



CPL. JOSHUA YOUNG

Cpl. Jeffery Mount, team member, Security Force Assistance Advisor Team 2-215, moves his gear in preparation to leave Forward Operating Base Nolay, Helmand province, Afghanistan, May 2.

Last Marines exit Sangin, Afghanistan

Cpl. Joshua Young
 Combat Correspondent

FORWARD OPERATING BASE NOLAY, Afghanistan - The final Marines and sailors of Forward Operating Base Nolay exited the Sangin Valley, leaving the 2nd Brigade, 215th Corps, Afghan National Army in full control of the FOB and the surrounding area for the first time without coalition forces in place since they first entered during 2006.

The Marines and sailors from Security Force Assistance Advisor Team 2-215 arrived at Camp Leatherneck following a seven-month deployment and a convoy out of Sangin Valley, May 5. On the same day the last Marines of 1st Battalion, 7th Marine Regiment departed FOB Sabit Qadam, also in Sangin.

The SFAAT 2-215 Marines and sailors were part of the last U.S. brigade-level advisor team in Regional Command (Southwest), which includes Helmand and Nimruz provinces, but the British continue to advise the 3rd Brigade in central Helmand.

The service members, who are now preparing to redeploy to their home units, expressed their feelings on leaving the FOB completely in the hands of 2nd Brigade.

"The 2nd Brigade has had the torch for some time," said Capt. Joseph Dewson, a 28-year-old Marine reservist from Newark, Delaware, and an advisor with SFAAT 2-215. "We have been able to spend time with them and vested a per-

sonal interest in their success."

Col. Christopher Douglas, the team leader for SFAAT 2-215, kept a "no interference" stance with his advisory unit. One of his goals was to rapidly allow the 2nd Brigade to stand on their own with as little advisory help as possible to ensure their capability to defend the Sangin Valley from hostile attacks.

By adopting this stance, the 2nd Brigade has developed sustainable "Afghan solutions to Afghan problems," and in turn has become more confident in their problem-solving ability and ability to carry on the mission without coalition assistance. Many of the advisors believe the Afghan solutions work better than some of the coalition force solutions used in the past. Although the "no interference" stance was kept, the advisors gave feedback to the leaders of 2nd Brigade at every opportunity to reinforce their actions as well as to provide a positive learning environment.

"I feel honored to have been part of the legacy left by previous Marines and coalition forces," said Douglas, a reservist from Ballston Spa, New York. "I expect to see them continue to focus on stability and actively opposing insurgent violence, to dominate and win every fight."

For some of the advisors, this was not their first time aboard FOB Nolay. Gunnery Sgt. John W. Greene, who was shot in his shoulder

See SANGIN, A6

3rd CEB celebrates family day

Lance Cpl. Paul S. Martinez
 Combat Correspondent

High-tempo music filled the air as Marines and sailors frantically circled two rows of back-to-back chairs. Although they are surrounded by family and friends, a tense mood fills the atmosphere. Suddenly, the music comes to an abrupt halt, and the group immediately pounces on their nearest chair, shoving each other in the process until one is left the odd man out. He performs a playful walk of shame as those around him laugh, wishing him better luck on the next round of musical chairs.

Marines, sailors and families of 3rd Combat Engineer Battalion enjoyed an afternoon of food and games during the unit's family day at Desert Winds Golf Course, Monday.

"Having returned from deployment in October, we wanted to get everyone together again," said Lt. Col. Brian Dwyer, battalion commander, 3rd CEB. "With Marines and families throughout the unit, we wanted to ensure camaraderie and do something together as a unit to have some fun. We want to show the families that we

"We want to show the families that we appreciate everything they do day in and day out."

- Lt Col. Brian Dwyer

appreciate everything they do day in and day out."

The family day was themed toward the Cinco de Mayo celebration, with Mexican food provided by Tim Perez. Music and a piñata with candy were also featured in the fun.

"It was a lot of fun," said Capt. Andrew McGinn, company commander, A Company, 3rd CEB, whom attended with his wife and daughter. "The piñata was pretty funny to watch and the food was great. I think these unit functions get everyone out of the work mindset and allow them to be on a more personal level."

All over, the battalion could be seen enjoying spoonfuls of Mexican cuisine while watching their fellow Marines and sailors stumble over games of musical chairs. A bounce house kept the children entertained.

"We pride ourselves not as a battalion but as a family," said Erika Capistran, family readiness officer, 3rd CEB. "[Family day] gives us an opportunity to come together for unit cohesion."

According to Dwyer, the unit is turning its operational focus on supporting Exercise Desert Scimitar this month.

"The Marines and families of 3rd CEB have been incredible," Dwyer said. "They have per-

See FAMILY, A6

MCMWTC Marine defends ring title

Cpl. Charles Santamaria
 Combat Correspondent

RENO, Nev. — Only the voice of the announcer can be heard through speakers behind the giant curtain. The fighter's heartbeat becomes louder and more distinct each second before his name is called. He walks through the curtain to cheers from a crowd surrounding the octagon arena where he will fight to defend his title. His heart begins to race, slowly picking up speed as he steps into the cage and sees his opponent face-to face.

Sgt. Daniel Ramirez, Distribution Management Office clerk, Marine Corps Mountain Warfare Training Center, competed to defend his welterweight title at a mixed martial arts event held at the Reno Event Center, Saturday.

Ramirez Began fighting after he became a Marine and arrived at MCMWTC. Since then, he has trained and competed in the amateur mixed martial arts circuit in the hopes of achieving his dream of fighting in the Ultimate Fighting Championship professionally.

"It's a natural progression to me," Ramirez said. "I feel like I've proven myself through my performance and I have a great coaching team behind me so I feel like I'm ready to advance to the next level."

At 170 pounds, Ramirez is the current champion of the welterweight division in the amateur league for the Ultimate Reno Combat Championship. From the time the fighters touched gloves and began the match, it took Ramirez 17 seconds to bring his opponent to the ground and obtain a victory by way of knockout.

"Every day we train and there's no breaks leading up to a fight," Ramirez said. "you have to visualize the win. If you train hard and fight hard all the hard work pays off."

