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OBSERVATION POST

MCAGCC TWENTYNINE PALMS
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'America's Battalion'



Pacific-based Marines train at Combat Center

Story and photos by Lance Cpl. Paul S. Martinez

Marines with Marine Wing Support Squadron 171 pushed their envelope of training when they arrived at the Combat Center Aug. 14, to conduct a variety of training exercises during the Integrated Training Exercise. What was extraordinary about this iteration of the ITX was that the squadron heavily expanded on their initial training utilizing every available asset.

Approximately 300 Marines, half of the entire squadron, made their way to the Combat Center in mid August to execute two phases of training.

"The first pillar of our training revolved around providing aviation ground support to Marine Aircraft Group 14," said Lt. Col. Howard Eyth, commanding officer, MWSS-171.

According to Eyth, operations in this portion of training were outlined in 14 functional areas and six

exercises to test the squadron in various areas of proficiency.

"Getting (the tasks) done was huge because this is what we report to Headquarters

Marine Corps concerning our mission readiness," said Maj. Gary Humphries, operations officer, MWSS-171. "If the flag goes up, we want to be ready."

The 14 functional areas included establishing a Forward-Operating Base, a Forward-Arming and Refueling Point, Airbase Ground Defense, and a Base Recovery After Attack.

"We really hit the full spectrum of training required to maintain proficiency in all functional areas of aviation ground support and activities an MWSS is expected to perform," Eyth said.

In an "airfield damage repair" exercise, combat engineers found themselves repairing a simulated,

damaged airway to make it operable for aircraft.

"If a runway is in bad shape, planes can't take off," Humphries said. "We also did a Forward-Arming Refueling Point, which is another big task for Marines."

When aircraft are supporting a combat operation, rather than fly a long distance back to base and expending fuel, Marines will set up a FARP to serve as a temporary point not far from a combat zone so aircraft can land to refuel, rearm and immediately return to the fight.

"Tactics like communicating with pilots on radio, taking the correct precautions and equipment for different types of aircraft, and coordinating the arming process are all things they got hands-on training with," Humphries said. Marine Corps Air Station Iwakuni, Japan,

See ITX page A7

3/4 Advon RETURNS



Families and friends welcome home the first wave of the 'Thundering Third' on their return home from Afghanistan, Sept. 28.

Story and photo by Cpl. D.J. Wu

Friends and family members of 3rd Battalion, 4th Marines, 7th Marine Regiment, warmly welcomed Marines and sailors home at Del Valle Field Sept. 28.

Approximately 100 service members returned in the battalion's advanced party. They are the first wave of scheduled homecomings for the battalion in the next few weeks.

Marines and sailors with 3/4, or "Darkside," returned to the Combat Center after a seven-month deployment to Afghanistan in support of Operation Enduring Freedom.

"It's great to be back," said Maj. Michael Cable, executive officer, 3/4. "Our main job in Afghanistan was security forces assistance. The Afghans have been taking the lead and we've been helping enable them. We had a really good group of guys with us."

This will be the last set of homecomings for the battalion as 3/4 is slated to deactivate sometime next year. The rest of battalion will be returning home in the coming weeks.



Due to a laps in federal funding, the Commanding General's Annual Car Show hosted by Marine Corps Community Services, scheduled Oct. 5 has been canceled.

We regret this unfortunate outcome and are well aware this lack of appropriation and the resulting government shutdown may cause significant fiscal hardship to civilian Marines who are highly valued member of our team.

Family DAY

Marines enjoy time with loved ones



LANCE CPL. JONATHAN TRAN

Kids enjoy jumping in the bounce house during the Tactical Training Exercise Control Group's family day Sept. 27.

Story by Lance Cpl. Alejandro Bedoya

Tactical Training Exercise Control Group held a family day for its Marines and their family members at Victory Park Sept. 27, which included a bounce house near the park's playground, as well as food and drinks.

"It is good for the Marines and their families to get out here and spend time together," said Pfc. Jared Goff, role player, TTECG. "We spend a lot of early mornings and late nights out in the field, especially during ITX, so time away from work is much appreciated."

TTECG's purpose is to evaluate the performance of units conducting various training exercises aboard the Combat Center. They also ensure the exercises are safely and tactically executed. TTECG works closely with these units so they meet the Marine Corps' and unit-specific training objectives. Marines with TTECG provide preliminary classroom introduction, control the exercise scenario in the field, and portray the enemy actions. They also allow the exercise force to employ the full spectrum of combat capabilities.

The director of TTECG arrived to personally to thank and speak to the Marines and their families for some of the sacrifices made in support of their mission.

"I can't thank these Marines and their families enough," said Col. Andrew Kennedy, director, TTECG. "This event is for all of you. The Marines who are out there working and the families back home supporting their every move, this is a way of saying thank you."

Traveling wall comes to Big Bear

MCCES Marines invited to memorial

'Blue Diamond' pays tribute

Story and photos by Cpl. Ali Azimi

Story by Cpl. D.J. Wu

Student Marines with the Combat Center's Marine Corps Communication-Electronics School, were invited to Big Bear City, Calif., to witness and learn about the history of the Vietnam War and American Veterans Traveling Tribute Sept. 27.

The tribute, founded in 1998 in Flint, Texas, features an 80-percent replica of the Vietnam Veterans Memorial Wall found in Washington D. C. The display also features informational panels with every other American conflict, 9/11 memorial, and other historical information.

Thirty-eight students from MCCES were invited to Big Bear by the event coordinator, Vince Smith. Smith saw the wall in Pason, Ariz., and wanted it to be shared with the Big Bear community. He says his intentions were to share what he experienced and he wanted to invite local service members to

See WALL page A7

The winding mountain roads looked out onto a marvelous valley. It's turns made good practice on a motorcycle and as the bikes ascended up the mountain, the air cooled. The sky and the roads were clear; it was a good day to ride.

Approximately 40 Combat Center motorcycle riders from 1st Marine Division units rode to Big Bear City, Calif., to visit the Vietnam Veteran's Traveling Memorial wall, as part of the Blue Diamond East motorcycle ride, Sept. 27.

Group motorcycle rides are commonly

See RIDE page A7



Cpl. Abney, Keegan, intelligence analyst, 2nd Battalion, 7th Marine Regiment admires the Vietnam Veteran's traveling wall at Big Bear City, Calif. Sept. 27.

