

3/7 welcomes new commander

Cpl. Ali Azimi
Combat Correspondent

Lt. Col. Daniel Wittnam relinquished command of 3rd Battalion, 7th Marine Regiment, to Lt. Col. Ross Parrish during a change of command ceremony at Lance Cpl. Torrey L. Gray Field, Wednesday.

The ceremony featured music played by the 1st Marine Division Band and a display of a few of the unit's tactical vehicles and two M777 Howitzers.

The "Cutting Edge" Marines marched onto the field in parade formation with their M16 A4 service rifles. They took their positions and conducted rifle manual before the appointment of their new commander.

The Marines were followed

"It's been an absolute honor to lead [3/7] and serve alongside them[3/7]."

— Lt. Col. Daniel Wittnam

by the units color guard, carrying the national flag and the battalion colors. The color detail stood firm in their position as the national anthem was played while patrons stood to pay tribute.

The national anthem was followed by the official transition of authority. Wittnam and Parrish stood before the audience as the battalion sergeant major delivered the battalion colors. Wittnam took hold of the colors and passed it off to Parrish, representing the official exchange of authority, accountability and responsibility.

"It has been my absolute honor to lead [3/7] and serve alongside [them]," Wittnam said.

The ceremony ended with the pass and review, at which point the four companies of

See **CUTTING EDGE** page A7



Maj. Sven Jensen, operations officer, Marine Corps Mountain Warfare Training Center, salutes Combat Center Commanding General David H. Berger, during a change of command ceremony hosted at Post 1, Marine Corps Mountain Warfare Training Center, June 27.

MCMWTC receives new commanding officer

Story and photos by
Cpl. Charles Santamaria

BRIDGEPORT, Calif. — Preparing Marines for survival in mountainous terrain and high elevations is what the Marine Corps Mountain Warfare Training Center is known for. Although the mission of the base remains the same throughout the years, leadership and personnel will change and uphold the standard set by those who came before.

A change of command ceremony was hosted at Post 1 aboard MCMWTC, June 27, marking the day Col. John J. Carroll Jr. relinquished duties to Col. Scott Leonard.

"This is a really good team of Marines," Carroll said. "It is because of the men and women who stand behind me today that MCMWTC runs as smoothly as it does. Leaving the base, I believe it's in great hands from operations and training to the staff."

Leonard served a joint-duty assignment at United States Pacific Command, Camp Smith, Kaneohe Bay, Hawaii, as the J71 Training and Exercise Division Chief where he was promoted to colonel. Leonard took note of the work and effort that has gone into the base and training by Carroll, mountain warfare instructors and the Marines who support the command.

"As the commanding officer, I want to make sure the Marines have all the support and things needed to continue what Col. Carroll and the staff have done to revitalize the base," Leonard said. "I'm looking forward to the future with Marines who are passionate in what they do and instructors qualified to meet the challenge of teaching Marines to fight in this terrain. I believe some of the best mountaineers in the world are the mountain leaders aboard this base."

Carroll and Leonard first met each other as second lieutenants with 3rd Battalion, 2nd Marine Regiment. Twenty-two years later, they met again as colonels in a ceremony where one would pass the torch to the other with the duty of training Marines in mountain warfare.

"We understand that battalion commanders want to provide the best training possible for their Marines," Carroll said. "If a unit wants to challenge their Marines phys-

See **MCMWTC** page A7

New HQBN CO takes charge

Lance Cpl. Paul S. Martinez
Combat Correspondent

Marines, sailors, distinguished guests, families and friends of Headquarters Battalion gathered to watch as Lt. Col. Michael A. Bowers, former commanding officer, HQBN, relinquished command to Lt. Col. Dennis A. Sanchez, commanding officer, HQBN, during a change of command ceremony at Lance Cpl. Torrey L. Gray Field, Wednesday.

Bowers assumed command of the battalion in July 2012, and will now report to Maxwell Air Force Base, Montgomery, Ala., for command schooling.

"To be a part of this command and the community is a very special thing," Bowers said. "It has been

"We're going to have a great time with the phenomenal Marines here."

