



Reprinted from the Observation Post

August 30, 1974

# "Gave up broncs for bull riding"

BY PENNY PETTIS

Horses are more dangerous than bulls! That's the opinion of Gysgt. Jim Cude, of Headquarters and Service Battalion here. The Gunny began competing on rodeos before joining the Marine Corps 15 years ago.

In Berone, Texas at the age of 16, a friend of the Gunny's persuaded him to give it a try. For the first three months, he rode strictly bareback broncs, then took his first ride on a bull. He rode in all local amateur rodeos, alternating between horses and bulls. After several years of riding he gave up broncs and stuck strictly to bulls.

"I quit riding bareback horses because it's too dangerous. Horses go up too high and you have to far to fall," he said. "Bulls are harder to ride and they're dangerous, a person doesn't take the chances he would on a horse."

The stocky 5-foot, 9-inch Texan has been seriously hurt only twice. Once he was kicked by a horse and had his ribs

pulled loose on one side, and one time a bull stepped on him, pulling the tendond in his leg. Luckily, neither incident required hospitalization.

After joining the Marine Corps and completing recruit training he was stationed at Marine Corps Base, Camp Pendleton. He rode every chance he got until going overseas. While overseas he was away from the rodeo scene, only to pick up where he left 13 months later when he returned to Camp Pendleton. Gysgt. Cude joined the rodeo team there for two years until transferred to Albany, Georgia. He participated in a few rodeos there but according to Gunny, there's not the rodeo interest there as out West.

Once again the Texas cowboy had to leave the rodeo action for an overseas tour. Returning to the States he was assigned to Twentynine Palms. While stationed here he rode at Camp Pendleton and was the third in the standings, when once more he had to give up riding for a year in Vietnam.

After his return, he went to Tucson, Arizona for Inspector-Instructor duty. The brown-haired Texan did a lot of riding there as he made most of the rodeos throughout Arizona and New Mexico.

Three years later he returned to Twentynine Palms, riding on the average of 25 rodeos a year. In November of 1972, he began slowing down. Until then he rode almost every weekend. Presently he rides about twice a month. When he's not riding he's either judging or working for a contractor setting up arenas, helping with the stock-anything to make the rodeo a success.

Some of the large rodeos he's competed in include Long Beach, San Diego and Brawley, Calif., Las Vegas, Nev., and Tucson, Arizona.

Throughout the Texan's travels, he has had opportunities to meet many famous people in the rodeo world. For example, there's Larry Mahan, who won more all-around-championships than anyone in this

profession, Jim Shoulders who is considered the "gran daddy" of bull riding and is now retired and running a rodeo school; Casey Tibbs, one of the well-known saddle bronc riders, and Jerome Robertson who is presently the bull riding director for RCA (Rodeo Cowboy Association).

According to the Gunny, rodeo is considered one of the most competitive sports, more so than football, baseball, bowling etc.

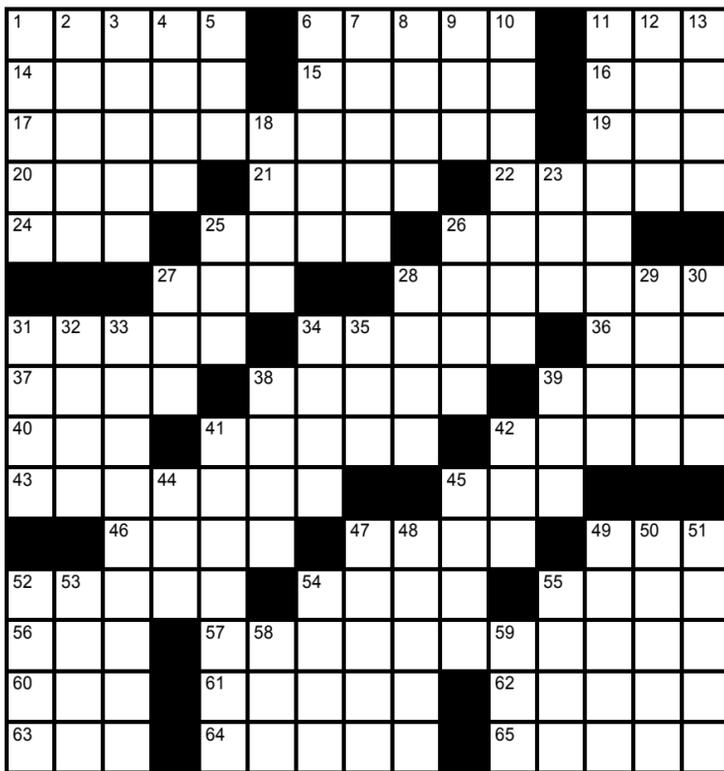
"In any team sport, you pit one team against the other. In rodeos the individual competes against another individual-plus the animal. Rodeo people pay their own expenses and if they don't win they're just out money. There are no team doctors or trainers. If a rider gets hurts he has no money coming in."