CHILI LUNCH

The Combat Center Fire Department is holding its 16th Annual Chili Lunch, Oct. 9th. Anyone interested in purchasing tickets can call (760) 830-6871. Attendees will need to provide a unit POC, phone number, building number, and the number of tickets being requested. The tickets will be delivered. Pre-sale tickets are \$2 and tickets at the event are \$3.

Patrons can pay ticket prices but for those looking to save a few bucks blood will also be accepted as payment. The department will be collecting blood donations and every donor receives a T-shirt and a free bowl of chili. Anyone interested can schedule an appointment to give blood by calling (760) 830-5400 and leaving their name, number and what time they can donate. The fire department can accept one donor every 15 minutes from 9:30 a.m. to 2 p.m.

From the office of the Commanding General

Dear Marines, sailors, and family members of the Combat Center,

The opportunity to learn is one of the greatest gifts that we can give our children. We continue however, in an economy where retail sales are slow, home property resale values remain in the decline, and public schools battle for every budget dollar. Military and civilian parents who live or work on Marine Corps Air Ground Combat Center may help by participating in the Federal Impact Aid Program. The Federal Impact Aid Program is a law that provides a means for the federal government to reimburse local school districts for the loss of property and business tax support associated with federally connected students residing on or off base in the country. By providing our children with a high quality learning environment, we allow them the chance to succeed in a global job market that is becoming increasingly more competitive. Each child's school will receive replacement funding for operating expenses such as materials, equipment, staff, special education programming and building improvements.

Impact aid dollars are not automatic. Schools that choose to participate must conduct a yearly survey to identify the number and types of federally enrolled children, which are submitted directly to the U.S. Department of Education. Your child will be bringing home the Federal Impact Aid Survey Card from school in early October. The data retrieved from this survey is the only way that our schools are able to qualify for Federal Impact Aid funding. Unfortunately, many schools do not receive the maximum amount of funding available to them due to a low rate of return of survey cards. Parents who do not receive the survey forms should contact their child's school in order to request the form.

We are all aware of the fiscal challenges facing the California schools and the negative effect these budgetary crises can have on our children's education. Your involvement is critical in ensuring that our military impacted schools receive the proper amount of funding in order to sustain the educational needs of our student population. Low participation in the Federal Impact Aid Survey could result in a loss of millions of federal dollars that could otherwise benefit our local schools and our children's education.

Thank you for your support of this most worthy initiative. Working together on school funding issues, we can better prepare our children for a successful future.

Semper Fidelis,

D. H. Berger
Major General, U.S. Marine Corps
Commanding General

BIRTH ANNOUNCEMENTS

GRACE EMERY METZ
Born on: April 3, 2013
Born to: Kirk and Molly Metz

ZAIN PAUL CROWTHER
Born on: Sept. 15, 2013
Born to: Tim and Jessie Crowther

KADEN JAMES BRUNS
Born on: Aug. 23, 2013
Born to: Kyle and Kelsey Bruns

CAROLINE NICOLE GRAY
Born on: Sept. 14, 2013
Born to: Matt and Tanesha Gray

EVERETT RYAN CHASE
Born on: Aug. 24, 2013
Born to: Ryan and LECHE Chase

MANUEL ANTONIO GUERRERO V
Born on: Sept. 20, 2013
Born to: Manuel and Judith Guerrero

NAOMI ALICE ZARLING
Born on: Aug. 22, 2013
Born to: Jonathan and Cindy Zarling

LILLY JO KIRKPATRICK
Born on: Sept. 7, 2013
Born to: Jordan and Erica Kirkpatrick

ANTHONY PATRICK ETHERINGTON
Born on: Aug. 20, 2013
Born to: Anthony and Jewel Etherington

ANGELO NICHOLAS CIARAMELLO III
Born on: Sept. 5, 2013
Born to: Angelo and Shirmerr Ciaranello

SARAJANE RENEA DENNIS
Born on: Sept. 18, 2013
Born to: Jason and Sandra Dennis

RYKER ALEXANDER FROST
Born on: Aug. 31, 2013
Born to: Maximillian and Arielle Frost

EMMA PAISLEY DUGGER
Born on: Sept. 19 2013
Born to: Richard and Alysha Dugger

TRISTAN LANE WILLIS
Born on: Aug. 24, 2013
Born to: Earl and Emily Willis

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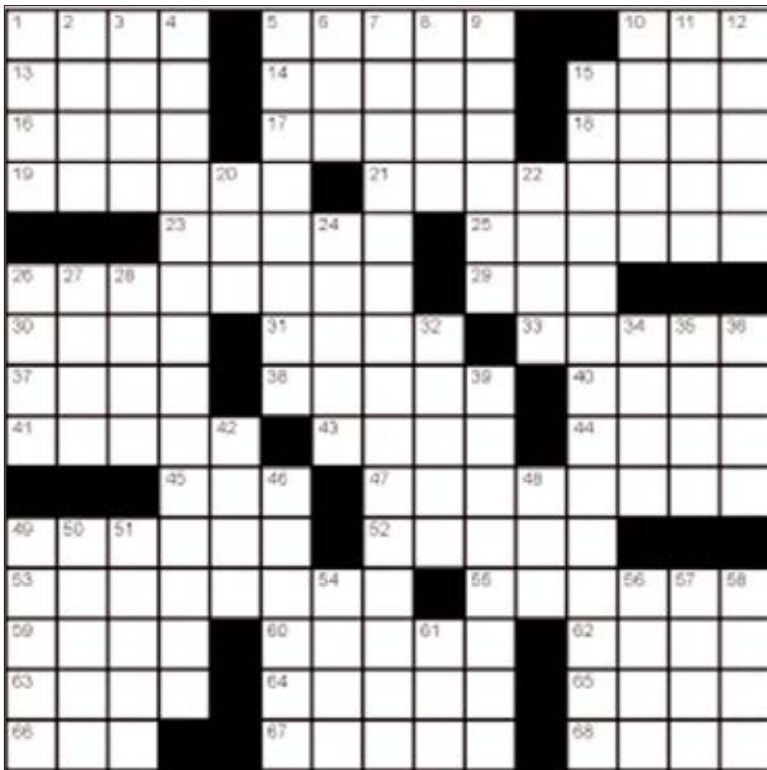
The Combat Center has its own YouTube channel. Find it at <http://www.youtube.com/user/CombatCenterPAO>

The Combat Center has its own Flickr photo and video streams. Find them at <http://www.flickr.com/thecombatcenter>

