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OBSERVATION POST

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‘War Dogs’ come home

Cpl. Ali Azimi
Combat Correspondent

Marines with 2nd Battalion, 7th Marine Regiment, returned to a cheering crowd of families and loved ones during their homecoming event at Del Valle Field Tuesday.

The field had been occupied by 2/7’s fans for hours prior to their arrival. The crowd faced intense winds and clouds of dust blew into the air as they waited for the battalion’s return.

The Marines marched from the battalion’s armory to the field where they were greeted with celebration. Some Marines were nearly knocked over as loved ones tackled them with a hug.

For some families it was a first deployment, but for others it was a well-known part of life in the Marine Corps.

Chelsea Meares was in attendance at the event to welcome her husband, Lance Cpl. Aaron Meares, a mortarman with Weapons Company, 2/7. In their three years of marriage, they have faced two deployments together. She says her



CPL. AZI AZIMI

Lance Cpl. Travis Titchenell, mortarman, 2nd Battalion, 7th Marine Regiment, is welcomed home by his family during the battalion's homecoming at Del Valle Field Tuesday.

experience with the military has made it easier, but it feels good to have him back.

The battalion returned from a seven-month deployment to Afghanistan in support of Operation Enduring Freedom. During their deployment, they provided support to Afghan National Forces and trained them to become self-sufficient in the fight against the Taliban.

They were replaced in their mission overseas by 3rd Battalion, 4th Marine Regiment, who deployed in March.

More homecoming photos on page A6



1st Lt. Ross Pospisil, platoon commander, Company A, 1st Combat Engineer Battalion, skis up a mountain pass near the Marine Corps Mountain Warfare Training Center's skylift training area April 2. Pospisil conducted land navigation during the Winter Mountain Leaders Course. Graduates of the course will become Mountain Warfare Combat Instructor certified and be an assest to their commanding officer.

Elevation, skis humble leaders

Stories and photos Cpl. William J. Jackson
Combat Correspondent

Marines with the Marine Corps Mountain Warfare Training Center's Winter Mountain Leaders Course 2-13 in Bridgeport, Calif., conducted a land navigation exercise near the ski-lift training area April 2.

The WMLC is designed to train Marines to become subject matter experts in cold weather operations. The winter mountain operations teach Marines to conduct enhanced movement, control of fires, intelligence gathering, sustainment and force protection in complex snow and ice covered terrain.

“The Marines are constantly moving, learning and dealing with the elements,” said Staff Sgt. Keola Lee, chief instructor, Mountain Leaders Course. “Everybody gets humbled out here.”

The 25 students, from corporal to captain, geared up on skis and began traversing the terrain to find eight-digit grid coordinates given to them by their instructors. The students are training to be advisors to a commanding officer and his staff whenever their unit is deployed in snowy mountainous terrain.

“If you look at the map, multiple countries have mountainous terrain and those passes are often used as ship to

See **WMLC** page A5



CPL. WILLIAM JACKSON

Lance Cpl. James Robbins, infantryman, Company G, 2nd Battalion, 3rd Marine Regiment, and Cpl. Corey Sammons, team leader, Co. F, 2/3, prepare to fire during a biathlon April 3.

Scout skiers conduct biathlon

Marines with 2nd Battalion, 3rd Marine Regiment, competed in a biathlon, a sport that combines cross-country skiing and shooting, during the Scout Skiers Course held at the Marine Corps Mountain Warfare Training Center in Bridgeport, Calif., April 3.

Before the Marines began the biathlon, they completed a 10 hour movement through the snow-covered Humboldt-Toiyabe National Forest, from Landing Zone Robin to Range 1100. For most of the Marines, it was their first time on skis.

“All this week we’ve been teaching them route selection, avalanche avoidance and how to ski,” said Staff Sgt. Richard Sweetman, chief instructor, Scout Skiers Course. “They find the route that a company or battalion can get up to get to

See **BIATHLON** page A2



A DAY IN Her BOOTS

By Lance Cpl. Alejandro Bedoya

Tevin Speight and *Catherine Oliva-Speight* are not the typical Marine Corps couple. They were together for two and a half years before Catherine became a Marine. Catherine graduated from boot camp on February 28, 2012. Once Catherine started her career, she married Tevin. They got married on January 4.

Catherine: When I joined, I honestly thought we were going to break up. You see the commercials and where the Marine Corps can take you but I was afraid of where my relationship would end up.

Tevin: I didn’t know whether I wanted to put any effort in the relationship or not at first but I am glad I did. It’s working out in my favor.

Catherine: It is funny because I’ll say Marine Corps jargon and he won’t understand anything I am saying.

Tevin: I was worried because the day I terminated my lease, I found out there was a chance she was going to deploy in April and I was getting here in March.

I didn’t want her to leave but she was saying she wanted to and it’s what she trains for, she was giving me the whole nine on why she wanted to go.