Gunny Cude plans to continue working with the rodeo another four or five years. After retirement in Arizona or Texas, he hopes to eventually get into the rodeo contracting business.

## GOLLY!

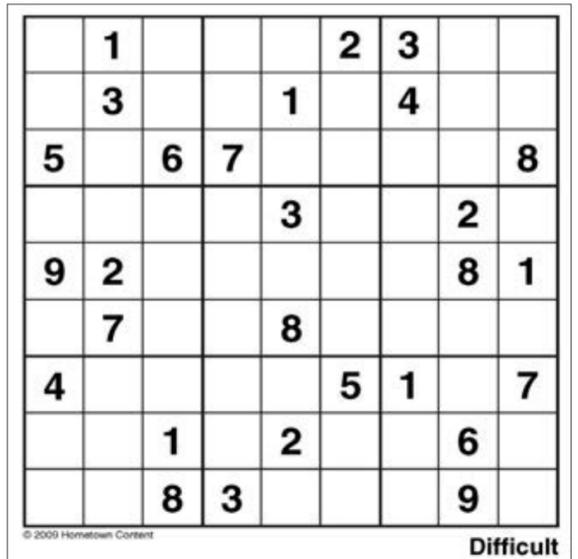
See answers in next week's edition

- Across**
- 1 Worries
  - 6 Unemotional
  - 11 Work on pants
  - 14 Set aside
  - 15 Go-getter's attitude
  - 16 Kind of poem
  - 17 "9 to 5" singer
  - 19 Ignited
  - 20 Olympics sword
  - 21 "\_\_\_ the Woods"
  - 22 Electrical units
  - 24 Lion's home
  - 25 Animals at home
  - 26 Say it didn't happen
  - 27 Douglas \_\_\_ (kind of tree)
  - 28 Got more issues
  - 31 Absorb, like gravy
  - 34 FBI employee
  - 36 "Bravo!"
  - 37 Norse god
  - 38 "Trick or \_\_\_!"
  - 39 "No way, \_\_\_!"



- 40 Word after sesame
  - 41 Turned (away from)
  - 42 Having seen it all
  - 43 Kept a sharp eye on
  - 45 Dad's lady
  - 46 Knitter's need
  - 47 Random guess
  - 49 Important message to cops
  - 52 "The Golden Girls" city
  - 54 "\_\_\_ thing!"
  - 55 "American \_\_\_"
  - 56 "A League of Their \_\_\_"
  - 57 Spoil
  - 60 Actor Chaney
  - 61 Show to be true
  - 62 Soup vegetables
  - 63 Genetic material
  - 64 Used a needle
  - 65 Papas
- Down**
- 1 Became less loud
  - 2 Run away to marry
  - 3 Director Woody
  - 4 Part in a movie
  - 5 Pig's home
  - 6 Hard to find
  - 7 Pastries with fruit
  - 8 "I'm \_\_\_ you!"
  - 9 Wedding words
  - 10 Home to nuns
  - 11 Movie capital
  - 12 Make changes to an article
  - 13 New York baseball team
  - 18 Dock
  - 23 Number after zero
  - 25 Dot on dice
  - 26 Fender-bender result
  - 27 Cat's cover
  - 28 Enjoy a book
  - 29 "What \_\_\_ can I say?"
  - 30 Act
  - 31 Octagonal road sign
  - 32 Dayton's state
  - 33 Optimistic person
  - 34 Hot and dry
  - 35 "Wowzers!"
  - 38 Next
  - 39 Jelly cousin
  - 41 Pinches pennies
  - 42 Occupation
  - 44 "\_\_\_ the Walrus"
  - 45 Painter Chagall
  - 47 Work, as a crossword
  - 48 Played (around with)
  - 49 Did some math
  - 50 \_\_\_ dots
  - 51 "God \_\_\_ America"
  - 52 Bad sign on bread
  - 53 Victor's shout
  - 54 Farmer's item
  - 55 Concept
  - 58 Valuable rock
  - 59 "\_\_\_ King Cole"