ELEMENTARY BEGINNINGS

- ACROSS**
- Deli spread
 - "The Chronicles of Narnia" author C. S.
 - On the ___ (fleeing)
 - Salt Lake City's state
 - "___ to Hold Your Hand"
 - Journalist Pauley
 - "Cheers" regular
 - Bother
 - Pitching successes
 - Rajiv Gandhi's mother
 - Causes great anguish
 - Copycat
 - English noblewoman's address
 - Order in the court?
 - "What did I tell you?"
 - Former Russian ruler
 - Sisters
 - Prima donna's favorite numbers
 - Prefix with space or plane
 - Lacking originality
 - Dog name
 - Thanksgiving table item
 - List-ending abbreviation
 - Half a sestert
 - Greek goddess of the dawn
 - Republican symbol

- Prepare leftovers
- Anti-flooding device
- Of the heavens
- "The Governor"
- Element #26
- So far
- Brainstorm
- Pulitzer-winning musical of 1996
- ___ Island (Connecticut neighbor)
- Laundry amount
- Actor Billy ___ Williams
- "Green Eggs and Ham" author
- Blows a fly
- 1936 Pasteur portrayer Paul
- "This must weigh ___!"
- Three feet
- Electrician's favorite TV show?
- Connective tissue
- She bleats
- Electrician's verbal shrug?
- Fascinated by
- Weather map features
- Actress Dern
- Put in one's two cents?
- Like a tee's room, stereotypically
- Electrician's favorite movie?



- Brazilian city, familiarly
- Even scores
- Get accustomed
- Party type
- Consumer
- Silents star Theda ___
- Like an old joke
- Pre-euro money
- Chief Norse god
- Chimney sweep's covering
- Puts on a pedestal
- "___ place or mine?"
- Obsolete weaponry
- A pop
- Out there
- "___ Grows in Brooklyn"
- Avignon's river
- Late tennis star Arthur
- Stench
- King of Shakespeare
- Pops
- Bradley and Meese

See answers on page A8

SUDOKU 3039D

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

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

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 - Angelo's Kars, 226 S. Coast Hwy, Oceanside, Calif., 92054

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

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

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- In Twentynine Palms:**
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 - 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.
 - Whispering Palms Apts., 449 E. Arenas Road
 - NYPD Pizza, 260-262 N. Palm Canyon Drive

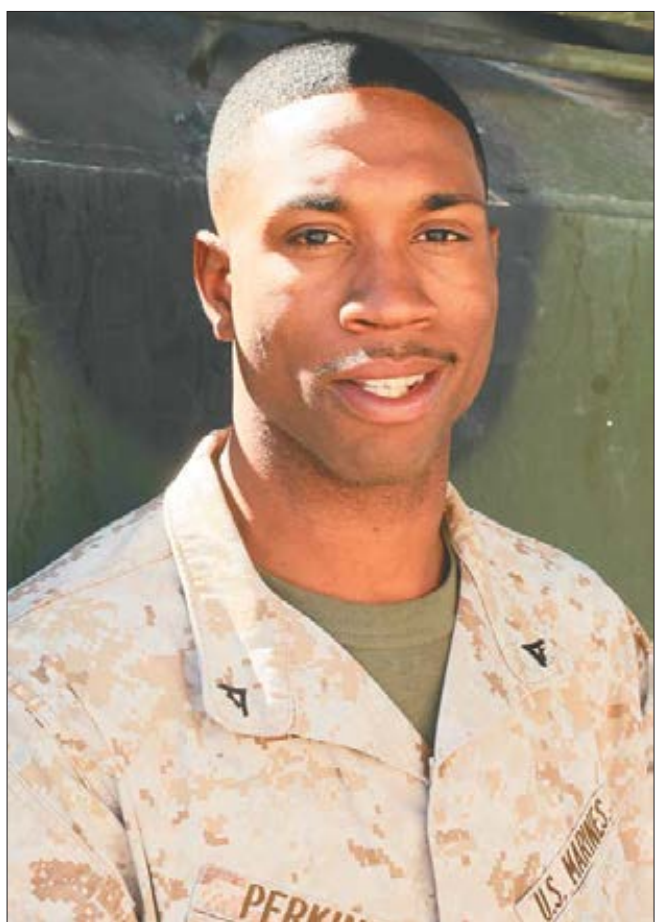
For the complete orders, but not off-limits, check out the Combat Center's official website at <http://www.29palms.marines.mil>

WHAT I'VE LEARNED

Mychael

Jacksonville, Fla. warehouse clerk, 22

PERKINS



> **I've always had** an interest in music. I've been playing piano since I was five.

> **I started taking** lessons at the age of seven. It was something that helped me stay out of trouble.

> **As I progressed**, I learned to read music at age eight. I mainly stuck with classical, but by age 13, I started listening to songs on the radio and was able to play them just by listening to them.

> **I have my own** keyboard that I play often.

> **I've played** in concerts and competitions. In Jacksonville there's the University of North Florida, and they conduct federations (competitions) for different sections such as piano, violin, brass and woodwind instruments. My music teacher, Hiroka Sanford, told me she wanted to sign me up for the competition. I entered and got 3rd place out of 300.

> **I met people** from Louisiana, Japan, and Switzerland. They all came, like me, to showcase their talent.

> **It was a great** experience to meet people there, people that were from all over the world. I like classical pianists such as Ludwig van Beethoven, Wolfgang Mozart and Johann Sebastian Bach.

> **I'm also a fan** of John Phillip Sousa. He was a conductor for the Marine Corps Band.

> **In my senior year** of high school, I went to Washington, D.C. with the marching band and there I met members of the Marine Corps band. It was my first military interaction. I spoke with the conductor, and he gave us a lot of insight.

> **When I first** arrived here, 1st Lt McQuade, our supply officer, took me and two other Marines to the O-club. It had been awhile since I played, but I noticed the piano there.

> **Later, I was** there for a function, and I thought about the piano.

> **I went inside** to see if it was still there, and asked a woman by the name of Candace if it was okay for me to start playing. She told me to go ahead, that no one ever plays it.

> **I played for a little while**, and as I was about to leave bystanders asked me to play a little longer. When I left she asked me to come back and play sometime. With that, it opened up some big opportunities for me.

> **A sergeant major** approached me one day while I was playing a Bob Marley song.

> **He asked me how** I learned to play the song, and I replied I learned it by listening. Right after that he asked me if I had ever thought about the Marine Corps Band.

> **Soon after that**, I spoke with a master gunnery sergeant, and he gave me some pointers on how I can enhance my musical abilities.

> **I still stay in touch with him**; because I have aspirations to try out for the band.

