



URBANEVAC



CPL. ALI AZIMI

Marines with 1st Battalion, 6th Marine Regiment, Combat Logistics Regiment 16 and Marine Aviation Weapons and Tactics Squadron 1 conducted a mission rehearsal exercise for a noncombatant evacuation operation at Lance Cpl. Torrey L. Gray Field April 19.

Marines conduct simulated NEO

Cpl. William J. Jackson
 Combat Correspondent

Marines with 1st Battalion, 6th Marine Regiment and Combat Logistics Regiment 16 coordinated with Marine Aviation Weapons and Tactics Squadron 1 to conduct a noncombatant evacuation operation at Lance Cpl. Torrey L. Gray Field April 19.

The operation simulated an evacuation of American civilian personnel and local nationals from a foreign country and utilized a total of 27 aircraft.

The training operation spanned from Marine Corps Air Station Yuma, Ariz., to the Combat Center which gave Weapons and Tactics Instructor students the ability to train in various scenarios and training environments.

"The students all fill billets within the units during the training exercise," said Maj. John Gibson, pre-deployment training officer, MAWTS-1. "There will be students flying in aircraft, there will be students running the evacuation control center, there will be ground combat element students and there will also be air officer students."

Gibson also said the Weapons and Tactics Instructor Course is a bi-annual training evolution that integrates pilots, weapons systems operators, ground combat and combat service support units from throughout the Marine Corps.

The three-phase operation



CPL. ALI AZIMI

Staff Sgt. Alex Padilla, platoon sergeant, Company A, 1st Battalion, 6th Marine Regiment, performs crowd control during a noncombatant evacuation operation exercise at Lance Cpl. Torrey L. Gray Field April 19.

started with the landing of several MV-22 Ospreys and CH-53s into the landing zone on the lawn. Each aircraft dropped off its Marines, who immediately rushed to set up a secure perimeter around the landing zone. The pilots then took off to allow more waves of Marines and sailors to land.

The aircraft navigated through the urban terrain, which tested their ability to recognize the landing zone and land in a compressed space.

"We're focused in working in urban and built up areas," Gibson said. "A big part of this is planning, communicating and focusing on aircraft movement over two areas while extracting individuals who represent civilians, personnel or host nation personnel."

After securing the landing zone, the Marines went on to set up an ECC to process the evacuees and local nationals. They screened dozens of people for contraband and correct documents to confirm their identities before they were allowed to board an aircraft to be evacuated.

Afghan role players acted the part

See **NEO** page A5



Story and photos on A6

Fire departments cross-train

Lance Cpl. Alejandro Bedoya
 Combat Correspondent

Combat Center and Twentynine Palms firefighters came together to participate in live-fire training exercises at the fire department training area April 19.

The fire departments cross trained to handle the different scenarios they may encounter while on duty.

These training exercises are used to provide realistic situations in a controlled environment. Firefighters ran through three different scenarios created during the exercises. They ran basic advancement drills where the firefighters were taught the basics on how to spray a fire and advance until they reach the main flame.

Another scenario used by the firefighters was the two story advance drill where they must go either up or down a case of stairs fighting the fire until they reach the main flame.

"This helps us identify fire behavior and it's a great learning experience."

—Lt. Alfonso Razo

The third scenario the firefighters faced was a garage fire scenario. The firefighters had to enter the garage through a back door and extinguish a car that was on fire. After extinguishing the car, they used the advance method to reach the main flame.

All of the situations they faced forced the firefighters to make judgments off of smoke and fire conditions.

"This is the most awesome training you can get around this area," said Lt. Alfonso Razo, Driver, Engine 451, Combat Center Fire Department. "This helps us identify fire behavior and it's a great learning experience."

The Combat Center Fire Department does more than handling structure fires. The fire fighters also handle traffic collisions, medical aid and they respond to situations in Twentynine Palms if the Twentynine Palms Fire Department lacks the manpower.

The Combat Center Fire Department is split between two different locations. One fire station located in Camp Wilson and the other is located on mainside. Each fire station handles problems that are local to its location.

The firefighters work two days in the fire station and then

See **FIRE TRAINING** page A5

Fit reps shape careers

Lance Cpl. Alejandro Bedoya
 Combat Correspondent

Marines are taught to know themselves and seek self-improvement and with that comes the desire to take on new responsibilities and climb the ranks. To do that, senior Marines must first understand the importance of their annual fitness reports.

Fitness reports evaluate the performance of sergeants, staff noncommissioned officers and commissioned officers. The Marine Corps Performance Evaluation System provides periodic reporting and analysis of these Marines.

"Fitness reports are important and nobody should care more than you," said Lt. Col. Daniel J. McMichael, Manpower Management

"Fitness reports are important and nobody should care more than you,"

— Lt. Col. Daniel J. McMichael

Support Branch 30. "You should constantly be checking them so you're never left wondering."

A fitness report includes an up-to-date physical fitness score, combat fitness test score, rifle qualification, pistol qualification and swim qualification. Along with annual training updates, a fitness report includes a more in depth look on an individual's job description

There are 14 attributes in the form of Performance Anchored Rating Scales.

These attributes are based off leadership traits and techniques. Courage, initiative and judgment are some of attributes Marines are rated on. Marines are graded on a letter scale from "A" to "H". The "A" marking is adverse, the lowest grade a Marine can

See **FIT REPS** page A5



CPL. ALI AZIMI

Marines with Battery C, 1st Battalion, 11th Marine Regiment and Battery I, 3rd Battalion, 12th Marine Regiment watch direct fire support training at the Combat Center's Rainbow Canyon Training Area April 23.

Cannon Cockers prepare for Desert Scimitar

Cpl. Ali Azimi
 Combat Correspondent

Marines with Battery C, 1st Battalion, 11th Marine Regiment and Battery I, 3rd Battalion, 12th Marine Regiment conducted direct fire support training at the Combat Center's Rainbow Canyon Training Area April 23.

The battalion's artillerymen fired the M777A2 Howitzer at three targets more than 750 meters away. Their training developed

their ability to conduct fire missions at a section level and focus on crew drills and the intensity needed to put rounds down range at a fast paced tempo.

"That's what I wanted to see, focus and intensity," said Master Gunnery Sgt. Thomas Bast, field artillery chief, 11th Marine Regiment. "Now what we need to do is tighten up those crew drills."

The artillerymen were timed as they emplaced the Howitzer. They were given three rounds to fire in

two minutes at a designated target and once again timed to clear and depart from the firing line.

"You guys showed you can put steel on target quickly," said Col. Stephen Liszewski, commanding officer, 11th Marine Regiment. "You guys have the big stuff, now you have to dial it in at the section level."