His performance is complimented by the attendance of fellow MCMWTC Marines and sailors who come to support Ramirez at his fights.

"Seeing a local Marine from our base compete and be successful in activities off base raises morale by giving the sailors and Marines a sense of pride," said Petty Officer 2nd Class Federico Valois, installation religious program specialist, MCMWTC. "It's great knowing

See FIGHT, A6



LANCE CPL. PAUL S. MARTINEZ

Sgt. Hugo Antunez, forward, Alliance FC, dribbles the ball toward the goal during the intramural championship soccer match at Felix Field, Monday. Alliance FC's win made it their third consecutive championship in the Combat Center's intramural soccer league.

Soccer players compete in final game

Cpl. Alejandro Bedoya
 Combat Correspondent

The ball is stolen by the defender and the counter attack begins. The players storm down the field attacking the opposing goal. With each pass, they get closer to scoring the goal they need. The ball falls to one of the players on top of the 18-yard box. He looks up at the goal, picks his spot, and shoots. The moment the ball meets the net, his teammates tackle him to the ground and celebrate. They were winning. They were one step closer to becoming champions.

Alliance Football Club and 1st Tank Battalion

soccer team competed for first place in the Commanding General's Intramural Soccer League at Felix Field Monday. The game consisted of the top two teams from the league competing against each other for two 45-minute halves.

"Marines are naturally competitive," said Lance Cpl. Oscar Almodova, forward, Alliance FC. "We were the top two teams in the league. It was a battle for first place and I'm glad I can say that we came out on top."

Alliance FC won the final by a score of three to zero. This is their third consecutive soccer championship.

The next soccer season is scheduled to begin fall of this year.

This Week in Combat Center History



Reprinted from the Observation Post
dated May 14, 1963

Vol. 7, Issue No. 20

Open House tees off: Golf Links Course now ready for use by all

Courtesy Story

A new Special Services activity was dedicated and officially opened May 8. Festivities began at 10 a.m. with an "Open House" for a beautiful nine hole golf course, a fine clubhouse, locker rooms and a snack bar. The Base Band provided musical entertainment.

Maj. William Hickman acted as master of ceremonies and welcomed all present to the opening of the course. He stressed that the course was designed as another step forward in the recreational program of the base and that it was intended for use by all military personnel and their dependents. This included accomplished golfers, duffers and beginners alike.

The commanding general, Brig. Gen. Joseph L. Stewart, spoke briefly and expressed appreciation to the former commanding general, Maj. Gen. Lewis J. Fields, who was responsible for the initiation and development of the course. Stewart then called forward, for public recognition, others who contributed to the success of the course: Lt. Col. David Cox, who coordinated the various phases of construction; Mr. Dave Kent, the course architect; Col. George Thomas, the chairman of the golf committee; Lt. Col. D.

H. Simmons, who was responsible for preparing the rules and regulations under which the course will be operated; Maj. Charles Wann, base maintenance officer; Capt. Camper, commanding officer of Engineering Company, who were responsible for the construction of the course; Maj. William Dormady, base Special Services officer, responsible for the operation of the course, and Al Green, golf professional. All were thanked by the commanding general for their efforts in making the course possible.

Participants in the annual Navy-Marine Corps Amphibious Commander's conference, conducted at the base, took time out from their busy schedule to be present at the ceremony.

Vice Adm. E. P. Holmes, commander, Amphibious Force, Pacific, cut the ribbon leading to the first tee and remarked that he had been present in many places all over the world where Marines were celebrating grand openings. He teed off and drove the first ball "down the middle."

Holmes, with Maj. G. Avery Kier, Maj Gen. Herman Nickerson and Brig. Gen. Stewart, then played the first round on the new course.



BIRTH ANNOUNCEMENTS



CHASE JAMES TANNER

Born on: April 16, 2014
Born to: Michael and Carly Tanner

ELIANNA LIBERTY POWERS

Born on: April 22, 2014
Born to: Daniel and Yuriko Powers

COLTON MICHAEL DEPONTE

Born on: April 26, 2014
Born to: Roman and Mercedes Deponte

SILAS LIAM FIELD

Born on: April 21, 2014
Born to: Lucas Field and Abigail Laboy

XANDER ALAN STEHLIN

Born on: April 22, 2014
Born to: Jarrett and Michelle Stehlin

BROOKLYNN MICHELLE BYRD

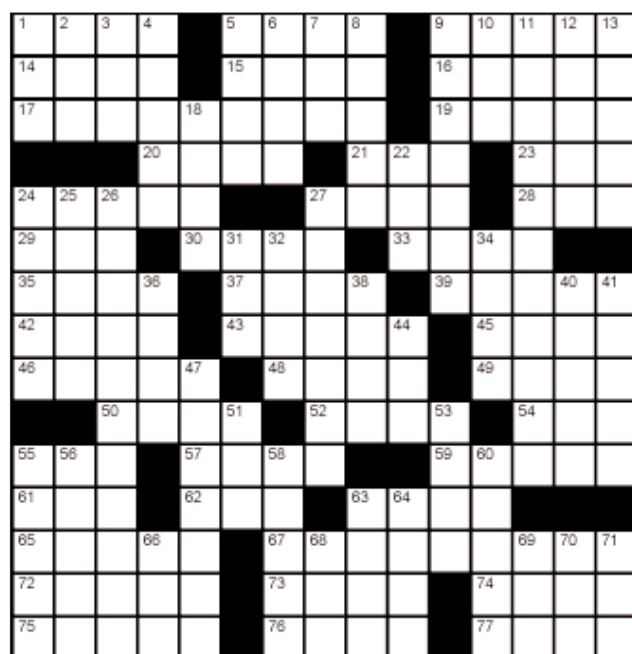
Born on: April 26, 2014
Born to: Matthew and Elizabeth Byrd

"NOW WE'RE COOKING"