> **Whether it's with a band** or going out in town, I love to just make music.

> **There was a bar in San Dimas** that I stopped at a while back. The people there were waiting for their band to show up so I asked if I could play for them while they waited. No one objected, so I played piano for them.

> **Playing or listening to music** is something that can help get through the day if I'm not in the best mood. For me, it creates a vibe that I can just connect to.

> **Florida is a nice** place to relax. There's a lot of nice views out there.

> **I love the beach**, but to me the setting for playing music doesn't matter. It's more about the meaning.

> **Some of my favorite** songs to play are tracks from Super Mario Brothers. I like to remind people of what they used to play as a kid.

> **I try to go to the O-club** during chow. I play for about an hour, grab chow, and come back to work.

> **Music makes the world go** round if you ask me. It's all based on your emotions.

Interviewed by Lance Cpl. Paul S. Martínez
Sept 31, 2013

PERKINS IS AN AWARD-WINNING PIANIST WHO OCCASIONALLY VOLUNTEERS HIS TIME BY PLAYING PIANO AT THE O'CLUB DURING LUNCH.

Looking for local entertainment?

See page B2 for our NEW LIBERTY CALL SECTION

8-4-6 Run KICKS OFF

Story and photos by
Lance Cpl. Paul S. Martinez

A participant in the 8-mile race sprints to the finish line during an 8-mile run at the physical fitness track as part of the 8-4-6 Race Series Sept. 25.



Semper Fit rolls out multi-mile race series

Various participants aboard the Combat Center hit the ground running at the physical fitness test track with the first race in the annual 8-4-6 Race series Sept. 25.

“I joined my friend in this run because she decided to run to honor one of her friends who passed away,”

— Marlow Besey

The race, organized by Semper Fit and Marine Corps Community Services, is now entering its third year of hosting friendly running competitions.

“This race opens our ‘cross-country’ season, as we like to call it,” said Danielle McKeever, athletic director, Semper Fit, MCCS. “We originally had one race but decided to increase it to three, that way more people can participate and have a better variety with the different length races.”

The PFT track was littered with Combat Center Marines making their way through the course with the intent of competition amongst each other and getting a lengthy physical training session.

“Today was our day off. We decided to come out here and race,” said Lance Cpl. Riley McIntosh, rear crewman, 3rd Amphibious Assault Battalion. “It was a good run.”

Civilians and spouses were also present to complete the trek across flat, sandy terrain.

“I joined my friend in this run because she decided to run to honor one of her friends who passed away,” said Marlow

Besey, wife of Pfc. Austin Besey, infantryman, Bravo Company, 1st Battalion, 7th Marine Regiment. “I found this race to be intense.”

Cold water and cheering spectators awaited the runners as they sprinted the last stretch through the finish line.

For most, it was a fun race, while others found it as rewarding as it was challenging.

“Keeping up with the Marines around me was good motivation,” Besey said. “I’m anticipating the four and six-mile races.”

Coming in first place for males was Capt. Jason Maraffi, Remain Behind Element officer-in-charge, 3rd Battalion, 4th Marines, 7th Marine Regiment, The first-place female competitor was Besey.

“With 137 racers today, it was the most we’ve ever had for the 8-mile,” McKeever said. “This was a very successful start, and I’m thinking the next two races will be even bigger.”

The next race in the series will be held Oct. 9, in which runners will compete over a four-mile course.



Marines with Co. E, 2/7, take on the obstacle course during a seven-mile run held by the unit, Sept. 26.



A Marine with Company E., 2nd Battalion, 7th Marine Regiment, climbs a rope on the obstacle course during a seven-mile run held by the unit Sept. 26.

Story and photos by
Lance Cpl. Paul S. Martinez

SEVEN MILES OBSTACLES

Competition tests Marines physically, mentally

Fifteen Marine fireteams stood outside the combat operations center for 2nd Battalion, 7th Marine Regiment shortly before sunrise. They were the Marines of Company E, 2/7, ready to embark on a rigorous, 7-mile race with seven obstacles in various locations aboard the Combat Center Sept. 26.

With each team led by a designated fireteam leader and maps in hand, the groups set out for a morning of running, obstacles and competition that would leave them looking filthy but begging for more.

"We wanted to test if our fireteams could operate under uncertainty, and if the team leader could lead when he's called upon to do so," said Capt. Will Kerrigan, company commander, E Co., 2/7. "A good company also likes competition, and this was certainly one."

The first stop for each team was the obstacle course. Marines were required to undergo the entire course twice, helping each other get through all obstacles if necessary. Next, they quickly ran to the Training Tank, where each Marine completed a 400-meter swim wearing their Marine Corps physical training shorts.

Next, the Marines found that the course was designed to test them not only physically but mentally. They stopped to conduct a full weapon assembly of the M16A4 service rifle with the M203 grenade launcher attachment, M9 Baretta pistol, and M240 Bravo machine gun.

"This course tested aerobic and anaerobic physical fitness with a combination of long-distance running and physical obstacles," Kerrigan said. "In addition, special stations were set up to test their mental capability, to see if the Marines could still think under fatigue."

Next was a simulated call-for-fire mission in which team leaders used a map to designate a target. Marines then found themselves at the Ripper Crossfit Gym and did not leave until each Marine had completed 50 pull-ups, 50 push-ups, 50 dips, and 50 air-squats.

"There's nothing easy about Echo Company," Kerrigan said. "We like to do things tough."

Marines made it even closer to the finish line when they arrived at a "terms and graphics" station, which is where they had to call upon their geographic comprehension skills to identify terrain features such as hills, saddles and valleys.

Finally, the last station was a simulated casualty evacuation exercise. Marines placed a simulated casualty on a stretcher and transported him to a landing zone, all while providing security for the casualty and each other.

"This race helped build unit cohesion," said 1st Lt. Tyler Mojer, company executive officer, E Co., 2/7. "I'm surprised to see how well the fireteams have done with this course."

Marines made the final stretch to complete the 7-mile circuit by returning to the starting point. The fireteam with the fastest overall time was rewarded with a 72-hour liberty pass.

"I saw this as a team-building competition," said Lance Cpl. Jordan Chrisley, infantryman, E Co., 2/7. "It brought our guys together and the challenges made them closer. I think we did very well."

The unit intends to schedule more competitive events like this in the future as the Marines of Company E maintain mission readiness and await the next challenge.

"We will learn that by the end of the day, the company will be that much closer," Kerrigan said. "No one can mess with this company, and no one will."