The regiment arrived at the Combat Center April 19 to begin training in preparation for 1st Marine Division's annual

See **DIRECT FIRE** page A5

Homework **HELP**



Military children offered free tutoring

Photo and story by
Cpl. William J. Jackson

The final months of school are fast approaching and with that comes standardized tests, end-of term papers and final exams. But all students that belong to military families are eligible for free educational resources at www.tutor.com/military.

This Department of Defense program is an educational resource for military families looking to give their child a step up at the end of the year.

"Whether the student is in elementary, middle, or high school, one can get tutoring assistance," said Jeff Fourier, branch head, Lifelong Learning Center. "Tutors are available in all disciplines including math, English, grammar, and much more. Further, students in need of assistance for a GED completion may also get no-cost support from (the website)."

The DOD-funded resource is available at any time and provides expert tutoring in all core school subjects. The tutoring is available immediately and consists of algebra, geometry, calculus, physics, earth science, language arts, history and advanced placement courses.

The website allows students to work one on-one with a live, online-tutor for help with homework,

studying, test preparation, and essay-writing.

"(The website) is a no-cost service that is available to all of our military families who are in need of academic support," Fourier said. "Our children and adult learners may not always have the resources to get immediate assistance. Tutor.com/military offers 24 hour support. The tutors that assist students are proven in their fields."

Tutor.com is staffed by more than 2,500 tutors who are available to work one-on-one with a student through an internet-enabled computer or handheld mobile device at any time of the day, from anywhere, with no appointment.

Students and tutors work together in a secure and anonymous online classroom that features an interactive whiteboard, file sharing and instant messaging.

Students of all skill levels can benefit from using Tutor.com by working with tutors for step-by-step help with homework assignments or simply asking a tutor to double-check their work.

Parents of younger students can log in to Tutor.com and work alongside their children and advanced students can get help with more challenging classes.

For more information contact the education center at 830-6881 or visit www.tutor.com/military.



■ Circus cancels installation visit

Due to unforeseen circumstances, the Culpepper and Merriweather Circus has cancelled all performances scheduled aboard the Combat Center.

Those who have purchased tickets in advance will receive a full refund of their money by visiting the base's Marine Corps Community Services travel and ticket office, located in the main exchange, April 26 through May 10. Original tickets must be presented in order to receive a refund.

flickr

Hey Combat Center fans – Spread the word! The Combat Center has its own Flickr photo and video streams. Find them at <http://www.flickr.com/thecombatcenter>.

You Tube

The Combat Center also has its own YouTube channel. Find it at <http://www.youtube.com/user/CombatCenterPAO>.

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And visit the official MCA GCC facebook page at <http://www.facebook.com/thecombatcenter>

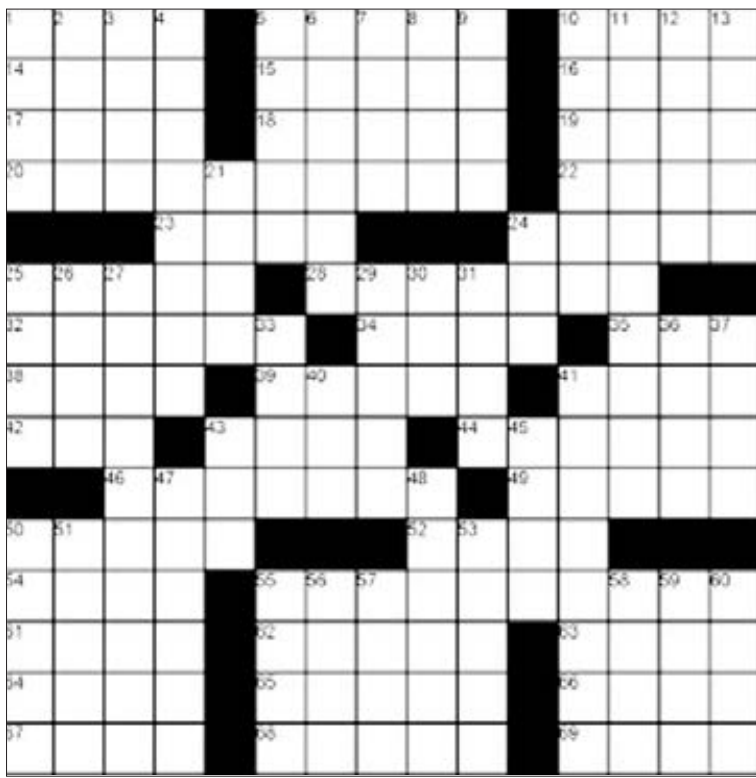
ASPIRATION

ACROSS

1. Muffin choice
5. Casts off
10. "Pygmalion" dramatist
14. Theater section
15. Secret languages
16. Fish story
17. NYSE counterpart
18. Peter of synonyms
19. Steam up
20. Fans of politico Gary
22. Youngest 500-homer man, familiarly
23. Be an omen of
24. ___-eyed (close to tears)
25. Theater guide
28. Unchecked
32. Goes after
34. Imitation
35. Stick up
38. "___ we forget ..."
39. Air freshener targets
41. Drone's home
42. Fireplace remnant
43. Cookie since 1912
44. Visibly upset
46. Robert Blake series
49. Upturned, as a crate
50. Jell-O formers
52. Social misfit
54. Shirt brand
55. Wrestling champ
61. A whole lot
62. Really go for
63. "This can't be!"
64. Within: Prefix
65. Cubist Fernand
66. Vaudeville's Seven Little ___
67. Espied
68. Op-ed piece
69. Become threadbare

DOWN

1. Dull as dishwater
2. Actress Downey
3. Golden ___ (senior)
4. Second in preference
5. New England catch
6. Depression-era president
7. Slight lead
8. Salt lick visitor
9. Fliers from De Gaulle, once
10. Muscle problem
11. Salon workers' walkout
12. Mete out
13. Like a neglected lawn
21. Tribal history
24. Upper limit, informally
25. Pac-12 team
26. The Beatles' "___ Leaving Home"
27. Marilyn Monroe working at a beanery
29. Under way
30. Scratch up



31. Face, slangily
33. Needing liniment
36. Microwave or Dutch
37. Make concessions
40. NYPD fig.
41. "Don't touch!"
43. Surgery spots, for short
45. Circle dance
47. Builds a new room, say
48. Singer Bocelli
50. Tiny arachnids
51. Makeup of a layer with a "hole"
53. Abrasive stuff
55. Fit as a fiddle
56. Pindaric works
57. Snorers saw them
58. God with a hammer
59. "Watermark" New Ager
60. Optimistic

See answers on page A3

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5	1			9		7

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- 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.