Catherine: I was really lucky because I had my car at school and he had family that lived right outside the gates in Augusta, Ga., so I could see him on the regular.

See **HER BOOTS** page A5



SGT. NED JOHNSON

Navy Capt. Francis Foley, a Catholic priest and the 3rd Marine Aircraft Wing chaplain, reads a prayer during an Easter Mass in Camp Leatherneck March 30.

Chaplains tour Helmand province

Sgt. Ned Johnson
1st Marine Division

CAMP LEATHERNECK, Afghanistan — A new chaplain had just been assigned to a Marine infantry unit in Vietnam in 1967 when his unit was ambushed. At one point, a young Marine fell mortally wounded. The chaplain ran to his side to offer the man last rites.

As the chaplain said his prayers, the man looked up at him and said, “Thank you, Father. I was an altar boy.” The Marine died less than ten minutes later.

This is the story Navy Capt. Francis Foley, the 3rd Marine Aircraft Wing chaplain, heard from the Naval Academy chaplain when he visited the school as a young parish priest in 1983. From that point forward, Foley knew he wanted to be a Navy chaplain so he could have the opportunity to

provide services to service members on the front lines of combat.

Foley joined Cmdr. Michael Williams, the Regimental Combat Team 7 chaplain, on a two-week tour of the smaller bases in the RCT-7 area of operations to provide Easter services and counseling starting March 23.

These smaller bases often do not have chapels or a chaplain so religious services are not always conducted regularly.

“The greatest part is that we are able to provide for a need that is there,” said Williams, from Kodiak, Alaska. “It’s not something we have to provide, but a need that the Marines [and other service members] have.”

Foley is in Afghanistan for only a few weeks to help with Easter services for Catholics, but he said the trip is not an accident.

See **CHAPLAIN** page A5

Semper RIDE

Bringing together 1st MarDiv Riders

Cpl. Ali Azimi
Combat Correspondent

More than a hundred motorcycle riders filled the seats of the Combat Center's Sunset Cinema as part of a 1st Marine Division motorcycle ride. The division, along with Semper Ride, teamed up with the Star Motorcycle School to give Marines a day of riding and instruction.

Star Motorcycle School, an award-winning advanced riding school that provides training nation-wide, teamed up with 1st MarDiv for the event for the first time ever.

Unfortunately the ride was canceled due to Twentynine Palm's blaring wind conditions but the riders were able to go one-on-one with their command and professional rider Jason Pridmore about riding in the Corps.

The event started with unconventional motorcycle video projected over the theater's white screen. Marines and sailors in the audience witnessed stunts in the dirt and laps around a race track performed by Marines at Marine

Corps Base Camp Pendleton, Calif., as part of the Star Motorcycle School's camp. The motorcycle camp gives patrons instruction on and off road by professional riders. More than a few Marines in the crowd expressed interest in participating in such a camp at the Combat Center when Maj. Gen. Ronald Bailey, commanding general, 1st Marine Division, stepped out to speak with them. Bailey took the time to speak to the riders individually and as a group.

"This course is important. (Marines) participating in it is important," Bailey said addressing the crowd. "The Semper Ride program is not about me, it's about you. Helping you, improving you. Doing things and making you a better rider."

In addition to stating his confidence in the program and in the Marines, he asked every rider present to take a pledge to be safe, sober and responsible riders.

"I want (Marines) to have the courage to do the right thing all the time," Bailey added. "Be courageous and do the right thing."



Combat Center motorcycle riders came together for 1st Marine Division's Blue Diamond Ride April 9, 2013. The day provided instruction from professional rider, Jason Pridmore, and Maj. Gen. Ronald Bailey, 1st Marine Division Commanding General.

BIRTH ANNOUNCEMENTS

ARES HUNTER JIMENEZ
Born on: March 28, 2013
Born to: Miguelangel and Brianna Jimenez

REMINGTON JOHN SEDELMAIER
Born on: March 27, 2013
Born to: Justin and Amber Sedelmaier

ARCHER WILLIAM MASON
Born on: March 5, 2013
Born to: Lazarus and Andrea Mason

MELODY JEM MOBLEY
Born on: March 27, 2013
Born to: Jacob and Mianne Mobley

JAYLEN NATHANIEL JACKSON
Born on: March 25, 2013
Born to: Kian Jackson and Ashley Kennedy

FIONA ASKAL BOYD
Born on: March 22, 2013
Born to: Markus and Alemtschay Boyd

MARCELO GIOVANI MIYASAKI
Born on: March 22, 2013
Born to: Doni and Leanne Miyasaki

EMMA BELLE LOPEZ
Born on: March 20, 2013
Born to: Kevin and Benazir Lopez

GAVIN LOUIS JOHN GRENIES
Born on: March 18, 2013
Born to: Jason and Judy Grenies

MASON IAN JENKINS
Born on: March 18, 2013
Born to: Devin and Amber Jenkins

EMMA SUSANN BROOKS
Born on: March 18, 2013
Born to: Tylor and Terry Brooks

VALENCIA SARA ROSADO
Born on: March 14, 2013
Born to: Andres and Nagma Rosado

PEYTON SCOTT BISHOP
Born on: March 15, 2013
Born to: Brandan and Jana Bishop

JENSEN CHRISTOPHER BISHOP
Born on: March 13, 2013
Born to: Jeffrey and Malory Bishop