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Story and photo by
Lance Cpl. Paul S.
Martinez

Sasha Martinez, wife of Staff Sgt. Chris Martinez, crash fire rescue vehicle mechanic, suits up in the Advanced Bomb Suit during Jane Wayne Day Sept. 27.

Spouses step into their Marines' boots

Marine Wing Support Squadron 374 organized an unforgettable opportunity for Marine spouses with a Jane Wayne Day held at various ranges aboard the Combat Center Sept. 27.

Spouses gathered outside of the unit's vehicle lot, geared up in flak jackets and Kevlar helmets, and loaded in the back of medium tactical vehicle replacements, or seven-tons, to experience what it is like to be an MWSS-374 Marine for a day.

The first stop was Range 108, where each spouse learned how to properly fire the M4 service rifle and M203 grenade launcher. After a series of safety briefs were given, including the four weapon safety rules, the spouses were escorted to the firing line.

Accompanied by combat-marksanship trainers, the spouses took aim with the M4 rifle and M203 grenade launcher and fired at targets ranging 100-400 yards.

"I was very nervous to fire the rifle, even fidgeting, but I managed to do it," said Maricruz Madril, spouse of Lance Cpl. Aaron Madril, combat engineer, MWSS-374.

Following the live-fire, spouses had a hands-on lesson with explosive ordnance disposal robots, and some geared up in a 95-pound bomb suit, attempting to maneuver in it.

Spouses were then provided Meals

Ready-to-Eat for lunch before traveling to Range 112 to watch a controlled demolition of Composition 4 plastic explosives.

"We held this as an effort to allow spouses to experience multiple activities associated with their Marine's lives," said Capt. Ronald Dutil, company commander, Motor Transport Company, MWSS-374. "It showcases what we as Marines do, whether it's the live-fire ranges or explosive ordnance disposal."

After the EOD demo, spouses made their final stop at the utilities platoon lot, where they took a tour and observed the tents that Marines use when not in garrison, the generators that power their equipment, and more weapon systems that included the M240 Bravo and Mark 19 automatic grenade launcher.

"Today was definitely an experience," Sasha Martinez, spouse of Staff Sgt. Chris Martinez, fire fighter specialist, MWSS-374. "It was challenging holding the rifle and wearing the (flak jacket) all day, but it was very fun, and I loved it."

All hands returned to the lot to disembark and conclude the event. Spouses had a newfound appreciation for what their Marine does.

"I could see this was an experience unlike anything the spouses had ever seen," Dutil said. "But because of that, they felt a part of something bigger. They could see that this is more than just a job, it's a lifestyle."

Belle of the BALL

Story by
Lance Cpl. Paul S. Marintez



L.I.N.K.S. prepares spouses for Birthday Ball

The Lifestyle Insight Networking Knowledge and Skills organization held a special class at the Officers' Club Sept. 28, which brought Combat Center spouses together to help prepare them for the 238th Annual Marine Corps Birthday Ball.

The event, named Belle of the Ball, was put together with sponsorship from Allied American University and Elite Cosmetology School for its second year of educating spouses on the customs and traditions of the Marine Corps Birthday Ball.

The inside of the Officers' Club was completely transformed to resemble a Marine Corps Birthday Ball setting. Spouses sat together at fully decorated tables as Gina Smith, L.I.N.K.S. trainer, explained the history behind the Marine Corps Birthday Ball, including Gen. John Lejuene's birthday message, the significant POW/MIA table and the customs associated with celebrating the Marine Corps' birthday.

"The birthday ball helps build camaraderie and honors tradition," said Lt. Col. Steven DeLazaro, director,

Marine Corps Community Services. "We share esprit de corps not just with fellow Marines and sailors, but the families as well."

A detail of Marines, led by 1st Lt. Adam Lawrenz, logistics officer,

3rd Combat Engineer Battalion, entered the ballroom with a Marine Corps birthday

cake to demonstrate the official cake-cutting ceremony.

Spouses learned the tradition of cutting the cake and giving the first slice to the guest of honor, the second to the oldest Marine present, and the third to the youngest Marine present, symbolizing the passing of knowledge and leadership.

"With this event, I learned what to expect at the ball, and how to act," said Tammy Flores, spouse of Cpl. Noe Flores, combat engineer, 3rd CEB. "I'm excited for the ball. It will be my first time going." The spouses then watched as L.I.N.K.S. held a fashion show dedicated to displaying dresses that are appropriate, and inappropriate to wear to the ball.

Dresses with a camouflage print, mid-drift waistline and even a wedding dress were highlights of what not to wear. More elegant dresses that are long in length and simple in color were strongly suggested.

"What to wear and what not to wear for spouses is huge at the ball," said Amber Bilderain, L.I.N.K.S. trainer. "We want to teach spouses how they can be a good representative for their Marine."

After the class, spouses were allowed to pick from a collection of donated dresses, provided by Armed Services YMCA, to find their calling of what to wear for this year's ball.

"This is a fun event that gets spouses excited and prepared for the ball," Bilderain said. "At the same time, they gain an appreciation for the significance of it, and understand that it is their Marine's day."

RIDE, from A1

organized by units as an opportunity to increase the proficiency of riders and improve mentorship throughout the ranks.

"We've got a lot of experienced riders and a lot of inexperienced riders so there's a lot of mentorship and some coaching going on," said CWO 2 James DeSelms, Chemical, Biological, Radiological, & Nuclear Officer, 2nd Battalion, 7th Marine Regiment. "Any time you can get riders out, a novice rider with an experienced rider, they get a little coaching from the experienced riders and just teach them based off experience."

The winding loops leading up the mountain as well as the presence of fellow riders proved the riders skills and their ability to ride as a group.

The ride to Big Bear was unique, as their destination held special significance. A replica of the Vietnam Veterans Memorial was on display in the city serving as a special tribute to those who gave their lives during the conflict in Vietnam.

"2/7 was supposed to do a battalion ride back when the rain got real bad," said DeSelms, a Motorcycle Safety Foundation coach. "We postponed it and then we found out the Vietnam wall

was coming so we pushed it until today, so the battalion could ride up and pay our respects."

The battalion conducts a motorcycle ride every other month, but for this ride they wanted to include other units in their division.

"I didn't want to do it by ourselves," DeSelms said. "The units here wanted to do something where we pull everybody in and do something together. So I reached out to (1st Tank Battalion) and (3rd Light Armored Reconnaissance Battalion) and got them to come along to build camaraderie between the units."