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

- 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



Samuel

King's Mountain, N.C., weather impact analyst, 33

PETRY

- > **I have a wife and** a baby boy named Trip.
- > **My wife was open to** coming out here with me because she supports me, but I think it's safe to say she is pretty happy we are leaving.
- > **My first duty station** was in North Carolina, only four hours from home. It's a big change coming from there to the middle of a desert.
- > **My job in the** Marine Corps has always been related to weather.
- > **Ever since I was a** little kid, I have always been interested in what was going on in the sky. I wanted to know what every type of cloud meant and what caused lightning and thunder.
- > **My grandfather enlisted** after Pearl Harbor, he volunteered and felt that it was his duty. He had never left our home town until joining Marine Corps and once he did his time, he went straight back home.
- > **My dad is my hero** just by the person he is. He made me realize there is more than King's Mountain and I wanted to see these places. He would always talk about the beautiful jungles he saw and it made me want to go out and see what the world had to offer.
- > **They made it seem** like serving is what I was supposed to do.
- > **When I saw my dad** in uniform, it put me on cloud nine. It sold itself because of how sharp looking it was.
- > **My dad and uncle would always** go back and forth because my uncle was in the Army and a (Korean War) veteran. Seeing my dad always get the upper hand in those arguments also helped me choose my branch.
- > **Now when I talk to** my dad, he is interested in the differences. He use to tell me he would have to stand in line every two weeks and a truck would come around and pay them in cash and then it went to a paper check. He was also getting around \$66 every two weeks. Now I tell him about direct deposit and it blows his mind.
- > **I have a break** in service. I got out in 2006 and it hit me pretty quick that I messed up.
- > **When I walked around** people would ask me if I was a Marine because of my haircut and I would simply tell them I did eight years and I got out but I wish I wouldn't have.
- > **I remember one day we had a meeting** at my civilian job about insurance and they were telling us the different ages we could retire and what we would get when we did retire thinking I was an idiot because I could have only done 20 and got out still getting a paycheck

PETRY IS A THIRD GENERATION MARINE. HIS GRANDFATHER WAS IN WORLD WAR II, HIS FATHER WAS IN VIETNAM AND PETRY SERVED IN OPERATION IRAQI FREEDOM AND OPERATION ENDURING FREEDOM.

but all of the ages were over 60. I was just sitting there from the government. You can't beat that gig.

- > **A greater sense of purpose** is one of the biggest things I have learned from the Marine Corps. The things I do now are not so much self-centered anymore. I do stuff to make things better for the Marines.
- > **Coming up as a** lance corporal, I remember the good things that happened to me but I also remember the bad. At that time, I wished I was in a position to change some of those bad things and now that I am, I try to make sure newer Marines don't have to experience them.
- > **The Marine Corps has taught** me teamwork, kept me motivated and given me the ability to provide for my family.
- > **I don't think I would have** ever come out to California if it wasn't for the Marine Corps bringing me out here. I would have never gotten to see the luxurious Twentynine Palms area.
- > **Now when I go home,** even my high school buddies look at me differently. I wasn't necessarily the ring leader in high school, but now they kind of follow my lead because they respect me.
- > **I would have never gotten to** meet some of the people I have if I wasn't where I am today. Even internationally, with the British and Australian pilots who fly in and talk to us.
- > **I went to college** and started working on my associates' degree. I didn't have too much going on, I was working temporary jobs so I just decided to walk down to the recruiter's office one day and join.
- > **The Marine Corps took me** back and has been good to me. I want to try to give back and I feel the best way for me to do that is recruiting duty.
- > **I live by doing what I want** to do no matter what someone else is telling me. If they truly care about you they will stick with you.
- > **My family looks up to** me a good bit. My niece is joining the Air Force because of the role model I have been for her.

Interviewed by Lance Cpl. Alejandro Bedoya
April 18, 2013



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4	8	2	7	1	5	6	9	3
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Faces in the Crowd



- [1] A Twentynine Palms firefighter discusses training procedures during a live-fire training exercise at the Combat Center's fire department training area April 19.
- [2] A Twentynine Palms firefighter uses his breathing apparatus during a live-fire training exercise at the Combat Center's fire department training area April 19.
- [3] Combat Center and Twentynine Palms firefighter discuss training procedures during a live-fire training exercise at the Combat Center's fire department training area April 19.
- [4] A Twentynine Palms firefighter observes live-fire training exercise at the Combat Center's fire department training area April 19.
- [5] A Twentynine Palms firefighter dons his breathing apparatus during a live-fire training exercise at the Combat Center's fire department training area April 19.

Lance Cpl. Alejandro Bedoya
 Combat Correspondent

Firefighters from the Combat Center Fire Department and Twentynine Palms Fire Department came together to participate in live-fire training exercises at the Combat Center's fire department training area April 19. The firefighter combated controlled-fires inside of Sweden survival training boxes, which simulate live-fire scenarios they may encounter on duty.

The intent of the exercise was cross-training. Combat Center firefighter worked with the city's fire department to complete live-fire exercises pertinent to their safety while on rescue calls. One of the groups' critical tasks for the exercise was to ensure their abilities stay sharp while fully geared. The training encompassed procedures, protocols and actions necessary for the firefighter to maintain fire safety in the community.



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CPL. ALI AZIMI

Marines with 1st Battalion, 6th Marine Regiment, Combat Logistics Regiment 16 and Marine Aviation Weapons and Tactics Squadron 1 conducted a mission rehearsal exercise for a noncombatant evacuation operation at Lance Cpl. Torrey L. Gray Field April 19.

NEO, from A1

of both the local civilians seeking rescue and insurgents attempting to get on the plane or engage the Marines in small arms fire.

"This is really good training," said Lance Cpl. Aaron Culp, infantryman, Co. A, 1/6. "In a place like this it's a lot more realistic than being down at a range."

The security forces kept an eye on suspicious characters while the evacuees were thoroughly searched and processed by ECC Marines. The evacuees played their part, creating obstacles for the Marines to overcome and becoming

rowdy or aggressive.

Once the perimeter was secure and the evacuees were processed the call went out for an extraction.

"This is a very important part of the training for these students," Gibson said. "Not only planning the mission but keeping accountability for personnel over two areas separated over hundreds of miles."

The second-phase cycled Ospreys in and out. People were evacuated and flown to an intermediate support base. The third and final phase was evacuating the security forces and ECC Marines back to MCAS Yuma, Ariz.