## SUDOKU #3382-D



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Difficult

## LAST WEEK'S PUZZLES

"Greetings!"



Sudoku Solution #3375-D

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

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 - Get It On Shoppe, 3219 Mission Blvd.  
 - Main Street Motel, 3494 Main St.  
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- In National City:**  
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 - Sports Auto Sales, 1112 National City Blvd.

- In Twentynine Palms:**  
 - Adobe Smoke Shop, 6441 Adobe Rd.  
 - STC Smoke Shop, 6001 Adobe Rd.  
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- In Yucca Valley:**  
 - Yucca Tobacco Mart, 57602 29 Palms Hwy.  
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- 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

# Jade LOPEZ

Rifleman, 7th Marine Regiment, 23

BEFORE JOINING THE MARINE CORPS, LOPEZ HAD THE OPPORTUNITY TO TRYOUT FOR KANSAS CITY SPORTING, WHICH IS A PROFESSIONAL SOCCER TEAM.

> **Two of my biggest hobbies** are hunting and playing soccer. I grew up with both of them and I still try and do both as much as possible.

> **Soccer was always around** because of friends and family but I didn't really fall in love with it until high school. My highschool coach taught me everything that I know. He taught me everything from the skills of the game to how to be passionate and truly appreciate it.

> **I love it so much because** you can always get better. No one can be a perfect soccer player. There is always something new to learn and that is addicting to me.

> **I started out playing mid field.** I liked the position because mid fielders get to see both sides of the game. One minute I'm trying to score a goal and the next I'm doing my best to defend my goal. I recently started playing defense but I have always considered myself as someone who can play any position.

> **Before the Marine Corps,** I had the opportunity to tryout for Kansas City Sporting. It was a pretty big deal to me because that is a Major League Soccer team but I ended up enlisting.

> **After joining the Marine Corps,** soccer slowed down for me because I obviously had other things to do, but once I returned from my last deployment, I had the chance to play again.

> **I was invited by my neighbor** to play on his soccer team for the base league. I said yes because of how much I missed playing my favorite sport.

> **They needed defenders** so I volunteered to play there. I soon found out that the team I joined was the [championship team] of the base league. After playing with them for the past two seasons, we have yet to lose the title.

> **I enjoy Twentynine Palms, Calif.** because of my friends and my family but it has made it a lot harder for me to hunt. Nowadays, the only time I get to hunt is when I go back to Missouri.

> **Back home, it's almost** a part of life. A lot of people I know grew up around hunting but the main reason I hunt is for food. There is something about hunting your own food that makes it taste better. Some people may think it is weird to think that way but that's all I knew.

> **I really don't have a favorite animal** to hunt but if I had to choose one, it would be deer.

> **I have learned to appreciate** nature from both sides. I am thankful for nature because it puts food on my table but I also appreciate how beautiful plants and animals can be.

> **Hunting also sparked** my interest for guns. I like learning about them, figuring out how they work, how to maintain them and how to utilize them. That was one of the reasons I wanted to join the Corps.

> **I enlisted in the Marine Corps** as an infantryman because that's what I always thought of when I pictured a Marine and I wanted to be that.

> **I always pictured myself** in the Marine Corps. I wanted to fight for my country and become a part of the famous brotherhood.