The bikers arrived at the memorial with the roar of more than 40 motorcycle engines, but once they arrived there was silence. The riders walked alongside the black wall, inscribed with the names of the deceased in white and were given the opportunity to talk to Vietnam-era veterans.

"I enjoyed the ride and the wall was very moving," said Cpl. Abney, Keegan, intelligence analyst, 2/7.

Unit motorcycle rides are meant to increase safety and skill on bikes, but the Blue Diamond riders will remember this ride as a day they paid tribute to the men who came before them and paid the ultimate sacrifice.



CPL. ALI AZIMI

Combat Center riders from 1st Marine Division units ride to Big Bear City, Calif., Sept. 27 to visit the Vietnam Veterans Traveling Memorial, as part of the Blue Diamond East motorcycle ride.

ITX, from A1

which is where the squadron is based, does not afford such terrain and space for these kinds of operations.

"We have to seek out venues to accomplish these things," Humphries said. "Coming out to ITX is something we do not take for granted."

The squadron dedicated time and resources to honing all other training topics for its Marines, and designed an entirely separate set of exercises.

"The second pillar of our training was unit-level training, which allowed us to cover the remaining functions and activities that an MWSS is expected to perform," Eyth said.

Training conducted for this pillar included combat-rifle marksmanship, simulated convoy operations, explosive ordnance disposal mine sweeps, the Combat Lifesavers Course and First Responder's Course.

"We wanted to come large and we wanted to come capable," Humphries said. "We aim to work on the airfield, but also to train our Marines for combat."

According to Humphries, the squadron's presence in Iwakuni makes them a direct part of the contingencies in the Pacific region. If there were to be a crisis in the Pacific, the unit is capable of responding quickly.

"Our Marines were thrilled they could come out

and do live-fire training in the desert," Humphries said. "They were able to hone their skills."

The squadron's time aboard the various ranges of the Combat Center enhanced the capabilities, knowledge and cohesion of the unit.

"We truly maximized the training potential of ITX here," Eyth said. "These Marines built their knowledge and forged a common bond. They also gained an understanding for our mission and how we go after it."

With the skills the squadron developed while aboard the Combat Center, they are better prepared for the road which lies ahead of them.

"We've got a pretty robust exercise schedule for the next year," Humphries said. "We return to Iwakuni to refit and rearm, and these very same Marines will go to the Mariana Islands, to support an exercise called Forged Fury. They will be constructing restoration of flight lines to make them C-130 capable."

The squadron expects nothing short of success from their Marines as they go forward to operate wherever they are needed.

"The professionalism and high quality of these Marines, from the squadron staff all the way down to junior enlisted shows," Humphries said. "I'm very impressed by their fortitude and professional drive."

WALL, from A1

be present during the four-day showing.

"After seeing (the wall,) I said, 'this is what this community needs,'" Smith said. "It took three and a half years to get it here, but we did it. We have a very patriotic community up here. This is the least we can do for the service members. This is a community that knows the names on that wall gave their tomorrows for our todays."

MCCES students were invited to see the wall, talk to Vietnam veterans and enjoy lunch with the community. The students spent the afternoon learning the history of those that fought before them and listened to the stories they shared.

"I love listening to the history that veterans have to tell," said Pfc. Brittany Swann, student, Headquarters Co., MCCES. "I was a history major in college so this is an amazing opportunity for me. I love hearing the stories of why other service members joined."

The 360-foot-long display was back-dropped by the beautiful Big Bear Lake and mountains. The traveling wall brings a national monument to the back yards of those who aren't able to make the trip to the nation's capital.

"This is a spot-on replica of the wall in D.C.," said 1st Sgt. John Dober, company first sergeant, Headquarters, Co., MCCES. "Many of the young students haven't had the opportunity to visit the nation's capital and see the actual Vietnam memorial. This is a great experience for them. It reminds (the students) of what they're doing."

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CROSSWORD SOLUTIONS

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7	2	3	8	1	4	5	9	6

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GAME TIME

Fans cheer for the return of football season

During this time of year, it's likely that more people gather on couches in front of a TV than in pews at church. This is when a person's attire consists of their team's jersey, lucky socks and a magical headband that brings their team good luck. An essential part of the 'game-time' attire is superstitious items fans carry with them. These fans have a drive like no other. It is not the appeal of a gameday barbeque or the ice-cold drinks, it is the roaring cheer through four quarters of bone-breaking anticipation. It's football season.

a spot on next season's roster. The fight is endless. Countless hours of studying tape, quarterback's throwing the same pass over and over and wide-receivers running the same routes. They must strive for perfection. The players eat, sleep and breathe football.

The game is a battle as soon as they step onto the field. One yard at a time, they claw their way to victory. Though the fans are not on the field with the players, absorbing the hard hits, there is one thing they do share and that is passion for the game.

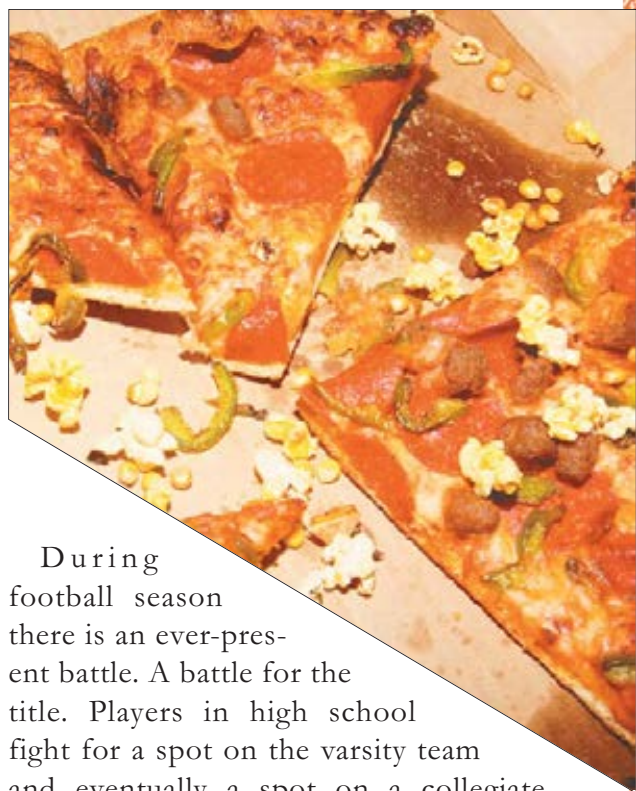
NFL fans are recognized as some of the most die-hard sports fans in the nation. For true fans, no matter how well their team performed last year, every year is a potential super bowl year.

wide-receiver to stretch that extra inch, make the one-handed grab and get a first down.