See answers on page A6

- Across**
1 October birthstone
5 Boat
9 Simple home in the woods
14 Celebrity
15 Fish in a can
16 Chicago airport
17 Breakfast food that may be sunny-side up
19 Motorcycle rider
20 Superman wears one
21 Computer key
23 Finish
24 Wishy-____ (indecisive)
27 Letters
28 ____ Moines (capital of 74-Across)
29 One of eight on an octopus
30 Big rig
33 Johnny of "Edward Scissorhands"
35 Not a neat person
37 Skin condition
39 ____ Island (state next to Connecticut)
42 Dog named for a Chinese city, for short
43 Church feature
45 Thing
46 Unkind look
48 Chorus syllables
49 Light source
50 Doodled

- 52 Hong ____
54 Tater ____
55 Halloween creature
57 Money for the bus
59 Unexpected twist
61 Fourth month: abbr.
62 Wedding day phrase
63 Ocean feature
65 Knife and fork's friend
67 Southern dish
72 Keep away from
73 "What ____ is new?"
74 State known for its corn
75 Put off
76 Catches a glimpse of
77 Act
Down
1 Not working today
2 Golf course score
3 "What ____ thinking?"
4 Parasite
5 Part of a process
6 Enormous
7 Finish for a verb
8 Tortellini or rotini
9 Person who works on shoes
10 Fancy type of 15-Across
11 Cookout food



- 12 Singer Cara or actress Dunne
13 "Revenge of the ____"
18 May has 31
22 Assistance
24 Stinging insects
25 Former senator Specter
26 Fish delicacy
27 Blunder
31 Time of history
32 Teen's hangout
34 TV's Dr. ____
36 Budweiser or Samuel Adams
38 Angel's ring
40 Evil spirit
41 Not full
44 Took off in a hurry
47 Oil ____
51 Big roll of cash
53 Hand over
55 Headquartered
56 Computer company that's also a fruit
58 Judges wear them
60 Tried again
63 Knowledgeable
64 Alcoholic brews
66 Praising poem
68 "Well done!"
69 Garden tool with a long handle
70 Leave astonished
71 Irate

SUDOKU 3249 D



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



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OFF-LIMITS ESTABLISHMENTS

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

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

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.
- 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

George

Jacksonville, Ill. electronics technician, G-6 Communications and Data, 33

BECKER



>**For me, joining** the Marine Corps seemed like the next step in life, something I needed to do. I had some prior service in my family, but didn't find out until after I had joined.

>**I took the** aptitude test and had the option to do which ever job I wanted. Originally, I wanted to do crash fire rescue, but my dad convinced me to find something that would better set me up for my civilian career.

>**After that,** I wanted to sign up in a technical field to set me up for my future. I chose the communications field and ended up becoming a radio technician.

>**After I reported** to and completed the Marine Corps Communication-Electronics School, my first duty station was with 2nd Battalion, 7th Marine Regiment at the Combat Center.

>**I did the sea-bag** drag, walked all of my stuff over to my new barracks. I originally wasn't very happy about it, because I had all my stuff ready to go somewhere new. It didn't take long though until Twentynine Palms grew on me, and I started to enjoy it.

>**For the rest of my** 5-year contract I stayed with 2/7. While I was with 2/7 we made two trips to Okinawa under the unit deployment program where I also had the opportunity to go to South Korea and the Philippines.

>**My biggest take away** from the Marine Corps is it made me a better person, without a doubt. People say that the military makes you a man, and for me it really did.

>**My transition out of** the Marine Corps consisted of a job opportunity as soon as I got out, working contract jobs aboard the base. I stuck around and eventually applied for a civil-service job with the G-6, and I have been there ever since.

>**People ask me** sometimes why I never left. You always think about going

somewhere else, but I looked at it like everything I needed was here. Everything was good, I had a good job, I met my wife out here and have a wonderful family life, so I never saw any reason to leave.

>**Working now as an** electronics technician, I maintain radio communications for all of the training areas aboard the base, as well as the airport surveillance radar, weather systems, and other radio communications aboard the base.

>**I enjoy knowing** that I help keep the base ready for the Marines to train. That support role that I play is important to me. More specifically, I really enjoy my job. I love computers and technology; it is fun for me.

>**Probably the most** fun I have in my job is tower climbing. It is exhilarating. I'm also often flying in helicopters out to remote locations to maintain communication gear.

>**Our team of** eight guys are all prior Marines. The continuity we have because of that is incredible. We work extremely well together and I think a big part of that is all of us have that mentality of being a Marine.

>**I have always believed** in not taking the easy route. Do what you have the capacity to do, but don't ever sell yourself short. Choose something in life that is entertaining, that you won't get bored with, and you will do well.

>**If you are thinking** about joining the Marine Corps, I would say pick something that is lucrative, and something you enjoy to set yourself up for when you get out.

>**Throughout my 15 years** affiliated with the Combat Center, I have lived in Twentynine Palms, Joshua Tree and now currently in Yucca Valley. What keeps my family and I up here in Yucca Valley is the people and the work. Working on base is a great opportunity for me, and for other Marines transitioning.

>**I would say that** all three of the cities I have lived in out here are great communities to be a part of. There is a sense of belonging that I don't know if I have ever seen anywhere else.

>**First and foremost,** I love spending time with my family and enjoying our home together. I'm also an avid golfer and love to ride motorcycles, all of which are great hobbies to be a part of in this area.

>**The ultimate goal is** to finish school and continue to work my way up in the G-6.

>**I'm always trying** to better myself and improve the life of my family, and that is what I like to leave with young Marines. Take advantage of everything you possibly can, do something you enjoy, and never stop bettering yourself.

Interviewed and photographed by Lance Cpl. Kasey Peacock May 4, 2014

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[Above] Marines with the Provost Marshal's Office conduct a military working dog demonstration for Oasis Elementary School 6th-grade students at Felix Field, Wednesday. More than 60 students awed at the demonstration of the dogs discipline and ferocity.

[Left] A student from Oasis Elementary tests out the microscopes Marines at the Marine Corps Communication-Electronics School use during their tour of MCCES Wednesday.

Combat Center welcomes local students

Story and photos by Cpl. Ali Azimi

Oasis Elementary School students made the first-ever visit to the Combat Center, Tuesday.