DIRECT FIRE, from A1

Desert Scimitar.

Desert Scimitar is large-scale exercise conducted by 1st MarDiv units aboard the Combat Center. The division-sized exercise brings together Marines from the Combat Center as well as Marine Corps Base Camp Pendleton, Calif. for a week of live-fire combat maneuvers.

Marines with 11th Regiment, also known as the Canon Cockers, will be providing artillery support for ground elements during the exercise and have already begun training to prepare for the week-long event.

"The battalion is working with their batteries and coming together. It preps them for the regimental phase, when the regiment takes over."

They have continuously moved from one

pause to another to fire. Their training prior to Desert Scimitar also provides time and experience for the Marines to get conditioned to the Twentynine Palms environment and shooting at the Combat Center ranges.

"When we first came up here they weren't used to the heat," Bast said. "They have acclimated. The sections started coming together. They started getting quicker and more accurate."

The battalions will move on to the regiment phase, where the regiment takes over and begins to support 1st MarDiv during Desert Scimitar.

Desert Scimitar will utilize artillery as well as 1st Tank Battalion, 3rd Light Armored Reconnaissance Battalion and Combat Logistics Battalion 7 from the Combat Center. The exercise is scheduled to begin April 29 and continue until May 5.



CPL. ALI AZIMI

Three battalions with 11th Marine Regiment and Company I, 3rd Battalion 12th Marine Regiment, faced off in a competition of artillery excellence at the Combat Center's Rainbow Canyon Training Area April 23. The batteries were given two minutes to fire three rounds at targets more than 750 meters down range.

FIT REPS, from A1

receive "B" through "G" covers the rest of the ratings with "G" being the highest. The "H" is for non observed, a Marine who hasn't been observed by a supervisor long enough to be given an accurate rating.

Each marking is accompanied by a justification box. This justification box is where supervisors can explain why the Marine being reviewed is receiving an adverse or top rating.

In order to better prepare their fitness report, a newly promoted Marine should meet with their chain of command to see what their billet description is. The billet description portion of a fitness report is a list of the command expectations of the Marine being reviewed.

Another section of a fitness report is billet accomplishments. This section is based off of the billet description and is comprised of what the Marine has accomplished during that time frame in that particular billet.

According to Capt. Sherel Quinonez,

combat center adjutant, Marines' competitive nature reflects the Marine Corps' competitive promotions. Marines who are hungry for the next rank should be going above and beyond their bill of requirements to get a step ahead of their competition.

Quinonez suggests volunteering for community services and enrolling in off base education which can give a Marine a leg-up in the race for promotion.

Another important factor in the Marine's fitness report is his appearance. An up-to-date promotion photograph is a requirement to complete a fitness report package.

"Marines should make sure they have a good photo," McMichael said. "You don't want to look like the Leaning Tower of Pisa or the guy who can't pass up a trip to Dunkin' Donuts."

While a well executed fitness report can improve a Marines' chance at career advancement, a poorly executed fitness report can do the opposite. Keep this in mind, when the next fitness report is due.

FIRE TRAINING, from A1

get two days off. While they are on duty, they work in teams of four.

"I love the guys I work with, they are incredible," Razo said. "They are my brothers and there is no describing the bond we have. My life depends on them and their life depends on me."

According to Razo, firefighters are part of a tightly-knit community.

"I love my job, it is the greatest job in the world," said Capt. Tom Fowler, Engine 451, Combat Center Fire Department. "It includes moments of sheer excitement with many hours of boredom waiting for that call to come in."

While the fire department waits for the call, they plan on continuing training and inviting the Twentynine Palms Fire Department for more cross-training exercises in the future.

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In the fight



SGT. NED JOHNSON

Cpl. Scott Johnson, special security representative and systems administrator, Regimental Combat Team 7, holds his opponent during a submission grappling tournament, April 7.

RCT-7 Marine sustains love for sports

Sgt. Ned Johnson 1st Marine Division

CAMP LEATHERNECK, Afghanistan — Marines are very accustomed to sparring and grappling. They learn the basics of the Marine Corps Martial Arts Program in boot camp, earn a tan belt and continue the program throughout their time in the Corps.

Cpl. Scott Johnson, special security representative and systems administrator, Regimental Combat Team 7, learned to spar and grapple long before joining the Marines Corps and through time grew to love many sports.

Johnson said boxing is his personal favorite sport, but the list of sports he enjoys playing doesn't seem to end, from grappling and racquetball to soccer and paintball. Johnson often joins other Marines in the RCT's intelligence section during games of football, but prefers head-to-head competition.

"I boxed for several years, and it's a lot of fun," said Johnson, a 23-year-old native of Flagstaff, Ariz. "I love any kind of sport that is one-on-one."

Johnson said much of what he learned growing up can be attributed to his father, who used to spar with him at home.

"One day I was practicing with my dad, and he got a real nice clean shot that completely rung my bell," Johnson said. "I woke up to him standing over me, and I could tell he was panicking. It still makes me laugh."

Before he deployed here in October, Johnson coached boys' soccer at Marine Corps Base Camp Pendleton, Calif., as a way to pass on some things he learned growing up.

"I really wanted to find a way to volunteer,"

"I've never seen him lose his temper, and he always makes people laugh. Without him, we would be dead in the water."

— Sgt. Christopher Travis

Johnson said. "I volunteered a lot when I was in Florida (for military training), and coaching kids was a great way to get out and help."

On the job, Johnson keeps the RCT's classified networks running properly and protected.

"I spend a lot of my day running around like my hair is on fire," Johnson said. "I'm responsible for

making sure everyone (who needs to) can access (necessary) information."

Johnson ensures information remains secure, which requires tenacity, said Sgt. Christopher Travis, intelligence targeting chief, RCT-7.