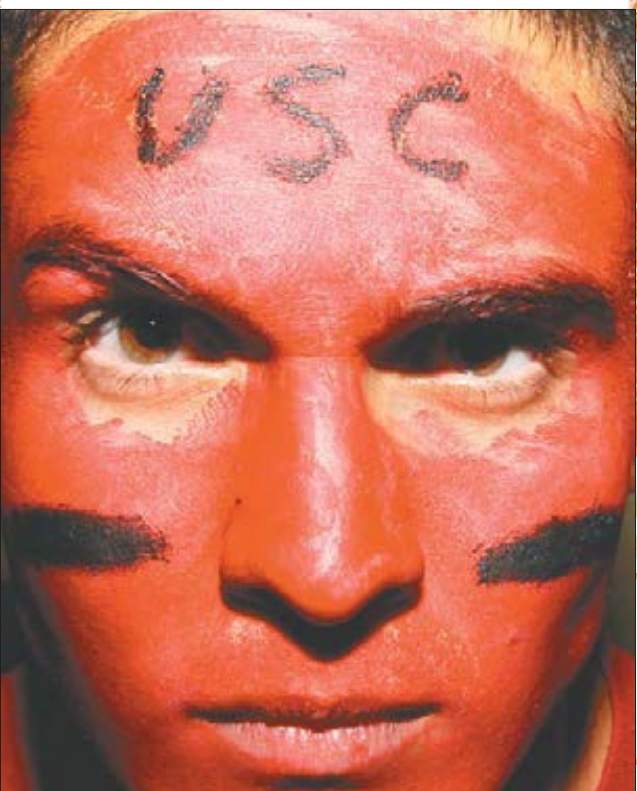
The full experience however, is to take all of that energy out of the living room and into the lion's den by showing up to the stadium hours before the game to tailgate, securing a spot to barbeque and amp-up before the game. This is also a time to greet opposing fans with glares and friendly banter in the form of snide remarks leaving no question of who's team is superior.

Fans are bound by a team spirit, a spirit embodied by 'high-fives' and 'chest-bumps' when their team scores. A spirit, which can also be crushed when their team loses. It is a bond that goes as far as hundreds of strangers uniting in hopes that their team will overcome the opposing force to get one more 'W' as they near the playoffs.

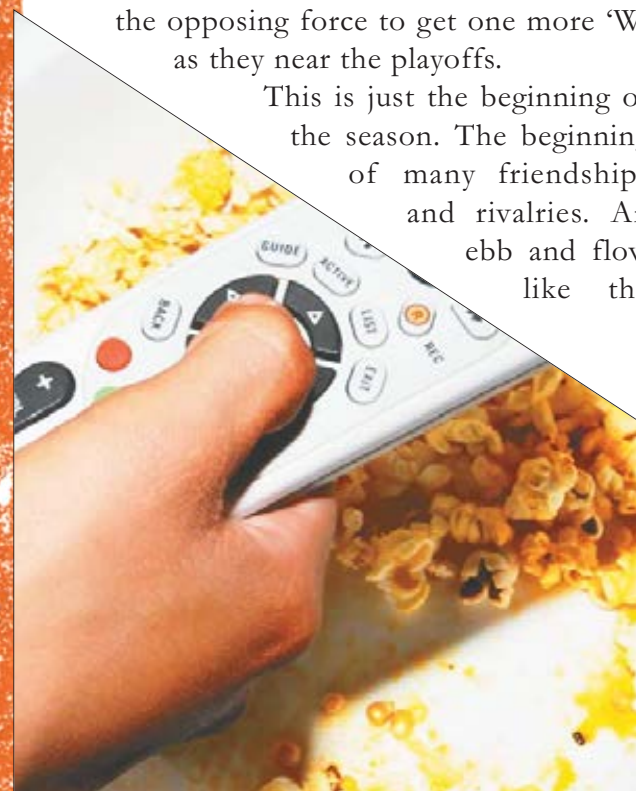
This is just the beginning of the season. The beginning of many friendships and rivalries. An ebb and flow like the



During football season there is an ever-present battle. A battle for the title. Players in high school fight for a spot on the varsity team and eventually a spot on a collegiate team. College players train day-in and day-out to prove they are worthy of playing with the big boys. But the ultimate goal for any serious football player, from high school to the National Football League, is to win a championship. People may say professional players already made it, but they are constantly competing against each other for that starting position and



The ultimate display of true fandom is the ritual of donning face and body paint. It is a regular occurrence come game day and some football enthusiasts will even 'paint up' to cheer from their living room with little concern about ruining the carpet or furniture. The belief is that screaming at a television can inspire a



change of seasons. No matter what life brings during the week, there is always something to look forward to on the weekend. A weekend full of hard hits, amazing catches and underdogs finding a way to win. So gear up and dig in because it's that glorious time of year again. It's football season.



Liberty Call

Combat Center Clubs

Excursions Enlisted Club

Thursday: Karaoke, 8:30 - 10 p.m.
Friday: DJ Gjettblaque, 8 - 11 p.m.
Saturday: DJ Gjettblaque, 8 - 11 p.m.

Bloodstripes NCO Club

Thursday: Warrior Night, 4:30 - 9 p.m.
Friday: Karaoke Night, 6 - 9 p.m.

Hashmarks 29 SNCO Club

Monday: Steak Night, 4:30 - 8 p.m.
Wednesday: Wing Special Wednesday, 4:30 - 9 p.m.
Thursday: Free Happy Hour Food, 5 - 7 p.m.
Friday: Steak Night, 4:30 - 8 p.m.
DJ Gixxa, 8 - 11 p.m.

Combat Center Officers' Club

Monday: Steak Night, 5 - 7:30 p.m.
Thursday: Free Pub Grub, 4:30 - 6:30 p.m.
Taco Night, 5 - 7 p.m.

For complete calendars visit <http://www.mccs29palms.com>

Local Events

Free Line-Dance Lessons

Learn to dance the night away
When: 5 - 9 p.m., every Sunday
Where: Willie Boy's Saloon and Dance Hall
50048 29 Palms Hwy, Morongo Valley, Calif.
For more information, call 363-3343.