ETHAN JAMES DEAN
Born on: March 11, 2013
Born to: Gordon and Amy Dean

LEXI RAE GUTIERREZ
Born on: March 10, 2013
Born to: Benjamin and Faye Gutierrez

BIATHLON, from A1

their objectives. Scout skiers are able to get up on ridges to watch their areas. Mainly, (the course) is about route selection for the companies to get them out of avalanche areas."

The three week course pushes Marines to their limits and teaches the basics of scout skiing so they can go back to the units and serve as pathfinders during 2/3's final Mountain Exercise.

"We are constantly on the skis so we're going to teach them about the terrain and the dangers of avalanches," said Lance Cpl. Luis Villalpando, assistant platoon leader, Company F, 2/3. "They should always be pushing themselves to strive for success. It's a mental game."

During the biathlon the Marines skied more than four miles and fired their weapons in the standing, kneeling and prone positions. The 10 hour movement and four hours of sleep in a 48 hour timeframe was a means of inducing stress before they stepped up to the firing line.

"They're doing pretty good," Sweetman said. "They're getting beat up just from the elevation from Hawaii to here. They've got a good attitude about it."

As the Marines took a day to compete against each other, their main goal was to be comfortable in a stressful environment. Every moment counts towards survival.

"I've learned how to survive using the fundamentals," Villalpando said. "Once you get the basics down, it gets a little easier. It's tough, especially when you're on skis. It's definitely a challenge."

flickr

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You Tube

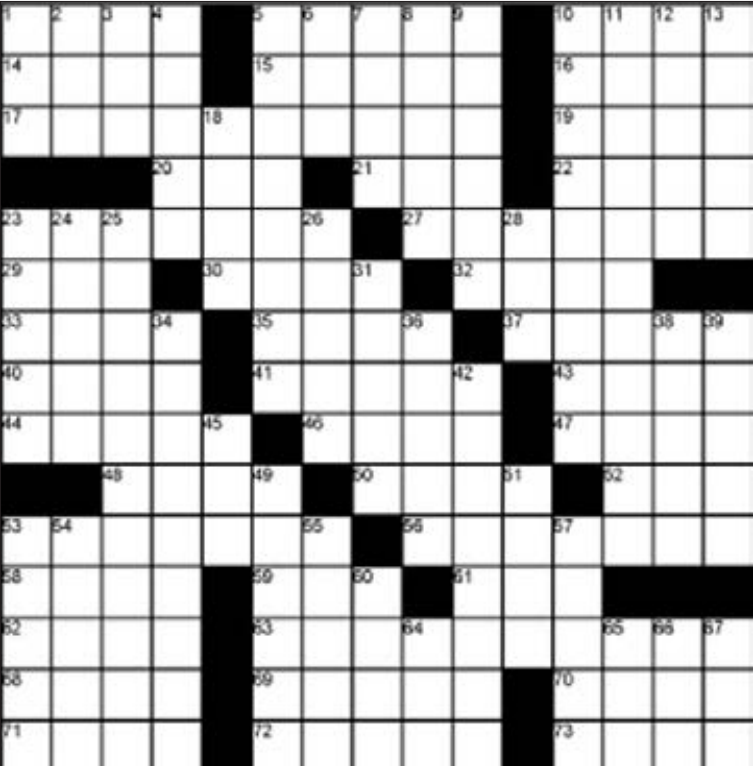
Hey Combat Center fans – Spread the word! The Combat Center has its own YouTube channel. Find it at <http://www.youtube.com/user/CombatCenterPAO>.

facebook

Visit the official MCAGCC facebook page at <http://www.facebook.com/thecombatcenter>

MOVIES

- ACROSS**
- Tourney type
 - Tent securer
 - "Don't look ___!"
 - Twistable cookie
 - 1998 animated Disney film
 - ___Pei (wrinkly dog)
 - 1991 Bette Midler stag movie?
 - Hospital fluids
 - Mineo of moviedom
 - ___ Claire, WI
 - Mos. when World Series begin
 - Reductions in night lighting, in wartime
 - Pocket jingler
 - Sked guess
 - Riga resident
 - Tiny amount
 - Deuce or trey
 - Santa's landing area
 - Zesty dip
 - Jai ___
 - Sudden burst
 - Watch over
 - "___ luck!"
 - Culinary direction
 - "Zounds!"
 - Brewery stock
 - Mt. Rushmore's state: Abbr.
 - Luau instrument
 - Had on
56. Ticked off
58. Anderson of "WKRP"
59. Hoopster Erving, familiarly
61. Make zigzags, maybe
62. "The joke's ___!"
63. 1990 Robert De Niro stag movie?
68. Baseball's Musial
69. Give the slip to
70. Word on Irish stamps
71. "Getting warmer," e.g.
72. Passover dinner
73. Lab procedure
- DOWN**
- Sock-in-the-gut grunt
 - Debate side
 - Sonnet's conclusion?
 - "False!"
 - Ore processors
 - Rub-a-dub-dub site
 - Natural emollient
 - Eskimo craft
 - Came after
 - Business partner
 - 1996 Jim Carrey stag movie?
 - Retail centers
 - Rub out
 - Do a trucker's job
 - Stick-on design
 - Author Calvino
 - 1976 Dustin Hoffman stag movie?
 - Subway map points