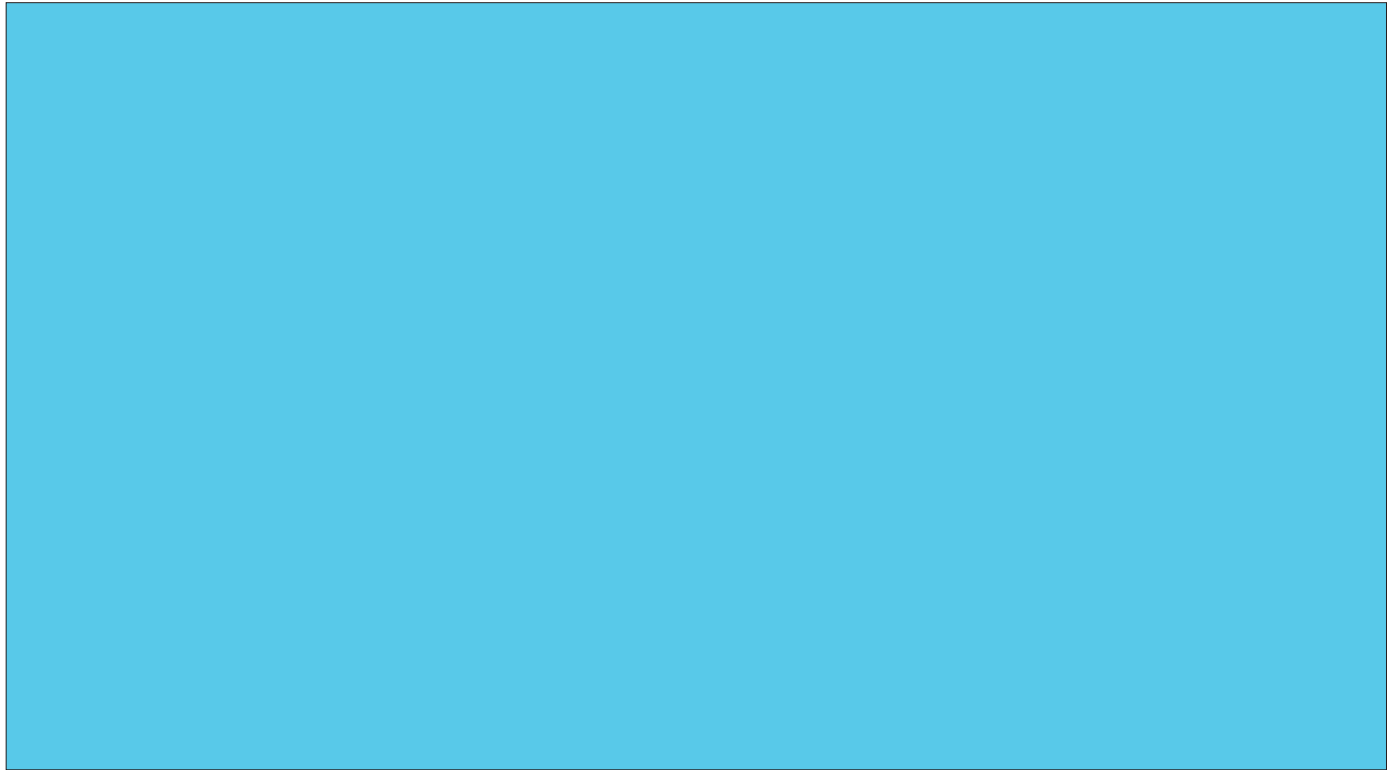
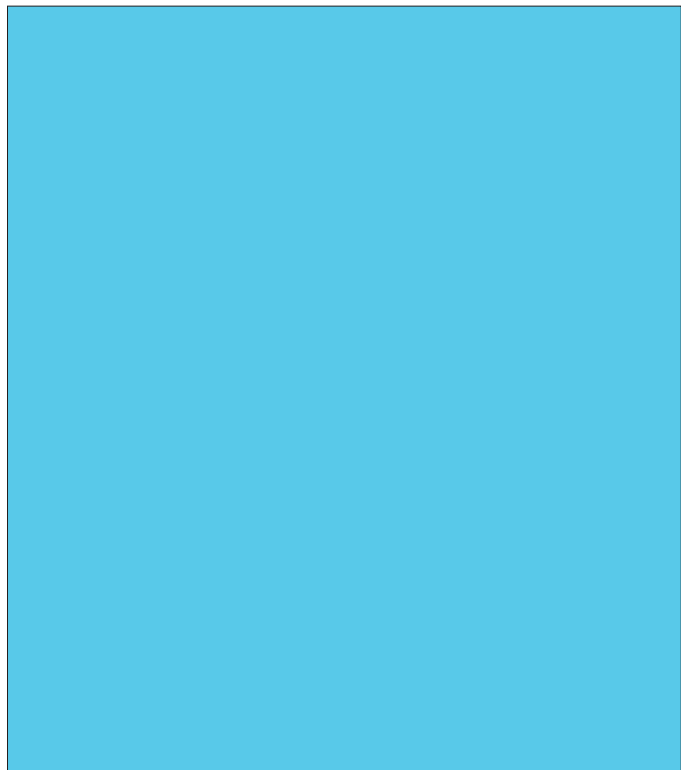
"He's extremely competitive," Travis said. "Even when we give him a problem he doesn't know how to solve, he eventually figures it out."

Travis recognized Johnson's playful side when he described him as the goofiest guy he's ever met. This goofiness helps in the office, though, Travis said.

"I've never seen him lose his temper, and he always makes people laugh," Travis said. "Without him, we would be dead in the water."

Although he hasn't decided on a career in the Marine Corps, Johnson hopes to attend California Institute of Technology to earn a degree in mechanical engineering. He's currently taking classes online to help prepare.

There will be more opportunities for Johnson to play sports in the future and he expressed interest in trying out for one of the All Marine Sports Teams, which competes against military branches and semi professional teams. Until then, he said there's plenty of work and play for him here.



EarthDay

Combat Center cleans up

Story and photo by
Kelly O'Sullivan

Josh Hurley and Stina Jacobson bonded over broken glass and rusty old cans Saturday, sharing life stories as they filled bag after bag with trash at Section 33 in Joshua Tree.

The 21-year-old private from Indiana who never saw the desert before arriving at the Combat Center a few weeks ago to attend classes at the Marine Corps Communication Electronics School and the Joshua Tree resident who loves seeing native plants and animals during her regular evening walks were among 200 Marines, sailors and civilians who spent their morning cleaning up the 623-acre site.

"We're a good team," he said. "He's a nice guy," she said. "I like working with the Marines."

Together, volunteers collected three tons of trash that ranged from broken tile, clay pigeons and shotgun shells to weathered kids' toys and discarded clothing.

Celebrating the planet, partnerships

The cleanup was organized for Earth Day and to celebrate the partnership that allowed land that was once targeted for a 2,400 home development and used as illegal dumping ground for years to be preserved indefinitely in its natural state.

Section 33, which lies just south of Twentynine Palms Highway between La Contenta Road and Joshua Tree Memorial Park, was purchased by the Mojave Desert Land Trust for \$1.4 million in conjunction with the Marine Corps Air Ground Combat Center, The Trust for Public Land and the California Wildlife Conservation Board.