— Lt. Col. Dennis A. Sanchez

such a privilege."

Bowers and Sanchez took their positions as Sgt. Maj. Abel Leal, battalion sergeant major, HQBN, presented the unit's colors to be officially passed from one commanding officer to another, symbolizing the transfer of authority and responsibility for the Marines of HQBN.

Sanchez is no stranger to the Combat Center, having previously served as a company commander with 3rd Battalion, 7th Marine Regiment, in 2003. His last assignment was as the operations officer for Eastern Recruiting Region, Marine Corps Recruit Depot Parris Island, S.C.

"We're going to have a great time with the phenomenal Marines here," Sanchez said.

Among those in attendance were retired Sgt. Maj. Scott Cooper, who previously served

See **HQBN** page A7



The 7th Marine Regiment Color Guard displays the national flag and regimental colors during the pregame ceremony at Palm Springs Stadium's baseball field June 27.

Marines enjoy evening at the ballpark

Story and photo by
Cpl. Ali Azimi

It was only a two-minute walk between the car and the Palm Springs Stadium baseball field. As the Marines approached the stadium, dressed in their dress blues, the spectators' heads turned. They greeted the Marines from afar and offered dozens of thanks before the opening ceremony of the baseball game.

The 7th Marine Regiment Color Guard was featured in the opening ceremony of the Palm Springs Power baseball game June 27.

The game was part of the Southern California Collegiate Baseball League, versus the Power against the Top Speed baseball team.

"This is my first public event," said Sgt. Brandon Wayne, color sergeant, 7th Marine Regiment. "I've done quite a few ceremonies. It's a nice change of pace."

Volunteers with the Bob Hope USO saw the game as an opportunity to provide an evening of fun and entertainment for Combat Center Marines.

"We had a hundred Marines come down on buses," said Ann D'amico, event coordinator and volunteer. "We thought it would be a wonderful evening for them, to come down to see a ball game."

The USO partnered with Power Baseball and Agua Caliente Casino to bring

See **BASEBALL** page A7



Joseph Chu, owner, Red Lotus restaurant, talks with Cpl. Emmanuel Prince, food service specialist, Headquarters Battalion, during a guest chef event at Phelps Mess Hall, Monday.

Chow hall welcomes guest chef, menu

Story and photo by
Lance Cpl. Paul S. Martinez

Marine food service specialists received a special opportunity to cook a unique menu with guest chef Joseph Chu at Phelps Mess Hall, Monday.

Chu, owner of the Red Lotus Restaurant in Twentynine Palms, Calif., supervised and assisted the Marines who were preparing Vietnamese and Thai dishes such as tom kha soup or chicken galangal soup, cum suon nuong, or grilled pork steaks, pineapple fried rice, jasmine rice and vegetable stir fry.

Chu's visit to Phelps Mess Hall offered the Marines a chance to cook foods different from what they usually provide for Marines.

"We usually have our own menus to cook, but this was a Vietnamese meal we did," said Cpl. Joshua Pentek, assistant chief cook, Headquarters Battalion. "I've never seen this kind of cooking, but we got it done."

Guest chefs across Southern California have lent their talents to the Combat Center before, among them were cooks from Hodads, a burg-

See **CHEF** page A7

This Week in
Combat Center
History



Happy 199th Birthday, America!

Courtesy Story

“When in the course of human events it becomes necessary for one people to dissolve the political bonds ...”
Sound familiar?

These are the words that begin the Declaration of Independence, a document that has been burned into the consciousness of all Americans for the last 199 years.

The Declaration of Independence is more than just a piece of paper, though. It’s like a living tribute to all Americans, both past and present, who have stood against tyranny and aggression everywhere in the world.

**Reprinted from the Observation Post dated
June 24, 1966
Vol. 10, Issue No. 26**

Ever since 1776, Americans have defended the concept of the Declaration and have shown to the nations of the world that we know what it means to be free.

The 4th of July should be more than just a day where people only concern themselves with being off of work and setting off a few fireworks. It is a day that should be spent in giving thanks and paying tribute to all those Americans, both past and present, that have defended our way of life and the concept of freedom that we so strongly believe in.