Thanks to a partnership between the school and the Combat Center, the base opened its gates to students for a visit.

"Normally, each year the 6th-graders go to a science camp for three or four days," said Gary Horn, acting chair, School Site Council. "Unfortunately, this year they weren't able to raise the money. We were looking for different ways we can substitute science camp."

The staff said they were grateful for the opportunity to learn on the base to substitute the canceled trip.

The base visit was part of a three-day series of events, taking students to different parts of the base and work with units to learn through demonstrations and practical application.

"They get to see things with a hands-on approach on everything," Horn said. "It reinforces what they learned in school."

More than 60 students were guided around by

their Adopt-a-School Marines from 3rd Battalion, 4th Marines, during the multiple-day visit to learn about the science behind the base.

Their first day revolved around the base's environmental efforts. They were taken to the Combat Center's Recycling Center and the Waste Water Treatment Center. The students learned about everything from the recycling of industrial and everyday materials to how the base regulates its water in the desert.

"It's pretty cool," said Paige McAdams, 6th-grade student, Oasis Elementary School. "We went and saw scraps of bombs. It's a little bit more than I've been taught. I learned some new stuff."

Their second day led them to the Marine Corps Communication-Electronics School, where the students learned about closed circuits, frequencies and the many types of radios and equipment that the Corps uses to keep in contact during hostile situations.

The students were split up into different stations and allowed to try the equipment themselves to communicate with their classmates across the room.

From there they were taken to Felix Field, where they visited the Curation Center and nature gardens, where they learned about the natural environment of the Hi Desert.

After each group had cycled through each station, they all met on the softball fields where they were welcomed by Marines and officers with the Provost Marshal's Office, and their military working dogs. The officers demonstrated the abilities and discipline of their canines in front of the crowd of awe-struck 6th graders.

The students last day at the Combat Center also attracted 3/4 Marines. They set up a series of classes to teach kids about living in the field and survival skills. But first they had to look the part.

With the help of the Marines, the students applied camouflage paint to their faces and went on to the different stations.

"This gives them a chance to hang out with the Marines and see what they do," Horn said.

In addition to the survival classes, instructor trainers from Combat Center units set up a demonstration of the Marine Corps Martial Arts Program. Marines de-bloused to demonstrate the



PHOTOS BY CPL ALI AZIMI

[Above] Marines with 3rd Battalion, 4th Marines, faced-off against Oasis Elementary School 6th-grade students in a pick-up game of football during a lunch break at Felix Field May 7. The students were at the Combat Center as part of a three-day base visit.

[Right] Students from Oasis Elementary learn about the the recycling of industrial and everyday materials at the the Combat Center's recycling centers, Tuesday.

[Bottom] Students with Oasis Elementary School explore the Digital Technical Control Facility at the Marine Corps Communication Electronics School, Wednesday.



many techniques they use to subdue an opponent. They focused key lessons, such as how leverage and pressure points are used during the techniques.

After the lessons and demonstrations, the Marines and students sat down together for the field food that service members are so accustomed to. They helped the students open their Meals Ready to Eat and taught them how to use the heating apparatus to make a hot lunch.

With the completion of their afternoon meal, the students headed to the last stop of their three-day visit.

EOD Marines attached to Marine Wing Support Squadron 374 set up a demonstration of their improvised explosive device diffusing robot, TALON, and their bomb suit at Camp Wilson. The students waited anxiously in line to try on the suit and operate the TALON.

MWSS-374 opened up its doors to the elementary school students for a Crash, Fire and Safety Demonstration. The Marines explained the procedures and safety measures they abide by during emergency situations.

At the end of the demonstrations, the students boarded their bus to return to school with a better understanding of science and its applications to the Marine Corps.

"They have a better understanding from seeing something or doing something what the background process is," Horn said. "I hope we are able to do this again and that all schools through the district are able to come out and see what is available here on base."



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SANGIN, from A1

while returning fire during November 2013, he conducted monthly visits to the base from February 2011 to Feb. 2012 as the Division Utilities Chief for 2nd Marine Division. He expressed his feelings on finally leaving after his second deployment in the area.

“After being at FOB Nolay on my last deployment where it was all Marines to now, where the Afghans run the FOB, it feels good that the ANA are doing so well,” said Greene, the utilities chief for SFAAT 2-215. “The 2nd Brigade has been running strong, planning hard and executing missions on their own for a while now. They’re doing a super job denying the insurgents free movement of control.”

The Sangin Valley is known by many as a hotbed for nefarious and illegal activities. It is strategic in its proximity to major corridors such as Route 1 and Route 611.

Drug runners and insurgents often use Route 1, which runs all the way through Afghanistan from Pakistan to Iran. The two routes are a crossroads for both trade and drug trafficking. Much of the Taliban’s funding comes from the profits of the poppy harvests.

The Taliban control much of the heroine trade and are dependent on the industry. When the weather cools off, the insurgency turns toward facilitating the poppy planting. When planting begins, fighting almost instantly ceases.

When they first entered the Sangin Valley during 2006, after the resurgence of the Taliban, coalition forces had the lead role in all combat operations. During the course of the campaign, the lead has steadily been turned over to Afghan forces as the coalition took on an advisory role.

Success in the region has not come easily. Many service members from coalition forces and the Afghan National Security Forces have paid the ultimate price to bring stability.

One of the most profound examples that illustrates the 2nd Brigade’s eagerness to continue the fight and completely make it their own is the changing of the base name. FOB Nolay is now known as FOB Hamidullah.

FOB Hamidullah was named after Lt. Hamidullah, a platoon commander in the 2nd Brigade’s Reconnaissance Tolai. He was known for multiple heroic acts over the years and as one of the best platoon commanders and fighters in the 215th Corps.

“The 2nd Brigade has been running strong and executing missions on their own for a while now. They’re doing a super job denying the insurgents free movement of control.”