The Marine Corps' participation in the project was made possible through REPI — the Department of Defense's Readiness Environmental Protection Initiative. REPI allows for Congress-authorized cost sharing partnerships between the armed forces, private conservation groups and state and local governments. Conserved lands benefit communities by preserving wildlife habitat and linkages near installations and ranges where the military operates, tests and trains.

"This is not only good for our community but directly supports the mission of the Combat Center," said Jim Ricker, assistant chief of staff, Community Plans Liaison Office.

Ricker, who worked closely with MDLT Executive Director Nancy Karl and others involved in the project, said preserving Section 33 is a win-win for the Morongo Basin.

"This area lies directly under a heavily utilized designated helicopter route. As part of the REPI program, other than flying over this area, the Marine Corps will never train here," he said. "Our kids and their kids will always have this area to enjoy what we enjoy today. Some may ask why would the Marine base be involved in land conservancy? Retired Maj. Gen. Michael R. Lehnert summed it up very succinctly: 'A country worth defending is a country worth preserving.'"

Completed in 2012, Section 33 was the Combat Center's second REPI project. The 2010 Quail Mountain REPI project, completed in 2010, preserved 955 acres of pristine desert tortoise habitat in the Joshua Tree Highlands adjacent to Joshua Tree National Park. That land also lies under airspace used by helicopters coming to and from the installation.

United for a cause

Karl was ecstatic as she watched 67 Marines stream off two Morongo Basin Transit Authority buses Saturday morning.

"This is fantastic. This is fantastic," she said as the young men and women from the Marine Corps Communication-Electronics School, Marine Unmanned Aerial Vehicle Squadrons 1 and 3, Headquarters Battalion, 3rd Battalion, 7th Marine Regiment and 1st Tank Battalion headed toward a check-in table set up by Armed Services YMCA staff and volunteers who handed them gloves and bright red T-shirts.

MBTA partnered with the land trust to provide transportation for the single Marines and sailors who volunteered for the cleanup. An additional 33 service members and their families drove themselves to the site.

"This is a perfect example of collaboration between federal agencies, private organizations and public support," Karl said, noting that the cleanup was the land trust's largest volunteer event to date. "We're able to protect this land, restore it and offer it back to the public."

After Karl welcomed and thanked volunteers that included two captains and two firefighter from CalFire in Yucca Valley, they were given a safety brief, then MDLT board President Curt Sauer addressed the enthusiastic crowd.

"It's a little early, but happy Mother Earth Day," the retired Joshua Tree National Park superintendent said. "We're helping preserve a real old lady. I want to say thank you to all of you for what you're doing today and I want to say thank you to the Marines for all you do every day."

Bob Johnson, MCAGCC community plans program manager, thanked the crowd on behalf of Combat Center commanding general Maj. Gen. David H. Berger, then volunteers divided into five groups and posed for a group photo taken by MDLT volunteer Vera Topinka before fanning out into the open desert to began cleaning.

A day of discovery

Cpl. Bobby Kesler, a North Dakota native who discovered Joshua Tree National Park shortly after arriving in Twentynine Palms three weeks ago to serve with 3rd Light Armored Reconnaissance Battalion, jumped at the chance to participate after learning about the cleanup.

"I like to do a lot of hiking, and (the park) gave me a free pass," he said. "I thought this would be a good way to give back to the community."

Saturday was a day of discovery for Kessler and for many of the service members on site.

Pfc. Benjamin Livingston and Pfc. Kristopher Hammond, both of MCCES, made what was likely the strangest find of the day — a bag of clams.

"Who would drive all the way out in the desert to throw away a bag of clams?" Livingston asked before the pair moved on, laughing as they scoured the desert for more finds.

Picking up an aftershave bottle that had seen better days, Livingston tossed it into the bag Hammond held open.

"It's so hot even the desert can't handle it," he joked.

Pvt. Michael Guillard and Pvt. Mason Beasley, also from



Elizabeth Lujan, 16, a student from Yucca Valley, works with Armed Services YMCA volunteers during the Section 33 cleanup in Joshua Tree April 20.

the communication-electronics school, hung onto one of their finds, a photograph of a family dated 1955, in hopes they might find the owners.

The two men, both newcomers to the desert, also learned what those big, spiky trees dotting the landscape were called. "Joshua trees," they echoed, looking closely at the community's namesakes. "That's what it's named after."

Following the three-hour cleanup, volunteers again congregated near the check-in booths, sharing stories for a few minutes before the Marines boarded the buses and headed back to the Combat Center.

As Karl stood next to the lead bus, shaking hands and saying "thank you" over and over, Sauer summed up the day.

"One of the most amazing partnerships MDLT has is with the USMC," he said. "It was stunning to see this many people out here. It was an opportunity for the community to learn more about the Marines and for the Marines to learn more about the community."

Ricker agreed.

"As you look around today, it is so awesome to see all of the people out here working so hard to clean up this area," he said. "Can you point out a Marine or Marine family from a community member? No, you cannot. Many of the Marines and their family members consider this their community. From coaching Little League to mentors in the local schools, this is their hometown, too."

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**Looking for
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Service members put their lives on the line and face adversity whether forward deployed, supporting or preparing for war. The real heroes are their children who didn't choose this life, but follow along and serve quietly on the homefront. April is the Month of the Military Child. It's a small gesture to say thank you for the countless time lost with their loved one.

Story by
 Kristine Schellhaas

Some children's sacrifices begin earlier than others. A staggering number of families go through the birth of a child while the dad is forward deployed. Many of these same families also endure missed birthdays, special events, and holidays — sometimes several years in a row. "My husband deployed for over a year just a week after our first child was conceived and came home to a 5-month-old!" said Stacie Porter, whose husband is with 7th Engineer Battalion at Marine Corps Base Camp Pendleton. "He totally missed everything related to the birth of his first child."

Hardships on the home front are often compounded by distance as well. Many families are stationed thousands of miles away from their extended family members and friends, experiencing loss of support and the opportunity for children to get to know their grandparents, aunts, uncles, cousins and more.

There's also the assumption that because a Marine isn't actively deployed, the demands are less, which isn't the case.

"My daughter, who is six, rarely even asks where daddy is because she is so used to him being gone," Porter said.

"Even when their daddy is home from war, he works such long hours that our three-year-old often tells people that 'Daddy is in 'Ganistan,'" said Abbey Bertalone, whose husband is with 9th Communication Battalion. "It breaks my heart every time he says it."

Of course, there are always moves and school changes factoring into difficulties faced. My son is eight and will be moving to his fifth duty station and third school. We try to stay positive by letting him know we're excited about the move and remind him of friends he knows who are already living there.