Many times Americans have responded to the call of battle and every time we have been able to show the same kind of courage and determination that has made our country great ever since our forefathers signed the Declaration of Independence, July 4, 1776.

This year, which commences our bicentennial, let’s us show ourselves and the world that Americans are still and always will be the leaders in the fight to defend freedom wherever necessary around the globe and that we will never forget our heritage of freedom.

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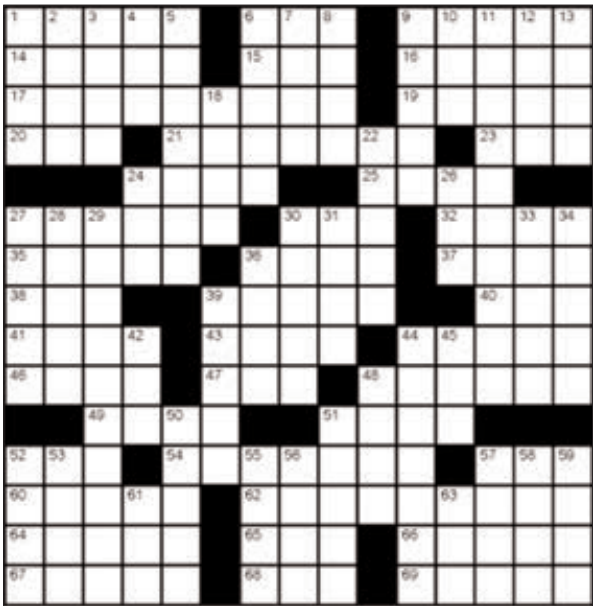
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“HAVE PHUN”

Across

- 1 English muffin alternative
- 6 iPhone download
- 9 Palin or Hyland
- 14 Public persona
- 15 ____ tai (drink)
- 16 Not these
- 17 Pound cake addition, sometimes
- 19 Sean of “The Lord of the Rings”
- 20 Compass point away from WSW
- 21 "Let's talk about something else"
- 23 Donkey's cousin
- 24 Watch the bar or the goal
- 25 Rip
- 27 Whole
- 30 Pie ____ mode
- 32 Use a keyboard
- 35 All ____ Day (Nov. 2)
- 36 Engage in recreation
- 37 Biblical paradise
- 38 Not madam
- 39 Each of this puzzle's four long theme entries ends with a brand of these
- 40 State between Illinois and Ohio: abbr.
- 41 Concerning
- 43 Places to stay for the night
- 44 War's opposite
- 46 Scream
- 47 Street crossers: abbr.
- 48 Protected, like some old cities
- 49 Border
- 51 Prepare for a trip
- 52 Writing tablet
- 54 Prepared
- 57 Fuel for a Ford
- 60 “Gotta go!”
- 62 Where Los Angeles
- 64 Desire strongly
- 65 Wrath
- 66 First Greek letter
- 67 Throws off, as a poll's results
- 68 Central
- 69 Put back to zero
- Down
- 1 Spleen stuff
- 2 “So be it!”
- 3 Chess or checkers
- 4 Driving force
- 5 They charge interest
- 6 Make changes to, as the Constitution
- 7 History
- 8 Greek bread
- 9 Vampire killer
- 10 Relaxed sounds
- 11 Feature of older



- phones
- 12 Conditions of sale, sometimes
- 13 They lay eggs
- 18 Area
- 22 Doesn't leave
- 24 ____ the cows comehome
- 26 Devoured
- 27 Writing on a certain subject
- 28 Irritating sound
- 29 Bird that's a symbol of love
- 30 Ladd and Alda
- 31 Times around the track
- 33 Parts of an English pound sterling
- 34 Came to a conclusion
- 36 Lake's little cousin
- 39 Police car roof feature
- 42 Ancient
- 44 Indy 500 vehicle
- 45 Big game
- 48 Skin growth
- 50 Presents
- 51 Mugged for the camera
- 52 Photos
- 53 Run ____ (go wild)
- 55 Enjoy the pool
- 56 Actress Garr or Hatcher
- 57 Holes
- 58 Arthur of tennis fame
- 59 RBI or ERA
- 61 Not many
- 63 “Bravo!”