- Soph. and jr.
- Track tipsters
- Space out
- Mexican artist Kahlo
- Viper, for one
- Tacked on
- Go to a new school
- Well-put
- Marsh plants
- "Trick" joint
- Walk through water
- Loren's husband
- Teed off
- Little hooter
- "The Grapes of Wrath" family name

See answers on page A5

SUDOKU 2872-M

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- Yucca Tobacco Mart, 57602 29 Palms Hwy.
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- In Palm Springs:**
- Village Pub, 266 S. Palm Canyon Dr.

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WHAT I'VE LEARNED



John Providence, Rhode Island, communications director, 39

LEWANDOWSKI

> **Some junior Marines** will log me into the duty book and just put chief warrant officer and not put the 3. A lot of them don't know how to read the warrant officer rank. So, I'll ask them, "Hey, what rank do you think I am?" and they'll say, "Uh ... I don't know, sir." I just laugh. It's a good chance for them to learn what the ranks look like.

> **We get 4,000-5,000** students here (at the Marine Corps Communication-Electronics School) every year.

> **I moved to** Phoenix when I was 17 and that's when I joined the Marine Corps.

> **I dropped out** of high school when we were living in Rhode Island and it took me a few months to realize the mistake I had made. We moved to Phoenix around the beginning of the school year and I re-enrolled in school. After I graduated, I decided to join.

> **It was the right thing** to do. My uncle was in the Army but besides that, no one else had been in the military. I wanted to make sure I was doing the right thing for my life.

> **I joined 20 years ago** and my thought was that when I got out I would have the G.I. Bill and that I could take college classes at night time. Things didn't exactly go as I had thought. In my first enlistment, I think I took two

LEWANDOWSKI IS THE COMMUNICATIONS DIRECTOR AT MCCES AND SAYS THE ONE THING THAT KEEPS HIM CLOSE WITH HIS FAMILY WHILE HE LIVES APART FROM THEM, IS COMMUNICATION.

college classes and then I got stationed in Hawaii and took a couple more but that was it for a while. It wasn't until I was a staff sergeant stationed in Yuma that I decided I needed to (go back to school) for myself. I finished my bachelors degree in 2011.

> **I met my wife** at Marine Corps Base Camp Lejeune, N.C. She was a legal clerk. We met through a friend of mine and we've been married for almost 18 years.

> **My wife did her four** years and then decided to get out. We decided it would be better for our family if we only had one parent in (the Marine Corps.) We've got two boys; a 16-year-old and a 12-year-old; Christopher and Matthew.

> **She keeps me in check.** We're kind of that typical story that's not supposed to work out but it did because we wanted it to. I was a corporal and she was a lance corporal when we met early in 1985 and we got married in 1995. We were young and we got married quickly, at the Jacksonville City Court House. Obviously, it was meant to be and we just knew it.

> **I went to** the warrant officer course in January of 2007 and since that time, I have not lived with my family full-time. After I graduated, I got stationed in Marine Corps Base Camp Pendleton, Calif., and they stayed in Yuma. She had her job, we had a house, the kids were in school and I was about to deploy, so we decided that would be best.

> **I deployed and stayed** with 1st Marine Division for about 45 months and then when it came time to move again, there was an opening here at Twentynine Palms so I took the position.

> **Communication is** what makes it work. It also helps that she has the Marine Corps background. I can talk to her about certain things and she just gets it. She even reads the Marine Corps Times so she can keep abreast of the issues. She's a strong woman, so that helps us a lot.

> **About a year ago**, my wife got a promotion that brought her to Phoenix. Since my parents live there, we were planning to settle there eventually anyways. So, we moved the family up there, the kids are in school and now they're just waiting until I retire so I can come home. I retire in November.

> **My son Christopher** just got accepted in to the National Honor Society, so he's a smart kid. I could say "He got his smarts from me," but my wife would strongly disagree.

> **Matthew is really** big into skateboarding. That's his passion and he's really pretty good. Matthew has a bit more guts than his older brother and apparently you have to have more guts to ride a skateboard than a bike. At least that's what I found out from talking to the kids at the skate park.

> **He's actually** taken his skateboard off of a seven-foot shed, which is crazy to me. I'm scared just trying to ride around on that thing.