Older children are altogether different with demands placed on them by new schools, with some requiring military children to start completely over with particular academics, or requiring a student to fit in four years of physical education their senior year, if it wasn't required earlier. This often translates to an overloaded schedule and summer school for kids.

Older children also face additional stresses which are not isolated to academics, but extend with the concerns of military life alongside their parents. Many experience the worry of family and friend's safety and imminent deployments, compounding the pressures and stress already facing our youth today.

However, all the sacrifices are not for naught; there

are some definite positives of being raised in our military lifestyle. Children get to experience living across our great nation and many are also exposed to cultures and life around the world.

"My son, at only three years old, could explain to you that the earth turned and how that created time change," said Heidi Wilde, whose husband is with 1st Combat Engineer Battalion. "I had to talk about this with him because he knew when we called or Skyped in the morning in Okinawa, it would be evening for Grammy and Grampy."

Strength, courage and pride run deep within military children, who are more accepting of others, face change with grace, and cherish friendships and bonds forged with our lifestyle.

"Being a military brat myself, I can tell you that one of the long-term consequences of growing up in this lifestyle is that I have very different ideas about what constitutes 'home' and 'family' than most people seem to have," said Wilde, whose dad is a retired UH-1N Huey pilot. "Not a bad thing, I think, just different."

The military melting pot of cultures and differences enhance and shape our children into the dynamic individuals they are today. Please join me in thanking military children for their tenacity and service.

Even when their daddy is home from war, he works such long hours that our three-year-old often tells people that 'Daddy is in 'Ganistan.' It breaks my heart every time he says it."

— Abbey Bertalone



LANCE CPL D. J. WU.

1st Lt. Eric J. Wilmott, assistant operations officer, 3rd Light Armored Reconnaissance Battalion, sits with his 2-year-old daughter, Kayla, during the 3rd LAR change of command ceremony at Lance Cpl. Torrey L. Gray Field Dec. 19, 2012.



Combat Center Clubs

Excursions Enlisted Club

Monday: Margarita Mondays
 Thursday: Rockin' Karaoke 7 to 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 to 11 p.m.

Bloodstripes NCO Club

Monday: Margarita Mondays
 Thursday: Warrior Night 4:30 - 9 p.m.
 Friday: Karaoke Night 6 to 9 p.m.

Hashmarks 29 SNCO Club

Friday: Steak Night, 4:30 - 8 p.m.
 Monday-Friday: All-hands lunch, 11 a.m. to 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, 11 a.m. to 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 to 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.

Ragtime

When: May 3 - June 1
 Where: Theatre 29
 73637 Sullivan Rd., Twentynine Palms, Calif.
 For more information call 316-4151
 or visit <http://www.theatre29.org>

Lower Desert

Gabriel Iglesias

Comedian performs
 When: 8 p.m., May 4 and 5
 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>

Huey Lewis and the News

American pop rock band performs
 When: 9:00 p.m., Friday, May 17
 Where: Morongo Casino Resort and Spa
 49500 Seminole Drive, Cabazon, Calif.
 For more information call 800-252-4499 or visit <http://www.morongocasinosort.com>.

Il Divo

Crossover quartet performs
 When: 8 p.m., Saturday, May 18
 Where: Fantasy Springs Resort Casino
 84-245 Indio Springs Parkway, Indio
 For more information call 800-827-2946 or visit <http://www.fantasyspringsresort.com>.

Scotty McCreery

Country musician performs
 When: 8 p.m., Saturday, June 1
 Where: Spotlight 29 Casino Resort
 46-200 Harrison Place, Coachella, Calif.
 For more information call 866-377-6829 or visit <http://www.spotlight29.com>

Sunset Cinema

Friday, April 26

6 p.m. - 21 and Over, Rated R
 9 p.m. - The Incredible Burt Wonderstone, Rated PG-13
 Midnight - The Host, PG-13

Saturday, April 27

10:30 a.m. - Free Matinee, Wreck It Ralph, Rated PG
 12:30 p.m. - The Croods, Rated PG
 3 p.m. - Oz The Great and Powerful, 3-D, Rated PG-13
 6 p.m. - Admission, Rated PG-13
 9 p.m. - Olympus Has Fallen, Rated R
 Midnight - The Call, Rated R

Sunday, April 28

12:30 a.m. - The Incredible Burt Wonderstone, Rated PG-13
 3 p.m. - The Host, Rated PG-13
 6 p.m. - The Croods, 3-D, Rated PG
 9 p.m. - Tyler Perry's Temptation, Rated PG-13

Monday, April 29

7 p.m. - The Call, Rated R

Tuesday, April 30

7 p.m. - Oz The Great and Powerful, 3-D, Rated PG-13

Wednesday, May 1

5:30 p.m. - The Croods, Rated PG
 8:30 p.m. - 21 and Over, Rated R

Thursday, May 2

No Movie, Leatherneck Tour Prep

Jackie Robinson story is rousing true tale of baseball's first black superstar



COURTESY PHOTO

NEIL POND

"42"

Starring: Chadwick Boseman & Harrison Ford
 Directed by Brian Helgeland
 Rated PG-13, 128 min.

Truth, we've always heard, is stranger than fiction. Sometimes truth is better than fiction, too.

That's certainly the case with the story of Jackie Robinson, the first black player to break Major League Baseball's color barrier in the 1940s. What Robinson did was so revolutionary, the resistance he faced was so formidable, and the character he demonstrated was so upstanding... well, it's a tale that Hollywood couldn't much improve by adding any shine to it, because everything's already there.

That's why director and screenwriter Brian Helgeland's new Robinson biopic, "42," dramatizes the baseball icon and his achievements but hews closely to the facts, sometime even down to a specific game's pitches, hits and plays. Not to say it's a dry, drab, droning history lesson, because it's anything but.

"42" is an uplifting, rousing crowd pleaser, and a powerful, moving tribute to a Baseball Hall of Famer who, especially for a lot of younger viewers, today might not be much more than the subject of a Black History Month school paper. This movie brings Robinson (who died in

1972) to life in a vibrant, electrifying new light, both for those who remember as well as those who have little or no idea.

Taking its title from his Brooklyn Dodgers jersey number, "42" begins in 1945, when Robinson, fresh out of WWII and playing baseball in the segregated Negro leagues, is plucked by Dodgers president and general manager Branch Rickey to try out for Brooklyn's farm team, the Montreal Royals.

Rickey (Harrison Ford) knows the risks of bringing a black player into the lily-white Major Leagues. He knows that player will be booed, baited with slurs, targeted by opposing pitchers with viciously hurled fast balls, and threatened by racist baseball fans.