See answers on page B2

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 - 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.
- 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.
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 - NYPD Pizza, 260-262 N. Palm Canyon Drive

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WHAT I'VE LEARNED

Jennifer
CASAS

Anaheim, Calif., Sexual Assault Response Coordinator, 32

CASAS ATTENDED CHAPMAN UNIVERSITY AND EARNED HER BACHELOR'S DEGREE IN SOCIAL SCIENCES AND SHE STAYED AT CHAPMAN FOR HER MASTER'S DEGREE IN PSYCHOLOGY ALL WHILE ENLISTED IN THE AIR FORCE RESERVE.

> I began playing music in my high school's band. I didn't keep playing after highschool but I do like maany genres of music ... I attend music festivals like Coachella and concerts throughout the year to see new artists, experience the atmosphere, and live performances.

>I received my bachelor's degree in social sciences at Chapman University. After my first degree, I began working at the county of Riverside juvenile hall. I went back to Chapman and continued my education to recieve my master's degree in psychology.

>I have been enlisted in the Air Force Reserve for 14 years with six being

Active Reserve status. In the Air Force, I am a knowledge operations officer, communications master sergeant.

> On the Air Force side of things, I am also a uniform victim advocate so I am familiar with the programs that I will be supervising aboard the Combat Center.

> When I began working at the county of Riverside juvenile hall as a corrections officer, it was difficult to get used to the environment.

> While working there, I was with the maximum security section of the hall. There were minors there who were sentenced for 25 years to life. Realizing the situation they were in and acclimating to that was a challenge and a learning experience.

> I worked there for three years and the experience helped me realize that I did not want to work with people from a correctional perspective but more from a mental health standpoint.

> I joined the reserves to pursue my education and accomplish my goals in the psychology field. Being a full-time student and meeting my military requirements has been a challenge throughout the seven to eight years of schooling.

> Although I ran in high school, I only got really big into running after I enlisted in the Air Force. I started running more and more and began to enjoy it. I began participating in running events like the Camp Pendleton Mud Run.

> I love running but I'm not the fastest and that's because I don't run for competition; it's more of a therapeutic experience for me.

> I've always hated the treadmill, so I enjoy running in areas with attractive scenery.

> My favorite run was in Holy Oak, Mass., for the St. Patrick's Day 10-kilometer race. Running in the fall as the leaves were turning was beautiful and added to the event.

> I'm big into music and I go to a lot of music festivals. The ambiance, the culture, the people and actually seeing the live performances of songs I like make it more enjoyable. Music is a big part of my life ... It gets to the point where the song or playlist I'm playing corresponds to how I feel at the time.

> There was a time when my son was with me in my car and a depressing song came on, he listened to the music and immediately said, 'Really mom, depressing music? What are you upset about this time?' ... People who really know me understand how closely music plays to my mood.


> I'm looking forward to working with Marines aboard the base. They have been very professional and I respect that about them.

> I wanted to pursue criminal justice at first but as I began working, I realized I wanted to help people with how they thought about things through mental health. From that point, I knew psychology was something I wanted to pursue a master's degree in and eventually a doctorate to start my own practice to help as many people as I can.

> I'm happy to be here on this installation, it will be a challenge overseeing programs for a base of this size, but sexual assault is prevented through education.




Interviewed and photographed by Cpl. Charles Santamaria, June 30, 2014




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Written by
Cpl. Lauren Kurkimilis

The birth of an independent nation

Since the dawn of civilization, a common societal theme has inspired some of the greatest changes in the world, and that is the evolution from the old-world order to the new. As a free-minded adult, I recognize this phenomenon as the controversial foundation upon which this nation was built and it is no surprise to find modern-day Americans celebrating the nation's independence in vastly different ways than the Americans of yesteryear. However, as the daughter of a die-hard American history buff, and a person whose childhood vacations were spent at battlegrounds such as Gettysburg, Antietam and Harper's Ferry, I believe it is important, and dare I say therapeutic, to not just celebrate the 4th of July with fireworks, food and friends, but to take a moment to reflect on the illustrious history behind how our great country was born.