> **The brotherhood is probably** my favorite thing about the Marine Corps. There aren't many places you can go where someone will risk their life for you just because you share the same title. That means a lot to me. I understand I get a paycheck and benefits. Eventually those will run out, but I know the friends I have made while serving are with me for life.

Story by Cpl. Alejandro Bedoya



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# Transportation Marine readiness during FEX



Pfc. Corey Sullivan, a landing support specialist with Transportation Support Company, Combat Logistics Battalion 6, 2nd Marine Logistics Group guides a CH-53E Super Stallion during helicopter support team operations at a field exercise aboard Marine Corps Base Camp Lejeune, N.C. The HST operation allowed landing support Marines to gain valuable experience.

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# es build cohesion,

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MARINE CORPS MOUNTAIN WARFARE TRAINING CENTER BRIDGEPORT, Calif.— More than 90 Marines with Transportation Support Company, Combat Logistics Battalion 6, 2nd Marine Logistics Group participated in a field exercise here, Aug. 18-21, to build unit cohesion and assess their capabilities before beginning a summer training package at the Marine Corps Mountain Warfare Training Center.

ensures the Marines react properly when facing an ambush or other enemy contact in a combat zone.

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The Marines with Landing Support Platoon were also given a chance to strengthen their skills during Helicopter Support Team training, working with student CH-53E



PHOTO BY LANCE CPL. SULLIVAN LARAMIE

Cpl. Matthew A. Bragg, a motor vehicle operator with Transportation Support Company, Combat Logistics Battalion 6, 2nd Marine Logistics Group lies in wait for a convoy while role-playing an enemy combatant during a field exercise aboard Marine Corps Base Camp Lejeune, N.C. The company held a nearly week-long field exercise to build teamwork and ensure the Marines maintain a field-oriented mindset prior to the unit's upcoming mountain warfare training.



PHOTO BY LANCE CPL. SULLIVAN LARAMIE

A Marine with Transportation Support Company, Combat Logistics Battalion 6, 2nd Marine Logistics Group fires blank ammunition from a M-240B machine gun while fending off a mock ambush during a field exercise aboard Marine Corps Base Camp Lejeune, N.C. The exercise helps the company maintain mission readiness for future deployments.



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Marines with Transportation Support Company, Combat Logistics Battalion 6, 2nd Marine Logistics Group play football at the end of a field exercise aboard Marine Corps Base Camp Lejeune, N.C. The Marines ended the nearly week-long exercise with a field meet and warriors' night to solidify the camaraderie built by the company during the operation.

“The exercise was mostly for the camaraderie and re-introduction to the field environment,” said 1st Sgt. Sarah J. Nolan, the first sergeant of TS Company. “Of course, we can't give them the mountains and we can't give them the cold mornings [of MWTC], but we can at least get them back in the habit of life in the field.”

The company conducted a variety of training, including: vehicle-mounted and foot patrols with fellow Marines role-playing the enemy aggressors, classes in lifesaving battlefield medical procedures, helicopter support exercises, and a vehicle-mounted machine gun range.

“Some of the Marines did their crew-served weapons shoot,” said Nolan, a native of Hibbing, Minn. “That's a good training event because the [Transportation Support] Marines don't often get a chance to move and shoot and maneuver their vehicles. They got a lot out of it and it was a big confidence builder.”

The three motor transportation platoons practiced maneuvering under fire in High Mobility Multipurpose Wheeled Vehicles, or HMMWVs. While one vehicle moved forward, another provided covering fire with live ammunition. The realistic training

Super Stallion pilots from Marine Corps Air Station New River. They practiced attaching thousands of pounds in supplies to a cable suspended below the helicopter, hovering above their heads.

Second Lt. John C. Vroom, the platoon commander of LS platoon, said that the Marines in the platoon trained frequently to perform this task, knew their jobs and worked well together.

The Marines ended the nearly week-long exercise with a field meet to solidify the camaraderie built by the company during the operation. Activities included a football tournament and a cookout meal of hamburgers and hotdogs off the grill. A warriors' night followed the field meet where the Marines entertained each

other with skits, jokes and impressions.