Nightmares Halloween Haunt

A play that dwells into the nightmare of a little girl
When: 7 p.m., Fridays & Saturdays, Oct. 18 - Oct. 31
Where: Theatre 29
73637 Sullivan Rd., Twentynine Palms, Calif.
For more information, call 316-4151

Low Desert

O'jays with Gladys Knight

"Living Legends" perform with eight-time grammy winner
When: 8 p.m., Saturday, Oct. 4
Where: Agua Caliente Casino, Resort and Spa
32-250 Bob Hope Dr., Rancho Mirage, Calif.
For more information, call 888-999-1995 or visit <http://hotwatercasino.com>

Trace Adkins

Country music artist performs
When: 8 p.m., Saturday, Oct. 11
Where: Fantasy Springs Resort Casino
84-245 Indio Springs Parkway, Indio, Calif.
For more information, call 800-827-2946 or visit <http://www.fantasyspringsresort.com>

War

American funk band performs
When: 9 p.m., Friday, Oct. 18
Where: Morongo Casino Resort and Spa
49500 Seminole Drive, Cabazon, Calif.
For more information, call 800-252-4499 or visit <http://www.morongocasinoresort.com>

Women of Soul

Hottest R&B singers of the 80's and 90's perform
When: 8 p.m., Saturday, Oct. 19
Where: Spotlight 29 Casino
46-200 Harrison Place, Coachella, Calif.
For more information, call 866-377-6829 or visit <http://www.spotlight29.com>

Sunset Cinema

Friday, Oct. 4

5:30 p.m. - Mortal Instruments: City of Bones, PG-13
8:30 p.m. - Jobs, PG-13
11:30 p.m. - Kick-Ass 2, R

Saturday, Oct. 5

10 a.m. - Free Admission Epic, PG
12:30 p.m. - Lee Daniels' The Butler, PG-13
3:30 p.m. - One Direction: This is Us 3-D, PG
8:30 p.m. - Elysium, R
11:30 p.m. - You're Next, R

How far is too far when the law doesn't go far enough?



COURTESY PHOTO

NEIL POND

"Prisoners"

Starring: Hugh Jackman, Jake Gyllenhaal & Paul Dano
Directed by Denis Villeneuve
R, 153 min.

Plunged into every parent's worst nightmare, a desperate father (Hugh Jackman) takes matters into his own hands when his young daughter and her friend disappear and the local police department can't get answers out of the man he's convinced abducted them.

With no evidence to hold the developmentally challenged Alex Jones (Paul Dano), who was driving the rattrap minivan seen near the girls just before they vanished, the cops have to let him go. That's when Jackman's Keller Dover abducts him, secretly holds him prisoner in an abandoned apartment building and begins a prolonged attempt to beat the truth out of him.

How far is too far to go, "Prisoners" asks, when the law doesn't go far enough?

That's not the only question the movie raises, in its brutally direct way, as it plows through a minefield of raw nerves, shattered emotions, shifting moral boundaries and unnerving religious overtones. Most of those questions don't have easy answers.

What are we to think, for instance, when Dover fortifies himself with the Lord's Prayer before another grueling session subjecting his captive, who has the mental capacity of a 10-year-old, to almost unthinkable abuse? Or when Dover's neighbors Franklin and Nancy (Terrence Howard and Viola Davis), whose young daughter was also taken, justify their complicity to his plan? "We won't help him," Nancy reasons, "but we won't stop him, either."

And feel free to overlay any number of social issues, current events, theological debates or other entry points for discussion onto Dover's declaration that his prisoner is "not a person anymore," and that "we have to hurt him until he talks."

Det. Loki (Jake Gyllenhaal), seemingly the only cop on the case in the entire (unnamed) Pennsylvania town, tirelessly tracks down clues that always seem to leave him frustratingly short of a breakthrough. Unable to cope, Dover's wife (Maria Bello) retreats into a prescription-induced haze.

Melissa Leo plays Alex's aunt, who raised him after his parents died, and David Dastmalchian is chilling as another suspect with a peculiar interest in children's clothes...and other creepy things.

"Prisoners" has a strong cast with seven Oscar nominations and two Academy Award trophies among them. The movie's palette of bleak winter landscapes also packs a visceral punch, thanks to ten-time Academy Award-nominated cinematographer Roger Deakins, who's worked on five Coen Brothers movies and the sumptuous-looking James Bond adventure "Skyfall."

But strip away its impressive Hollywood pedigree and it basically boils down to basic B-movie stock, shock and schlock. If you've seen anything like it, you've probably seen a lot of things like it.

Note the "s" in the title. By the time "Prisoners" ends after a marathon 153 minutes, its obvious it wants to leave you thinking about how you've encountered more than one prisoner, in more ways than one. But you'll also be thinking about how it's at least half an hour too long, how much of a grim ordeal the whole affair turned out to be, and how director Denis Villeneuve threw in way too much of just about everything, including snakes, some mumbo-jumbo about a "war against God," and all those mazes, mazes and more mazes that all lead nowhere.

Fans of forensic-investigation and crime-procedural TV shows like "CSI" might enjoy the twisty-turn-y trip down the zig-zaggy rabbit hole to the end. But as the credits rolled after the final scene set in the darkness of night, in the winter cold, with a frosting of snow on hard, frozen ground, I was glad to "escape" to somewhere brighter, somewhere warmer, and somewhere I hadn't just seen Paul Dano's face repeatedly bludgeoned into the consistency of raw deer meat.



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C BIG MORONGO CANYON LEAN-UP

Photos by
Cpl. Lauren A. Kurkimalis

Marines from Company E and Weapons Co., 2nd Battalion, 7th Marine Regiment, volunteered their time to help clean up Big Morongo Canyon Preserve in observance of National Public Lands Day, Sept. 28.

The Marines helped to maintain the hiking trails and boardwalks at the preserve by cutting back overgrown grass, bushes and trees.



[Top, left] Cpl. Stetson West, vehicle commander, Weapons Company, 2nd Battalion, 7th Marine Regiment, cuts away brush from a boardwalk at Big Morongo Canyon Preserve Sept. 28.

[Above] Cpl. Andrew Carpenter, machine gunner, E Co., 2/7, trims back tall grass from a hiking path at BMCP Sept. 28.

[Left] Lance Cpl. Thomas Wilson, machine gunner, W Co., 2/7, cuts away over-grown trees from a trail at BMCP Sept. 28, as Cpl. Andrew Carpenter, machine gunner, E Co., 2/7, removes the debris.

[Right] Seth Monore, 5, son of 1st Sgt. Brian Monroe, E Co. first sergeant, 2/7, joins his father and other Marines from 2/7 in cleaning up BMCP Sept. 28.