The year 1775 set into motion the early stages of rebellion from British reign. The Second Continental Congress was faced with serving as the only form of government beginning in late spring of 1775 after King George III continually neglected petitions sent by the First Continental Congress. Later that summer, the Continental Army, continental currency and post service for the United Colonies were established. By the end of the summer, the king's intentions became clear to the colonies.

In the summer of 1776, the Continental Congress heard Richard Henry Lee read his resolution stating: "Resolved: That these United Colonies are, and of right ought to be, free and independent States, that they are absolved from all allegiance to the British Crown, and that all political connection between them and the State of Great Britain is, and ought to be, totally dissolved."

On June 11, consideration of the Lee Resolution was postponed and the Committee of Five was

appointed to draft a statement to present to the world the colonies' case for independence. These men were John Adams, Roger Sherman, Benjamin Franklin, Robert R. Livingston and Thomas Jefferson.

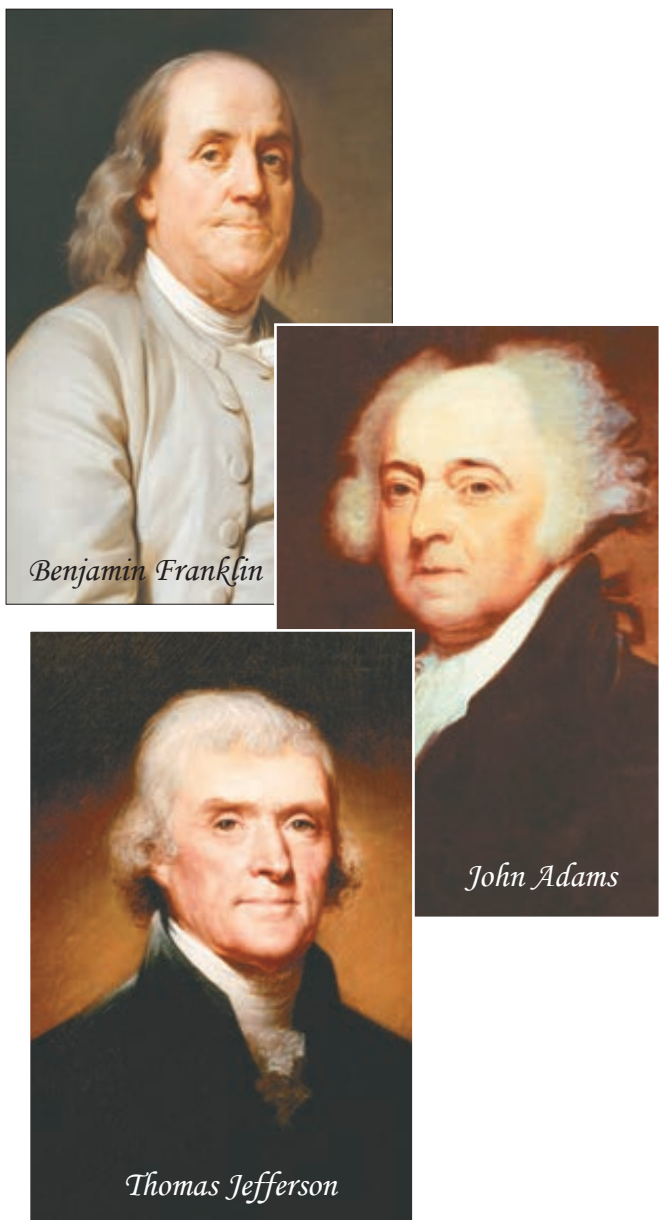
Jefferson's account reflects three stages in the life of the Declaration: the document originally written by Jefferson; the changes to that document made by Franklin and Adams, resulting in the version that was submitted by the Committee of Five to the Congress; and the version that was eventually adopted.

On July 2, 1776, the Lee Resolution for Independence was adopted, which meant immediately afterward, Congress began the consideration of the Declaration of Independence. Congress reviewed and revised the document until early morning on July 4 when the Declaration had been officially adopted.