> **They're both very** caring kids and neither one of them have grown away from mom and dad yet. So, they still talk to us and tell us what's going on. I only get to see them two days of the week so, it's nice that they still want to spend time with us.

> **In my free time**, I try to play catch up. When you only have Saturday and Sunday to spend with your family, you try to make the best of it. I don't want to go play golf or anything like that because that's just time that's taken away from my family.

> **I call it being** deployed in garrison because I don't get to see the people I love Monday through Friday.

> **People like me** have an interesting outlook on the Marine Corps. When I first joined, there was no Global War on Terror Medal. That didn't start until 2001, after 9/11. I had about ten years in the Marine Corps where it was a smaller budget and smaller numbers. Then we moved to the GWOT and things changed. Everything ramped up. Now it seems that we're going back to how it was before. There are a lot of people who have been in for 10 or 12 years that don't know what it was like before. We're coming up into a Corps where we are going to have to work harder with less. We'll have to work not just harder, but smarter too.

Interviewed by Lance Cpl. Lauren A. Kurkimilis
April 3, 2013

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Faces in the Crowd



[1] Danielle Champagne holds her daughter, Jayden, 5, as her husband Cpl. Bruce Champagne, Headquarters and Service Company, 3rd Combat Engineer Battalion, gets on the bus during the battalion's deployment to Afghanistan in support of Operation Enduring Freedom April 5.

[2] Sgt. Vincent Reynoso, platoon sergeant, Company B, 3rd CEB, says goodbye to his daughter, Luna, during the battalion's deployment to Afghanistan in support of OEF April 5.

[3] Gunnery Sgt. Jason Bloomfield, communications chief, H&S Co., 3rd CEB, hugs his son, Steven, 16, and his daughter Kimberly, 14, before he deploys to Afghanistan April 5.

[4] Arianna Yannetta holds her son, Kayden, 1, as her husband Lance Cpl. Steve Yannetta, field wireman, B Co., 3rd CEB, gets on the bus during the battalion's deployment to Afghanistan in support of Operation Enduring Freedom April 5.

[5] Lance Cpl. Steve Yannetta, field wireman, Company B, 3rd CEB, embraces his son, Kayden, 1, and his wife, Arianna, before he deploys in support of Operation Enduring Freedom April 5.



Cpl. William J. Jackson
Combat Correspondent

Marines and sailors with 3rd Combat Engineer Battalion's main body said goodbye to family members and loved ones before their buses arrived during the battalion's deployment to Afghanistan in support of Operation Enduring Freedom April 5.

3rd CEB is replacing 2nd CEB, which is based out of Marine Corps Base Camp Lejeune, N.C.

The battalion's mission is to provide direct combat engineer support to the ground combat element, Regimental Combat Team 7.

The direct combat engineer support is going to help the transition of authority from the U.S. forces and the (International Security Assistance Force) over to the Afghan National Security Forces. Engineering support includes route clearance and maintenance, construction and other vital enabling missions.

Families gathered to take photos and get their last minute hugs before their loved ones boarded the bus. For some Marine families, the event was a new and bittersweet milestone in their Marine Corps experience.

"The families are an integral component to the success of our Marines and sailors," said Erika Capistran, family readiness officer, 3rd CEB. "If our Marines and sailors know they are being supported, they can be free of worry and accomplish their mission."

They waved good bye while the busses turned onto Del Valle as the Marines with 3rd CEB began their journey to Afghanistan.

"The hardest part of watching the Marines deploy is seeing their families cry," Capistran said. "Marine Corps families are tough, proud and resilient. We know its part of the territory. However, it's never easy seeing your Marine leave."

TOUGH MINDED
OPTIMISM

by Lou Gerhardt



I am extremely upset by the Associated Press report Saturday (April 5). Please read this disturbing press release:

"The Texas Supreme Court has ruled that bereaved dog owners can't sue for emotional damages when someone else is to blame for the death of a pet. A Fort Worth family had challenged the law after an animal shelter mistakenly euthanized their Labrador retriever in 2009.

Justice Don Willet noted in his opinion the heartache wrought by "Old Yeller." But he said that "the human-animal bond, while undeniable" doesn't elevate to collecting money for grief."

What a terrible decision. Maybe I should write "what a frightening decision."

Explain that decision to my friend, Martha. Explain that decision to my dear, dear friend of many years, Roberta. Explain that decision to Shannon. Explain that decision to Claudia. Explain that insensitive and frighteningly wrong decision to my dear friend Muffin. I could go on and on and on.

I am almost 88 years old and have served as a clergyman for much of that time. I know first-hand the traumatic impact of the death of a beloved pet. When my wife of almost 40 years physically died I was distraught. When my son at 39 suddenly and unexpectedly physically died I was crushed. And I tell you truly that when our beloved dog "Cookie" physically died last year the pain was much the same.

The Texas Supreme Court was wrong, wrong, wrong.