– Gunnery Sgt. John W. Greene

“As soon as the brigade’s executive officer told me they’d decided to change the name, I got excited,” said Maj. Paul D. Tremblay, deputy team leader for SFAAT 2-215. “It’s proof that we’ve done everything we can to set the conditions for transition, the effectiveness on how the Afghans themselves have accepted the transition and are willing to take ownership of it, make it their own and take it to the next step.”

“The Afghans of the 2nd Brigade have chosen to name these positions after their heroes and warfighters who had a reputation above and beyond their individual sacrifice on any particular day,” he continued.

Lt. Hamidullah was killed during recent operation Oqab 144, which cleared the Sangin Valley south of FOB Robinson, which sits a few short miles from FOB Nolay, during February 2014.

“I had the privilege of meeting him,” said Tremblay. “The way he carried himself and addressed the younger soldiers, the way he wore his uniform and the way he spoke oozed of confidence, swagger and everything that we all strive to become as U.S. Marines. There wasn’t a soldier in the 2nd Brigade who didn’t know who he was.”

Forward Operating Base Robinson also received a name change. It is now known as FOB Rahatullah, named after Maj. Rahatullah, who was killed in an operation to disrupt enemy forces in support the April 5th presidential elections. The elections, along with the success of Oqab 144, were perhaps the biggest signs to the advisors that the 2nd Brigade was ready to successfully control the security of the area.

“The election was one of the most successful elections they’ve ever had in this country,” said Tremblay. “More particularly, the security situation up here shocked people because of what the Afghan National Security Forces were able to do.”

Within a few weeks, these Marines who have advised 2nd Brigade will be back with their families and home units with full confidence that they have left the Sangin Valley in good and capable hands.

“The focus should be maintained on the success of the 2nd Brigade and the ANSF pillars working together,” said Dewson. “It remains their country. We just provided an assist— hopefully an assist that keeps them positively highlighted.”

The confidence the 2nd Brigade has in their ability to maintain security can be seen in the eyes and heard in the voices of the leaders and soldiers of FOB Hamidullah.

“We already got this,” said Maj. Mhamaref, the education officer for 2nd Brigade. “The enemy can’t stand with us. They can’t stand and fight with us. We can make the achievement.”

FIGHT, from A1



CPL. CHARLES SANTAMARIA

Sgt. Daniel Ramirez, Distribution Management Office clerk, Marine Corps Mountain Warfare Training Center, is announced the winner after defending his welterweight title during an amateur MMA league fight night at the Reno Event Center, Saturday.

when people ask who Ramirez is; we can say he is a Marine stationed at our base.”

Ramirez works tirelessly, finding time in a Marine’s schedule to train and perfect his technique. He credits his work ethic to the values that were engrained in him throughout his Marine Corps career.

“We have to be consistent and not give up when we train,” Ramirez said. “That’s what the Marine Corps is all about, if you start something you have to finish and not quit. The determination feels automatic and it’s what has been instilled in me.”

With a record of seven wins and one loss, Ramirez is one fight closer to achieving his goal of making it to the UFC. With a winning record, several fights ending by way of knockout and a yearning to advance to higher levels of competition, Ramirez will continue to work toward his goal.

“If an opportunity is offered to someone, you have to be committed and reach the goal you set for yourself,” Ramirez said. “I feel like I’m getting closer to my goals and when I see all the Marines and sailors who come to cheer me on, it means so much. I feel like they are family supporting me and I’m very grateful for that.”

FAMILY, from A1



ERIKA CAPISTRAN

A Marine instructs a child on how to break a pinata during 3rd Combat Engineer Battalion’s family day at Desert Winds Golf Course, Monday. “We pride ourselves not as a battalion but as a family,” said Erika Capistran, family readiness officer, 3rd CEB.

formed admirably and I honestly believe the families of the Marines helped make them successful. I’m incredibly proud to be the commanding officer of this unit.”



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



[Left] Brooklyn, N.Y.-based photographer Jennifer Karady makes images of Staff Sgt. Kyle Winjum, Explosive Ordnance Disposal technician, during a photo shoot in Twentynine Palms, Calif., April 13. The resulting 4 by 4-foot photograph will debut at the Palms Springs Art Museum in December as part of Karady's exhibit, "Soldiers' Stories of Iraq and Afghanistan."

[Above] Staff Sgt. Kyle Winjum poses with Gunnery Sgt. Chase Konop, who played his team leader.

[Below] Special effects professional Wayne Burns of Joshua Tree, Calif., packs air cannons with simulated shrapnel.

Marine's story told in photograph

Text and photos by **Kelly O'Sullivan**

The unexpected flash from a camera is a minor annoyance for most people, but for one Marine it was much more.

Staff Sgt. Kyle Winjum, an Explosive Ordnance Disposal technician from Twentynine Palms who served in both Iraq and Afghanistan, was with friends in bar in Cardiff-by-the-Sea when a woman took a snapshot several feet away.

That innocent action triggered a flashback to an IED explosion Winjum witnessed on patrol in Afghanistan, turning a relaxing



Karady, left, and Winjum discuss the photo shoot.

evening into a tense, adrenalin-fueled rush to find his friends and make sure they were OK.

Winjum's story will be told in a 4- by 4-foot photograph by Brooklyn, N.Y.-based photographer

Jennifer Karady, whose exhibit "Soldiers' Stories from Iraq and Afghanistan" will open at the Palm Springs Art Museum in December.

Shot in Twentynine Palms, Calif. on April 13, the photograph features Winjum in the uniform and gear he wore in country, including a bandana given to him by his mother.

Also in the image are a Marine in uniform representing his team leader, Marines in shorts and T-shirts seated around a tiki bar, a woman with a camera and a simulated explosion created with air canons.



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SNEER		LALA		LAMP					
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BAT		FARE		IRONY					
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9	7	1	3	4	6	8	5	2
2	3	6	7	5	8	4	9	1

LOOKING for local entertainment?