It may not have been known then, but when the words of five men were quilled on to a single piece of parchment, the course of world history was momentarily changed. This marked the establishment of one of the world's most formidable countries and subsequently the growth of democracy, which became a globally recognized institution. In the name of common sense and good will, a few spoke up against an oppressive and negligent authority. From that effort came a collective pride to be awed and a force to be reckoned with.

Prosperity and grace through adversity was a lesson taught to me at a young age and for that reason, I take sentimental interest in the story behind how a humble collection of colonies defied the odds. Through out history, nations have come in to existence through common themes such as civil perseverance and military rebellion and our great nation is no exception to this prospect.

Editor's Note: All historic dates and facts are attributed to archive.gov.



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WeekINPhotos

Marine Barracks Washington D.C.




[Above] The U.S. Marine Drum and Bugle Corps, “The Commandants Own,” performs during a Friday evening parade at Marine Barracks Washington, D.C., June 27.

[Top, left] President Barack Obama greets Lance Cpl. Chesty XIV, official Marine Corps mascot, during a Friday evening parade at Marine Barracks Washington, D.C., June 27.


[Bottom, left] Marines from Marine Barracks Washington, D.C., perform during a Friday evening parade at the barracks, June 27.

See page B2 for
Sunset Cinema
movie
schedule



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Marines emerge victorious in World Cup tournament at Camp Dwyer, Afghanistan

Story and photos by Cpl. Joseph Scanlan

CAMP DWYER, Afghanistan — When Marines and sailors are not patrolling and supporting missions in Afghanistan, they often exercise to relieve stress and pass time. With the 2014 FIFA World Cup currently underway, the Marines of Company C, 1st Battalion, 7th Marine Regiment, decided to host their own soccer tournament aboard Camp Dwyer, June 21.

“During my weekly operations and intelligence meeting with Lt. Col. Ghani (the 1st Brigade Operations Officer, 215th Corps, Afghan National Army), we have talked about soccer and the World Cup,” said Capt. Alistair Howard, commanding officer of Co. C, 1/7, and a native of San Diego. “He is a huge soccer fan. I said I would like to have our own version of the World Cup on base since we have multiple countries here. When I mentioned I wanted to get a Marine team, Sgt. Eduardo Ayala put a

complete silence as the first shooter from the World Team prepared to shoot. All eyes watched as his foot stuck the ball and it soared into the top right corner of the goal. Flags waved, water bottles flew into the sky and deafening cries of joy erupted from the World Team spectators as they celebrated their lead. The Jordanians reacted to the ecstatic fans and scored a quick grounder to the left side of the goal. More shots scored from both teams, some were blocked and occasionally some missed, but ultimately the World Team won and earned their spot at the championship game the following day.

The Marines faced the Afghan National Army team directly after the World Team’s victory. From the Marines’ perspective, the ANA was an intimidating opponent because they have a brigade team that practices on a regular basis. While many of the Marines on the team played

by two ANA soldiers and nearly had the ball stolen from his possession, but he passed it to Ayala in the nick of time. Ayala had immediate coverage on him by one defender as soon as he received the ball. He swiftly made a split-second move around the opponent and took a shot from more than 30 yards out.

Players and fans alike watched the ball as if it were in slow motion while it sailed upward over the field. From a distance, the ball looked like was clearly going over the net, but it began to drop. Falling rapidly as it approached the goal, it managed to sneak its way between the top horizontal post and the goalie’s fingertips. Cheers and shouts erupted as fans celebrated the first goal of the tournament.

“I had an opportunity and took it,” said Ayala, a native of Richmond, Calif. “It was a really lucky shot, and it won us the game.”

The Marines’ defense kept the Afghans at bay for the remainder of the game and solidified their victory. Both teams met afterward and shook hands with one another in happy spirits following a well-played game.

Both the World Team and the Marines had a night of rest before playing in the championship game the following night.

The Marines arrived on the field with tremendous energy and motivation. The victory the night prior with the odds against them only added fuel to their fire.