This column sponsored by:

Roberta Paetow
Wauwatosa, WI

Betty "Samara" Szymanski
Yucca Valley

Dr. Lou can be reached at 760-367-4627
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res19mxc@verizon.net



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Wed. Bible Study 6:00 P.M.
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Pastor Abe Casiano
Church (760) 366-9119
www.skyviewchapel.org

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Pastor Titus R. Burns
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Wednesday Night Bible Study 7:00 PM
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HER BOOTS, from A1

No one wanted us together at first so we had to hide it for awhile but eventually everyone accepted it and we saw each other the time while I was at MOS school.

Tevin: This is the longest time we spent together, at one time, in the four years we have been together. I want to experience more of my marriage before she deploys.

I don't want her to deploy, but at the same time, this is her career and she has to do what she has to do. I'm not going to distract her.

Catherine: My first opportunity to deploy, I was all for it. I looked at it as an opportunity to learn my job.

I told myself in my head that I was ready to go but I wasn't sure if I wanted to leave him. I was crying, telling him this is what I have to do.

I did have a lot of worries about leaving him because he was just getting out here.

He's getting the hang of it and starting to use words that I use. I'll catch him saying things like 'MOS' and at first he didn't even know what that meant.

I'll come home and talk to him like he is a Marine and he's not used to that.

Tevin: When it comes to her being a Marine, I'm glad she is able to turn it on and off.

I'm just worried about something happening to her. I don't want anything to happen to her at all.

I enjoyed the (Marine Unmanned Aerial Vehicle Squadron 1) Jayne Wayne Day activities. I feel like I would be a good Marine and doing those things let me get a taste of it.

As far as everything I see Marines doing, it seems to be pretty cool. I consider everything to be an experience.

The simulator opened my eyes. I could tell that if you were in that situation, you can't just go out firing your weapon, you have to be aware of your surroundings.

She came home saying I was going to be mad at her because she signed me up for Jayne Wayne Day. Once she said I get a chance to shoot guns, I was all about it.

When I went to a shooting range in North Carolina, I missed every shot with a pistol and that's when I knew I needed to work on my accuracy. The first time I ever fired a rifle was at Jayne Wayne Day.

It was cool getting to be in her shoes. I respect everything she does.

Catherine: Before I got married, I talked to the only other female I know who is married to a male who has nothing to do with the military and she said she loves it.

To balance it out, I'm going to let him start making choices like where our next duty station is going to be.

The good thing is, no matter where I end up, I know he will be by my side.

Tevin: It's different being a male dependent but I have no doubts, I am very happy.

Before I came out here, I had never flown on a plane before. I was leaving everything behind. I wanted to better our relationship. That's why I am here.

All my stuff was sent to our new house before I got out here so there was no turning back even if I wanted to.

I left my job, my apartment but it was all worth it.

She would try to convince with me benefits and stuff but all I wanted was to be with her.

CHAPLAIN, from A1

“The extraordinary thing is that I have met Marines who I talked to that immediately said, ‘I have wanted to talk to a priest,’” Foley said. “If I hadn't been to Now Zad or many of these other places, these Marines would not have had the opportunity, and I believe God wants me here.”


Foley said he met two Marines who want to be baptized and one Marine who wants to get married after the deployment. He gave them the information they needed and his contact information so he could help them when they return stateside.

Foley went to seminary at St. Charles Borromeo Seminary in Lower Marion, Penn., and was a parish priest in Philadelphia before he became a Navy chaplain. Williams attended Denver Seminary and was an associate pastor before he joined the Navy. The two men are similar in many ways, including their love for Marines and their desire to help them.

“I have always loved the military, and I love the Marines,” Williams said. “The esprit de corps and the warrior spirit is something that I really enjoy.”

Both agreed the most difficult part of being a chaplain in Afghanistan is the amount of traveling that is necessary to assist service members. Foley is going back to 3rd MAW near the end of the month, but Williams will continue to travel to each base across RCT-7's area of operations and establish relationships with service members.

“It's not easy because we don't spend a lot of time at these bases with the Marines,” Williams said. “But there will be more travel in the future and I thank God that I have had this chance.”



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When she first left (for boot camp), I was really emotional. That last phone call when she was at the hotel made me realize that there was no turning back. She was gone.

She even sounded different on the phone after I heard her on the phone for the first time in three months. Seeing her in uniform made me proud.

I was excited to come out here to California. The drive from North Carolina was an experience in itself. I consider all of this an experience.

Catherine: Even when we first started dating, I felt like I knew him for a long time.

Tevin: I never tell someone I love them unless I mean it. I love her.

Catherine: After we are separated for a while, I feel like we are closer once we get a chance to see each other.

Tevin: When she was at boot camp, it was frustrating because I couldn't talk to her. I was standing by the mail box every day.

Catherine: Sometimes I wouldn't have time to write a long letter so I would send a letter that just said I love you. I would do anything just to write him.