But he also knows the upside: Good black players will help ball teams win games, and boost attendance by black fans.

Rickey also knows that integrating baseball is simply the right thing to do.

Chadwick Boseman, after numerous appearances on several TV shows, steps into his first big leading role with a remarkable resemblance to the character he's playing. He looks a lot like Robinson, and he does a great job expressing No. 42's formidable skills on the field, his remarkable restraint as opposing players and coaches assail him with taunts, and the powerful inner strength that guided Robinson to become America's first black baseball superstar

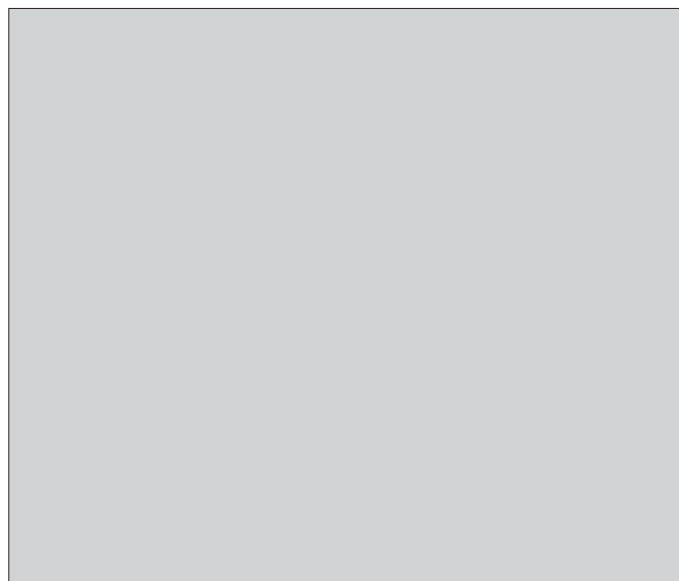
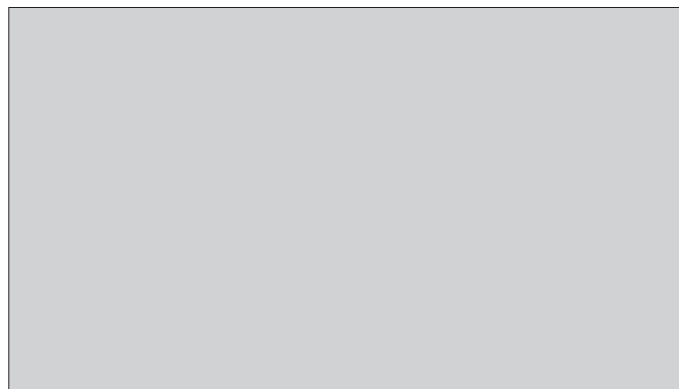
that fateful season in 1947, opening the door once and for all to other players of color.

The movie is filled with actors playing real-life players and other figures who factored into Robinson's story, including Dodgers manager Leo Durocher (Christopher Meloni), Brooklyn fielders Pee Wee Reese (Lucas Black) and Ralph Branca (Hamish Linklater), sportscaster Red Barber (John C. McGinley), black journalist Wendell Smith (Andre Holland), and Philadelphia Phillies coach Ben Chapman (Alan Tudyk), whose merciless hail of the n-word and other racist insults from the dugout during one game pushes Robinson as close as he ever comes to the breaking point.

Robinson's religious faith is a subtle thread woven throughout much of the plot, which should help "42" find a wider audience among faith-based audiences who often feel Hollywood ignores them. Rickey, his manager and mentor, uses Biblical metaphors in business negotiations and chastises his philandering team manager, Durocher, with a Scriptural admonition about adultery. Robinson encouragingly tells his wife (Nicole Beharie), "God built me to last," a line that Rickey later proudly echoes.

And here's another movie where you need to stay for the credits. As they scroll, you'll better understand the significance of "42" as one of the most powerful numbers in all of baseball and how it's uniquely honored today.

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



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



Cpl. Ali Azimi
Combat Correspondent

Andrew Kennedy and Victor Isarraraz started in the Boy Scouts when they were 11 years old and now, approximately seven years later, they reached the rank of Eagle Scout. The two newly promoted Eagle Scouts plan to continue their tradition of climbing through the ranks as they join the United States Navy and Marine Corps.

Kennedy and Isarraraz have been friends since before they joined the scouts, in fact, it was Kennedy that recruited Isarraraz into the organization. Together, through their experiences in the scouts, they decided to serve their country further by joining the armed services.

"I found that I did well in a structured organization," Isarraraz said. "The scouts are basically what made me want to get into the military."

Isarraraz, 18, will be continuing on to enlist as a sailor in the Navy. He believes the similarities between scouts and the military lie in their morals.

The scout's laws state they must be trustworthy, loyal, helpful, friendly, courteous, kind, obedient, cheerful, thrifty, brave, clean, and reverent. Many of these correspond with the ideals that sailors and Marines represent - such as honor, courage and commitment.

Isarraraz and Kennedy's achievement as Eagle Scouts is proof of their dedication to upholding these moral standards.

"The boy scouts teach you all these things. You are different from most other Americans," Kennedy said. "In the military it's the same thing. You're an elite few. Not everybody gets a chance to be an Eagle Scout. Those disciplines that they teach

are going to help me do what I need to do."

Kennedy, 17, has already accepted a scholarship through the Naval Reserve Officers Training Corps and, after-which, he plans to continue in his father's footsteps, Col. Andrew Kennedy, commanding officer, Tactical Training Exercise Control Group, as an infantry officer in the Marine Corps.

His time in the scouts has taught him leadership skills, which he hopes to use during his career in the Corps.

"I started out as a following position. I did the best job I could as a subordinate," Kennedy said. "When it came time for me to be a leader I did the best job that I could."

"To be honest, he was probably the best senior patrol leader we've ever had," Isarraraz responded to Kennedy's statement.

Although the two will be entering into different branches of the service and as different ranks, both plan to continue the friendship they have built throughout the past seven and a half years.

"Andrew has been my best friend for the longest time," Isarraraz said. "Ever since we've met, I've had a connection with this guy. I can't find myself saying goodbye to him."

"That's the funny thing about the military, it's a small world," Kennedy said. "There's no doubt we will meet up somewhere. It's never goodbye, its farewell 'till next time."

[Above] Andrew Kennedy, left, and Victor Isarraraz, right, recently achieved the rank of Eagle Scout and both intend to join the military. Kenedy recently accepted a scholarship to the Naval Reserve Officers Training Corps and Isarraraz plans to enlist in the Navy.