Howard, the referee for the game, blew a whistle and the game commenced. The first half began in a lively manner and each team had several scoring opportunities. Despite numerous shots on the goal, the goalies held their own and the half remained scoreless.

The team captains rallied their men during the break between halves. Tactics were discussed and spine-tingling shouts of motivation could be heard from the Marines as they broke from a huddle to begin the second half.

Days prior to the tournament, the Marines scrimmaged the other teams and lost to each one. Each scrimmage the Marines were outplayed and outmatched, but they defied all odds when they defeated the Afghans and were a force to be reckoned during the championship game. One look into any Marine’s eyes revealed their lust for victory. The Marines only needed to score one goal to secure their place as champions of the Dwyer World Cup, and that’s just what they did.

Midway into the second half the Marines gained possession of the ball and quickly moved up field. They passed it to one another until an Afghan interpreter on the Marine team gained possession of the ball. He sprinted diagonally to the outside of left field, juked out a defender and fired a shot on net. The ball managed to slip through the goalie and zoom into the right corner of the goal. Hair-raising cheers came from the Marines as they cheered for their comrade’s goal.

The clock ticked down and before long, the game was finished and the Marines emerged triumphant. Both teams met with smiles on their faces, shook hands and gathered for a photo with the trophy.



Marines with Company C, 1st Battalion, 7th Marine Regiment, shake hands with players from Team Afghanistan after defeating them during the Dwyer World Cup aboard Camp Dwyer, Helmand province, Afghanistan, June 21.

signup sheet in the chow hall and quickly stepped up as the team captain and organized practices to create a solid team.”

The tournament also was held in celebration of successful security operations in support of Afghanistan’s presidential runoff elections held June 14. Four teams participated in the tournament: Team America, Afghanistan, Jordan and the World Team (consisting of contractors on the camp). Due to the location of Camp Dwyer, there wasn’t a grass field to play on, so the participants improvised and played the tournament on a dirt field.

The first game commenced at 7:30 p.m. June 21, with the World Team facing the Jordanians. The two teams battled fiercely for more than an hour, but neither team had scored by the end of the two halves. The victory was to be decided by a shootout.

The players from both teams gathered around each shooter and goalie and the shootout commenced. The roaring cheers and chants of the spectators suddenly drowned into

soccer for a few years during school or for fun, they haven’t played much since. The Marines managed to practice twice before the match.

The ANA soldiers confidently took their positions on the field, their dark blue and lime green jerseys a stark contrast to the Marines’ characteristic green-on-green physical training uniform.

Much like the match prior, it was a fierce faceoff between the two teams. Dust arose and rocks tumbled as the Marines and the ANA attempted to breach each other’s line of defense, but all efforts were in vain and the first half ended scoreless. The second half was much like the first, but with just a few minutes left before the final whistle blew, something remarkable happened.

With sweat running down their faces and soaking into their shirts, the Marines gained possession of the ball and maneuvered up-field. The teammates passed to one another and before long, they were within scoring distance. The Marine with the ball was being pressured



Combat Center Events

Sesame Street Tour
USO and the Sesame Street Workshop are bringing the Sesame Street/USO Experience for Military Families.
When: Aug. 9 and 10
Location and time to be determined.
For more information, call 830-5086

School Week

Back to school week offers a whole week of activities including the Education Fair, Pool Party, Fashion show and Back to school Brigade.
When: Aug. 12 to Aug. 15
Where: Community Center
For more information, call 830-5086