See page B2 for our **LIBERTY CALL** section

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

WeekINPhotos

III Marine Expeditionary Force



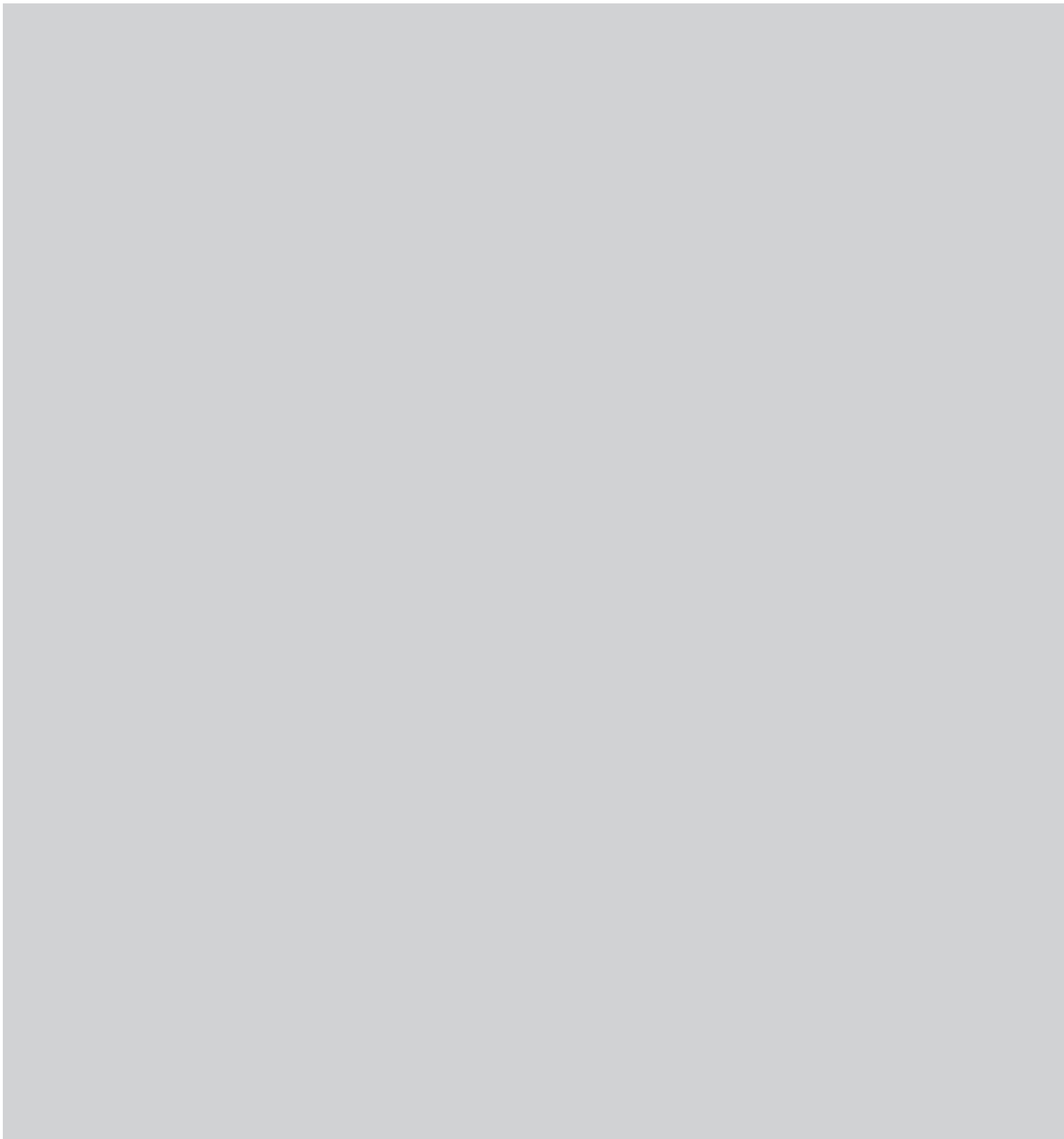
PHOTOS BY LANCE CPL. TREVOR STATZ



[Right] Philippine Army Pfc. Lutiano Neonal, assigned to 565th Engineer Combat Battalion, 51st Engineer Brigade, welds a ceiling beam on the roof of Malobago Elementary School during Exercise Balikatan 2014 in Guinobatan, Albay Province, Philippines, April 29. This year marks the 30th iteration of the exercise, which is an annual Republic of the Philippines-U.S. military bilateral training exercise and humanitarian civic assistance engagement.

[Top, left] Philippine Army Pfc. Ronald Victorio, assigned to 565th Engineer Combat Battalion, 51st Engineer Brigade, fixes a ceiling beam while working on the roof of Malobago Elementary School during Exercise Balikatan 2014, in Guinobatan, Albay Province, Philippines, April 29.

[Bottom, left] 1st Lt. Daniel Comito, combat engineer, 9th Engineer Support Battalion, 3rd Marine Logistics Group, III Marine Expeditionary Force, assists in cutting a piece of metal that will be used for the construction of a new school room roof during Exercise Balikatan 2014 in Guinobatan, Albay Province, Philippines, April 29.





TWENTYNINE PALMS
8TH ANNUAL SOAP BOX DERBY

Combat Center kids, adults showcase cars

STORY AND PHOTOS
BY CPL. ALI AZIMI

It was 5-year-old Wesley Fontecchio's first race. The day before, he had spun out during practice, but today was his day, and his only worry was going too fast. He strapped on his helmet, settled into his Spiderman racecar and rolled up to the starting line. Fontecchio's opponent looked confident in her pink racecar and matching helmet. Their eyes met then focused on the finish line. The horn blew and they were off.



Soap box derby racers speed down the street during the annual Street Fair and Car Show, and Soap Box Derby at Luckie Park Saturday. More than 50 contenders registered for the race, sponsored by the Armed Services YMCA and local businesses.

The annual Street Fair and Car Show, and Soap Box Derby were held at Luckie Park Saturday.

The soap box derby was hosted by the Armed Services YMCA and sponsored by local businesses. "We solicit local businesses for the racer," said Laura Scotto, special events and volunteer coordinator, ASYMCA. "These [soap-box kits] are expensive. The sponsors provide the supply wood and the soapbox kits so the families don't have to worry about that. They just get the materials and build their cars."