Tevin: It felt good getting letters from her. That's all I had when it came to me and her at that time.

Her handwriting even changed over time. I felt like I was seeing her change through letters. I would watch videos on the internet of what she was doing. Her sloppy handwriting always had me wondering what was going on over there.

I'm here to support her. I always tell her not to stress and that everything is going to be alright.



WMLC, from A1

shore (movements),” said Sgt. Warren Sparks, Mountain Warfare Combat Instructor. “If we had to move troops to some areas, we have to be capable to push in and move in cold weather and mountainous environment.”

As the students, in fire team sized elements, skated through the Humboldt-Toiyabe National Forest finding grid points, they reached more than 9,000 feet of elevation.

The six week training program also gives the Marines the ability to live in a winter environment, plan routes and identify hazards like avalanche zones or creek snow covered creek beds.

“Most of these guys will be embedded in an infantry battalion,” Sparks said. “Within their companies they will be advisors to their commanding officer. That's one of the biggest things they bring out to the fight.

WMLC graduates become experts in cold weather environments. Once they are with their units they can teach their Marines how to pack correctly, take care of their feet and hands and guide them on calorie intake.

“What's most important is the ability to move, assess hazards and be able to train those below you and around you about dealing with the elements,” Sparks said. “They've been out here going on nine days. Their feet are pretty beat up. They've been making a lot of movements and they're carrying a lot of gear.”



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2nd Battalion 7th Marine Regiment

returns to the Combat Center



CPL ALI AZIMI



CPL ALI AZIMI


Families and loved ones await the return of Marines with 2nd Battalion, 7th Marine Regiment after a seven-month deployment to Afghanistan in support of Operation Enduring Freedom during the battalion's homecoming Tuesday.



CPL WILLIAM JACKSON

[Above] Families and loved ones cheer as they welcome home Marines with 2nd Battalion, 7th Marine Regiment, after a seven-month deployment to Afghanistan in support of Operation Enduring Freedom.

[Left] Lance Cpl. Tristan Tiller, radio operator, Headquarters and Service Company, 2nd Battalion, 7th Marine Regiment, surprises his wife, Kylie, and son Kysan, 1, during the battalion's homecoming at Del Valle Field Tuesday.



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CPL ALI AZIMI

Sgt. John Hukaba, motor transport driver, 2nd Battalion, 7th Marine Regiment, holds his son, Tobias, 4, and daughter, Eliana, 2, for the first time in seven months, during the battalion's homecoming at Del Valle Field Tuesday.

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Story and photos by
Lance Cpl. Alejandro Bedoya

He is a Master Instructor at the Marine Corps Communication-Electronics School and recently earned the Master Instructor of the Year award. He's a combat veteran and a leader in the field. He's a family man. Staff Sgt. Richard E. Near is a lot of things, but for him, what's most important is being a teacher.

BATTLEFIELD LESSONS LEARNED

"One of the scariest days of my life was when my team and I were dropped in the heart of Fallujah where every crack or hole in the wall was a potential sniper hole," Near said. "I was scared because I had absolutely no urban-combat training. They decided to skip that portion of my Marine Combat Training in 2002 and after my experience in Fallujah, I wanted to change that."

Near has been on three combat tours to Iraq and Afghanistan and one unit deployment program which took him all over Asia. Near returned to the states on a mission to teach new Marines to fight.

His experience in Fallujah inspired him to be an instructor and mentor for junior Marines. He became a Marine Combat Instructor in 2006 at the School of Infantry on Marine Corps Base Camp Lejeune, N.C. He wanted to make sure junior Marines were trained properly.

His experiences in combat gave him ideas to implement new training tools to add realism during Marine Combat Training. This included simulators and combat scenario audio during training.

Eventually, Near wanted to teach Marines what the Marine Corps taught him. He wanted to teach his military occupational specialty as a tactical switching operator.

AT THE SCHOOL HOUSE

Near received the award for teaching at the Marine Corps Communication-Electronics School in 2011 where he taught Marines to be tactical switching operators. These Marines are responsible for connecting the Marine Corps through communications in combat. They install, operate, and maintain wire and cable networks to link key outposts, control points, and headquarters with reliable paths for the transmission of telephone, facsimile, and data services.

"It's what these Marines are going to be doing for the Corps," said Near. "I have to teach them about not only the new gear, but the old gear that old knuckle-draggers like me had to drag around. We just had to drag cables and punch things that blink in comparison to today's vast network technology."

"Learning from others' mistakes and successes is the key to an efficient future," Near said. "My Marines look at me as someone who has been there and done that and I'm still here, so I must be doing something right."

PASSION FOR TEACHING

Near has been teaching young Marines for six years out of his nearly 11 years in the Corps.

"Teaching is my absolute passion," Near said. "It is in my blood; I love to teach. If I could be a teacher for the Marine Corps for the rest of my life, then that is what I would do."