Sunset Cinema

Friday, July 4
12:30 p.m. – Edge of Tomorrow 3-D, PG-13
3 p.m. – 22 Jump Street, R
Saturday, July 5
10:00 a.m. – **Free Admission** Mirror Mirror, PG
12:30 p.m. – Maleficent 3-D, PG
3 p.m. – Blended, PG-13
5:30 p.m. – Godzilla, PG-13
8: 30 p.m. – X-Men: Days of Future Past 3-D, PG-13
11:30 p.m. – A Million Ways to Die in the West, R
Sunday, July 6
12 p.m. – Godzilla, PG-13
3 p.m. – X-Men: Days of Future Past 3-D, PG-13
6 p.m. – Edge of Tomorrow 3-D, PG-13
9 p.m. – 22 Jump Street, R
Monday, July 7
2 p.m. – **Free Admission** Madagascar, PG
3:30 p.m. – **Free Admission** Puss in Boots, PG
6 p.m. – A Million Ways to Die in the West, R
Tuesday, July 8
2 p.m. – **Free Admission** Ice Age, PG
3:30 p.m. – **Free Admission** Monsters Inc., G
6 p.m. – X-Men: Days of Future Past 3-D, PG-13
Wednesday, July 9
3 p.m. – **Free Admission** Toy Story, G
5 p.m. – Million Dollar Arm, PG
7:30 p.m. – Blended, PG-13
Thursday, July 10
3 p.m. – **Free Admission** Dispicable Me, PG
5 p.m. – Godzilla, PG-13
7:30 p.m. – Edge of Tomorrow 3-D, PG-13

High-flying DreamWorks sequel grows along with its young audience

NEIL POND
"How to Train Your Dragon 2"

Starring the voices of Jay Baruchel, America Ferrera, Gerard Butler, Craig Ferguson, & Cate Blanchett
Directed by by Dean DuBois
PG, 97 min.

A follow-up to the animated 2010 DreamWorks hit about a young Viking boy and his flying dragon, this soaring sequel has grown along with its audience. This new "Dragon" reunites director Dean DuBois with most of the original vocal cast (Jay Baruchel, Gerard Butler, Craig Ferguson, America Ferrera, Jonah Hill, Kristen Wiig, Christopher Mintz-Plasse) and takes place five years after the events of the first movie, as Vikings have learned to coexist with dragons instead of slay them. Now, as we see in the movie's high-spirited opening, the feisty fire-breathers have become part of the everyday life of the mythical island of Berk, where they're used for transportation, recreation, companionship and commerce. "With Vikings on the backs of dragons," says Hiccup (Baruchel), the son of the Berk's burly tribal chief (Butler) grooming him for an eventual leadership role he doesn't really want, "the world just got a whole lot bigger." And certainly a bit more complicated and dangerous — at least compared to the first movie. As Hiccup, now a gangly teenager, sails through the skies on his trusty night fury, Toothless, with his female friend, Astrid (Ferrera), he discovers a place where the inhabitants don't see things — or treat dragons — the way they do back on Berk. Hiccup's discovery puts his entire village in peril and leads to yet another, even more startling revelation, an Armageddon-like, fire-and-ice showdown, and a life-changing decision. (I won't reveal much

more, but it's connected to having Oscar-winning Cate Blanchett aboard as the voice of a new character.) The first "Dragon," praised by both critics and audiences, combined a rollicking, family-friendly story (adapted from Cressida Cowell's British book series) with marvelously rendered, high-tech animation, plus a cast of colorful, amusing characters — and some dazzling scenes, especially if you saw it in 3-D. "Dragon 2" upholds those high standards, even pushing them up a couple of notches. The whole movie looks fantastic — fluid, textured and alive. The dragons are things of whimsy, wizardry and wonder, intended to make you think of the strong bonds between people, nature and animals — at various times they mimic characteristics of puppies, ponies, birds, and butterflies. The returning supporting characters are a gaggle of loveable oddballs (Wiig, Hill, Mintz-Plasse), and a couple of new additions — especially hunky, comically inept Eret, Son of Eret ("Game of Thrones" actor Kit Harington) and the war-mongering dragon slave master Draco Bludvist (Djimon Hounsou) — both add depth and dimension to a story that's grown up a bit over the elapsed years, just like many of its young audience members. But the real beauty of the first "Dragon," and now this one, is how director DuBois and his team never approached them as purely "kids' movies." They always aimed higher than that, without ever losing sight of the children who'd find the most resonance in the fantasy-storybook-adventure elements of the tales. Witty, rousing, heartwarming, sensational-looking, and at times touching, uplifting and even moving, "How to Train Your Dragon 2" is another fine feather in DreamWorks' cinematic cap, and proof that it is, indeed, still possible for Hollywood to make movies that virtually all ages can enjoy, appreciate and admire.

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