Just like their NASCAR counterparts, each racecar advertised a supporting player from the community. The rest of the designs were left up to the racers.

The children modified their racecars to their preference. There was the Zombie Killer 2, with fake rockets at its sides and a machine gun in the front, the Batmobile, donning a bat-a-rang steering wheel, and even a burger on wheels, extra cheese but hold the pickles.

The creativity of the designs created a spectacle that attracted the eyes of spectators lining the streets, but it was the races that kept them watching.

More than 50 children from the Combat Center and local community entered this year's competition. The races were split up into 4 divisions separating age and experience levels.

"We have four divisions," Scotto said. "Stock, which is first-time racers, and super stock, which is for [those who] have raced before. Within those two categories there are [5 to 8-year-olds] and [9 to 14-year-olds]."

Although there were trophies, the derby was more about fun than winning. The racers grinned from ear to ear whether they were in the lead or falling behind.

After their races, the soap box competitors rolled down the hill to the Twentynine Palms Chamber of Commerce Street Fair and Car Show, where their cars would be displayed alongside the shining automotive marvels lining Luckie Street.

The event showcased cars and motorcycles, new and old. Service members and community members entered vehicles ranging from vintage '40s Chevys to souped-up Ford Mustangs and Harley Davidson motorcycles.

In addition to automotive display, the Combat Center contributed multiple static displays. Combat Center units provided a variety of static displays to include tactical vehicles, like a Light Armored Vehicle, Humvee, and medium tactical vehicle replacement.

Children and adults explored the armored vehicles inside and out.

"A lot of them ask what kind of rounds they shoot, if its cramped inside or how many people can fit inside," said Cpl. Jeff Turner, gunner, 3rd Light Armored Reconnaissance Battalion. "They love [going inside]; they think it's the coolest thing in the world."

In front of the vehicles, three sets of flaks and Kevlars were propped up, ready for any willing spectators to try them on.

"They say that they think it's fine, but on their faces you can see that little expression, like, 'wow, its heavier than I thought it would be,'" Turner said.

Down the road, Marines with the Explosive Ordnance Disposal unit had a booth set up for patrons of the event to visit. They brought with them a bomb suit and their improvised explosive device-defusing robot, known as TALON.

The Marines help place the suit on volunteers and had them walk 100-meters out into the grass to understand the mobility they have while wearing the suit and children were also allowed to control TALON from a booth.

Across from the EOD booth, a ceremony was held to present the awards to the winners of the Soap Box Derby. Fontecchio sat in his car holding his first-place trophy. He had won both his races during his first derby.

"I won because I was fast," Fontecchio said. "I want to go again next year."



[Left] Brydon Jones, 12, tries on the flak and Kevlar of a Marine with 3rd Light Armored Reconnaissance Battalion during the annual Street Fair and Car Show at Luckie Park, Saturday. Combat Center units provided static displays of its tactical vehicles, including a Light Armored Vehicle, Humvee, and medium tactical vehicle replacement.

[Below] The Twentynine Palms Chamber of Commerce's annual Street Fair and Car Show hosted shining automotive marvels on Luckie Street Saturday. The event showcased cars and motorcycles, new and old. Service members and community members entered vehicles ranging from vintage '40s Chevys to souped up Ford Mustangs and Harley Davidson motorcycles.



Liberty Call



Combat Center Events

We Salute You Celebration

This family-friendly concert will feature artists Brett Eldridge, Craig Morgan and Shuggah Pies. Food concessions and other activities will be available on site.

When: May 17

Where: Lance Cpl. Torrey L. Gray Field

For more information, call 830-5086

Intramural Golf Competition

Teams may have up to six players in this 72-hole Stroke Play Tournament. Entry deadline is Friday, June 6.

When: June 9 - 12, 8 a.m.

Where: Desert Winds Golf Course

For more information, call 830-4092

Coping with Work and Family Stress

This workshop will cover a wide range of active coping skills and ways to make better use of social networks.

Where: Bldg. 1530, Classroom 303

When: Tues. 2 - 3:30 p.m. and Thurs. 9 - 10:30 a.m.

For more information, call 830-5035

For more events, visit <http://www.mccs29palms.com>



Sunset Cinema

Friday, May 9

5 p.m. – Divergent, PG-13

8:30 p.m. – Captain America: The Winter Soldier, PG-13

11:30 p.m. – Oculus, R

Saturday, May 10

10:30 a.m. – **Free Admission** The LEGO Movie, PG

1 p.m. – Mr. Peabody and Sherman 3-D, PG

3 p.m. – Captain America: The Winter Soldier 3-D, PG-13

6 p.m. – Noah, PG-13

9 p.m. – Sabotage, R

11:30 p.m. – Draft Day, PG-13

Sunday, May 11

12:30 p.m. – Rio 2 3-D, PG

2:30 p.m. – **Free Admission** Transformers, PG-13

5 p.m. – **SNEAK PREVIEW** Godzilla 3-D, PG-13

8 p.m. – Oculus, R

Monday, May 12

6 p.m. – Divergent, PG-13

Tuesday, May 13

6 p.m. – Captain America: The Winter Soldier 3-D PG-13

Wednesday, May 14

5 p.m. – Rio 2 3-D, PG

7:30 p.m. – Noah, PG-13

Thursday, May 15

5 p.m. – Mr. Peabody and Sherman 3-D, PG

7 p.m. – Divergent, PG-13

High Desert

Nunset Boulevard

The Little Sisters of Hoboken return in a brand new show.

When: 7 p.m., April 25 through May 24

Where: Theatre 29

73637 Sullivan Rd., Twentynine Palms, Calif.

For more information, call (760) 316-4151

Wes Anderson's latest romp is a colorful getaway

NEIL POND

"The Grand Budapest Hotel"

Starring Ralph Fiennes, Tony Revolori and Willem Dafoe

Directed by Wes Anderson

R, 100 min.

With director Wes Anderson, you either "get him" and his oddball characters, quirky plots and distinctive, whimsical visual style, or you don't. A whole lot of people do, however, in his movies including "The Fantastic Mr. Fox," "Moonrise Kingdom" and "The Royal Tenenbaums."

