerced into one of the town's maritime customs, nighttime fish gigging. As she plunges a spear into the water and immediately pierces a hapless flounder — a quick, clean, get-it-over-with kill—a lot of guys who find themselves on the long, strung-out hook-and-line for another date-night Sparks-fest of wet Southern kisses, soaking rain and soul-bearing seaside conversations might find themselves secretly wishing for the same swift, merciful fate.

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