“The biggest takeaway for this training is the camaraderie and the teamwork aspect of the exercise,” said Nolan. “They're going to need it at the mountain warfare training because it's going to be a gut check.”

The company is scheduled to endure the harsh field conditions of mountain warfare training in September 2014 at MWTC Bridgeport, Calif.

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# Single Marine Program hosts poker tournament aboard Combat Center



Lance Cpl. Christopher Guzman, student, Company A, Marine Corps communication-Electronics School, contemplates his next move during the poker tournament sponsored by the Single Marine Program at The Zone. The event was open to Marines and sailors stationed at the Combat Center.



Sgt. Rudy Urias, mechanic, Headquarters Company, 7th Marine Regiment, converses with fellow Marines and Sailors during a poker tournament hosted at The Zone. The tournament is offered by the Single Marine Program.



The Combat Center's single Marines Program held a poker tournament for active-duty service members at The Zone. The personnel competing in the tournament, sit patiently to have their cards dealt to them.



Photos by Cpl. Alejandro Bedoya

Marines and sailors prepare for another hand to be dealt at a poker tournament held at The Zone. The poker tournament is open to all active-duty personnel aboard the installation and is held on the last Friday of every month.

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I know this is a tall order, but is anyone looking for casual fellowship over coffee who is a 5-point Calvinist? Amillennial? Doesn't believe in literal Sabbath-keeping, mandatory tithing, paedobaptism, or the health/wealth gospel? Believes Mat. 24 is fulfilled? Believes we are not the Romans 7 man or part old man and part new man? If so, call me at 760-365-6901.

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Pastor Titus R. Burns  
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### TOUGH MINDED OPTIMISM by Lou Gerhardt



I want to re-introduce you to a tremendous lady who is the epitome of what it is to be a positive thinker, in other words, a tough minded optimist.

Her name is Frieda Burdette and I have had the joy of knowing her almost 18 years. She is a wonderful person who has a genuine concern for the welfare of others.

Frieda is truly an amazing person. She is 75 years old and has earned a well deserved reputation for her leadership in sharing the beauties of our incredible world with her well-publicized group titled "Frieda's Happy Hoofers."

Frieda invites anyone and everyone of any age, ethnicity, sexual orientation, church membership, political affiliation, etc. to join the group and simply enjoy. No pledge of regular participation is required. Why not give it a try.

September 8 the hike is at Oak Glen Preserve. It's Apple season! The main Loop Trail is 2 miles. There are several spur trails--some ups and downs with several ponds and wetlands. Meet at the Park and Ride on Kickapoo Trail in Yucca Valley. Lunch will be at Apple Annie's.

On September 22 the hike will be at Morongo Preserve Canyon Trail. Walk for about an hour, then return. Meet at the Preserve Parking Lot at 9:00 AM. Lunch at the Morongo Café.

September 29 the hike is at the Morongo Preserve Boardwalk... 2/3 of a mile, level, many benches along the way. Everyone is welcome. Canes, walkers, wheelchairs ok. Meet at the Preserve parking lot at 10 AM. Lunch at the Morongo Café.

Let her know if you are attending. Frieda's telephone number is 1-760-364-2872. Join the fun!

This column sponsored by:

**Dr. Barry Mayron**  
Yucca Valley

**Jack Kennedy**  
Joshua Tree

Dr. Lou can be reached at 760-367-4627  
800-995-1620  
res19mxc@verizon.net

# WeekINPhotos

## 1/7 disrupts Taliban insurgents to assist retrograde operations



Lance Cpl. Javier Martinez, mine sweeper, Bravo Company, 1st Battalion, 7th Marine Regiment, searches for improvised explosive devices with a mine sweeper during a mission in Helmand province, Afghanistan, Aug. 16. Martinez, a native of San Antonio, Texas, and the company operated in Helmand province to disrupt enemy insurgents while retrograde operations were ongoing nearby.