Now "The Grand Budapest Hotel" offers a bustling movie getaway most Wes Anderson fans will find irresistible.

A wild romp set in a 1930s Eastern European mountain resort, it features a colorful assortment of players and a story within a story within a story that keeps burrowing deeper into its own silly seriousness. As with most Anderson projects, he works with cavernous open spaces as well as delicate, meticulously detailed miniatures.

His sights, like scenes carefully colored with pastel crayons from a storybook, are often sumptuous, and his actors move, and speak, with a clockwork cadence that adds to the sense of comedic orchestration.

The plot unfolds backwards, as unspooled by the owner of the hotel (F. Murray Abraham) to one of its guests (Jude Law), relating his beginnings as the establishment's bellboy, Zero (played by newcomer Tony Revolori in his first starring role). Zero and his mentor, the hotel's longtime, ladies-man concierge, the ultra-dapper Monsieur

Gustave (Ralph Fiennes), become friends and co-conspirators in a spiraling, sprawling misadventure that includes a murder, a missing will, a purloined painting, an outlandish prison break, and the outbreak of something that resembles World War II.

Along the way, they encounter a spectrum of characters, played by actors including many who've cropped up in previous Anderson movies (Owen Wilson, Edward Norton, Jason Schwartzman, Bill Murray — who's appeared in every Wes Anderson film — Adrien Brody, Jeff Goldblum, Willem Dafoe, Bob Balaban, Harvey Keitel), as well as Saoirse Ronan, Tilda Swinton and Tom Wilkinson.

Everyone seems to be having a big old time in the big old hotel, and everywhere else, and several scenes are real hoots, like the scampering prison escape which feels like a live-action re-enactment of something from the stop-motion animation antics of "The Fantastic Mr. Fox" — and an extended sequence in which a secret cadre of other concierges drop everything to help one of their own out of a jam.

The story is based on a book by little-remembered Austrian novelist and playwright Stefan Zweig, who was actually one of Europe's most popular writers of the 1920s and '30s. Anderson gives Zweig an "inspired by" credit at the end of the film.

Anderson's detractors often think his movies are contrived, pretentious, gimmicky, too indy/artistic or simply not nearly as funny as Mr. Anderson must think they are. OK, fair enough. But if you're looking for a kooky, slightly off-kilter stopover in a place that can offer you an exhilarating, completely unique experience like nothing else at the multiplex, then I recommend you check in for a couple of free-wheeling hours — at "The Grand Budapest Hotel."

Mountain leaders sharpen animal packing skills

Cpl. Charles Santamaria
 Combat Correspondent

MARINE CORPS MOUNTAIN WARFARE TRAINING CENTER BRIDGEPORT, Calif. — Mountain leaders from the Marine Corps Mountain Warfare Training Center conducted an Animal Packing Refresher Course at the MCMWTC's stables, April 29.

The course served as an introduction to animal packing and transportation for mountain leaders and instructors. This training also afforded a day for those who have already passed the Animal Packer's Course to hone their skills.

The day-long course began with two classes that taught the organization of a pack string, the anatomy of a horse, how to gauge the age and health of a horse, and different techniques of packing that have been used in the past.

"The animal packing portion of our program is designed to provide an alternative means of transportation for infantry battalions

to navigate through mountainous terrain when other resources are not available," said Anthony Wayne Parkhurst, director, Animal Packer's Special Operations Forces Horsemanship, MCMWTC.

The pack string portion taught what ranks are usually associated with the position in a string which is set up to have a commander, team leaders and those who make sure the loads on the animals are balanced and packed properly. The anatomy of the horse or mule also comes into play when packing because adjusting the mount to the shape and size of the horse improves the comfort for the animal by not hurting it or causing sores which will ultimately improve its performance.

"Packing the load properly from the beginning prevents many possible setbacks that may happen during the journey," said Staff Sgt. Scott Coffin, team leader, Mountain Leader Course. "The summer course for mountain leaders also covers this material but practical application is important to maintain the skill. Over the years, the course has become more refined, focused

and easier to learn for Marines as instructors have gained more experience working with the animals."

In countries such as Afghanistan, there are areas that service members will have to traverse during missions where vehicles or aircraft may not be available.

"There may be some missions where adding a vehicle may compromise the operators," Parkhurst said. "With the war winding down, availability of vehicles may also come into play when deciding modes of transport which is why this program is so beneficial for units of all branches, countries, and specialties."

The course gave examples of the benefits of the skill in combat zones with a scenario of casualty evacuation and injury of Marines. The example went over the techniques that should be used to pack and transport in both cases.

"If you think about what could happen for a platoon or squad that may not know these techniques, if there is a situation that a casualty occurs then the body is something each member would have to carry the entire distance which affects the speed and effectiveness of the group, which is why these skills add so much to a unit," Coffin said. "Even in the exercises we hold in the training areas, the effectiveness of moving equipment, food, or any load improves with animal packing and transport available."

The use of animals on the battlefield existed long before the use of vehicles in any conflict. Today, animals such as horses and mules still serve a purpose, even if their role has changed.

"I was an instructor for this course when I was a sergeant in the Marine Corps and its value is just as evident now as it was then," Parkhurst said. "This Animal Packers Course is the only one available in the Department of Defense. It has also grown over the years and although I don't see it getting any bigger than the footprint we see today, its importance stretches throughout American military, to international units that train aboard the MCMWTC."



PHOTOS BY CPL. CHARLES SANTAMARIA



[Top] Staff Sgt. Julio Cervantes, chief, Mountain Engineer Course, Marine Corps Mountain Warfare Training Center, walks his mule to a fence to secure him and begin the practical application of an animal packing refresher course hosted at the MCMWTC stables, April 29.

[Above] Sgt. Jeffery L. Anderson Jr., instructor, Animal Packer's Course, gives instruction on how to properly secure and wrap gear before mounting it onto any animal during an animal packing refresher course hosted at the MCMWTC stables, April 29. The load must be properly secured and evenly distributed in weight so the mule or horse doesn't lose its balance while traveling.