Even though Near had experience on his side, he didn't see his students as just students, but teachers as well.

"It is a brain trust here," Near said. "If you don't know something, there is someone who does and that includes students."

Near takes his job beyond teaching, he looks at it as a mentorship opportunity.

"You have to establish a working relationship and mutual trust with your Marines," Near said. "It doesn't always have to be a knife hand. I like to lead by example to motivate them and send them in the right direction. I have always enjoyed helping people and I think that's what it all comes down to. Education is one of the best ways you can help someone."

Near has placed an emphasis on learning and teaching so much so, it has become a life principle for him.

"Education is nothing unless you give it to someone else," Near said. "I would tell my students all the time that if I'm not teaching you something and you're not teaching me something every day, we are wasting time."

THE FAMILY MAN

The young Marines Near teaches motivate him but his family is his main source of support and motivation at the end of the day.

"She is the best thing that ever happened to me," Near said about his wife.

"My role is to support him in any way I can,"



Lindsay Near said. "I like to roll with it and take it as it comes, day by day."

Lindsay says her husband's personality is what makes him such a great instructor.

"He is very entertaining," Lindsay said. "Not only does he get the Marines' attention but he can hold their attention. No matter what he is teaching, it will be entertaining."

Lindsay says there is more him to being an instructor than just wanting to help his junior Marines.

"He honestly cares," Lindsay said. "He cares about each and every student. He wants them to be successful and have a passion for what he does and truly cares."

Now that Near is an instructor, he gets to spend more time with his family.

"My wife loves that I'm an instructor here," Near said. "As for my kids, they're too young. My daughter is only a month old and barely knows how to blow spit bubbles. My two-year-old son only knows camouflage means daddy is going to work."

MCCES names Instructor of the Year

The Marine Corps Communication- Electronics School held its annual enlisted Instructor of the Year board March 26 and 27 at the school house.

Instructors were nominated for the award by their individual companies within MCCES.

The board was divided into two sections; senior and master instructor of the year.

Instructors must complete a certain number of courses and accumulate a certain amount of hours to qualify for nomination. They must complete the Basic Instructors Course, receive a course orientation, receive at least three satisfactory evaluations and accumulate 200 instructional hours before they are considered a basic instructor.

Instructors must then receive seven satisfactory evaluations, complete the Evaluating Other Instructors Course, conduct four evaluations and accumulate 800 instructional hours to request the certification to move on to senior.

The last step in the instructor certification process is master instructor. Senior instructors must receive eight additional satisfactory evaluations, complete the Curriculum Developer Course and accumulate 1600 instructional hours to receive their master instructor certification. Instructors are eligible for the enlisted Marine instructor awards once they achieve either the senior or master instructor level.

The senior instructor nominees submit an application for the award and the master instructor nominees get the chance to send in a video submission.

"Football and lacrosse players submit highlight reels when they are trying to get on a certain team," said Lt. Col. Dennis Manaco, executive officer, MCCES. "These video submissions are a chance for the instructors to have a highlight reel of all of their best moments. The board members also get a perspective on how these instructors get their students in the learning mood."

The board had nearly fifteen minutes to look over each individual narration. During this time, the board circles key aspects and negative aspects about the nominees, Manaco said.

The board discusses the negative and positive aspects after the time is up. Votes are casted after the discussion is over and whichever instructor receives the most votes wins the award and receives a Navy Achievement Medal along with a letter of commendation.

The winners of the enlisted Marine instructor

awards for the year of 2012 were announced March 27. The runner-up for the noncommissioned officer senior instructor of the year is Sgt. Nathan P. Boan. The winner of the noncommissioned officer senior instructor of the year is Sgt. Anthony S. Nichols.



The staff noncommissioned officer, senior instructor of the year winner was Gunnery Sgt. Larry C. Blair. The master instructor of the year is Staff Sgt. Richard E. Near.



CPL. D. J. WU

DAY AT THE MUSEUM

Cpl. William Jackson
Combat Correspondent

The Palm Springs Air Museum is home to one of the world's largest collections of flyable WWII aircraft. It's located an hour away from the Combat Center at 745 North Gene Autry Trail in Palm Springs, Calif. This year's commemorative programs include events about the Korean War and the Vietnam Conflict.

The museum is open seven days a week from 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. and is closed Thanksgiving day and Christmas day. The museum is free for active duty military

members and their families. Tickets for children 6 to 12 years old are eight dollars, 13 to 17 years old is 13 dollars, 18 to 64 years old is 15 dollars, seniors 65 and older is 13 dollars and retired military tickets are 13 dollars.

Arranged group tours are given any day of the week between the hours of 10 a.m. and 3 p.m. Tours through all three of the museums hangars are guided by knowledgeable volunteers, many of whom are veterans and former pilots. The tour includes the history and individual backgrounds of each of the aircraft on display.



CPL. WILLIAM JACKSON



CPL. D. J. WU

LANCE CPL. ALEJANDRO BEDOYA



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