Lance Cpl. Danny Robinson, machine gunner, Bravo Company, 1st Battalion, 7th Marine Regiment, carries an M240B medium machine gun on his back while maneuvering to a patrol base during a mission in Helmand province, Afghanistan, Aug. 16. Robinson, a native of Longmont, Colo., and the company operated in Helmand province to disrupt enemy insurgents while retrograde operations were ongoing nearby.



Marines with Bravo Company, 1st Battalion, 7th Marine Regiment, wait inside a CH-53E Super Stallion helicopter before being transported to an objective to start a mission in Helmand province, Afghanistan, Aug. 16, 2014. The company operated in Helmand province to disrupt enemy insurgents while retrograde operations were ongoing nearby.

Photo by: Sgt. Joseph Scanlan

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*USAA members Robert Griffin III, Washington Redskins quarterback, and his parents, U.S. Army veterans*

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# Combat Center returns to the Grid Iron



PHOTO BY CPL. ALEJANDRO BEDOYA

Marines with Marine Wing Support Squadron 374 and Marine Corps Communication-Electronics School prepare to collide at the line of scrimmage during the Preseason Jamboree at Felix Field.

## STORY BY CPL. ALEJANDRO BEDOYA

Felix Field is now a place for all Combat Center patrons to enjoy America's favorite fall sport: football. Semper Fit has started up its intramural tackle football league after a two-year hiatus due to field construction. Four teams were created by different units to compete for the championship at the end of a twelve-week season. Marine Wing Support Squadron 374, Combat Logistics Battalion 7, 1st Tank Battalion and Marine Corps Communication-Electronics School have all fielded teams comprised of Marines, sailors, DoD contractors and family members who are 18 and above.

### Jamboree

Aug. 27, all four teams took the field ready to compete in a friendly preseason jamboree. Each team had a chance to play each other in a 15-minute quarter, per game. The officials and scorekeepers were volunteers from across the base. Other volunteers included some of the coaching staff.

According to a sports specialist with Semper Fit, a lot of patrons are excited to see intramural tackle football start up again and that it has been a long time coming, but the field was well worth the wait.

Players maintained professionalism and good sportsmanship on and off the field. Sergeant Martez McDuffie is a player as well as a coach from MWSS-374.

"As a spectator, I paid close attention to the three other teams," said McDuffie. "They all have things about them that they do very well."

In between games, some players who weren't playing on the field supported and cheered on their fellow league members, regardless of what team they were on. Others received coaching on what to fix and how to fix it.

"Now as a coach of MWSS-374, I must say that our team has a lot of work to do on both sides of the ball," Bryant said. "We will prepare for next week's game and be ready for CLB-7."

### The return of tackle football

Felix Field underwent renovations in 2013 to make it more family friendly and accessible. It requires little to no maintenance and is cost effective for the Combat Center to maintain. Patrons have long awaited the return of tackle football and are now excited to get the season started.

A lot of players were excited and showed devotion, to include Petty Officer 2nd Class, Tony Bryant, wide receiver, MWSS-374.

"All teams showed up," Bryant said. "There was a lot of passion on the field tonight and it felt good to get back at it."

This preseason jamboree gave all teams the opportunity to compete and measure their skills and strategies against their opponents. At the end of every game, the teams lined up and showed good sportsmanship by congratulating each other for completing their first preseason game.

"I'm proud of our team's performance but we have to perfect some things," said Bryant.

The intramural tackle football league is held every Wednesday night at Felix Field. The season will go for 12 weeks and attendees are welcome. To get information about times and schedules please contact Semper Fit at (760)830-6857.



PHOTO BY CPL. ALEJANDRO BEDOYA

Sgt. Martez McDuffie, embarkation specialist, Marine Wing Support Squadron 374, begins walking off the field after a turnover during the Preseason Jamboree at Felix Field.



PHOTO BY CPL. ALEJANDRO BEDOYA

Marines with Marine Wing Support Squadron 374 and Marine Corps Communication-Electronics School go head-to-head for the first time during the Preseason Jamboree at Felix Field. Intramural tackle football is scheduled to be hosted every Wednesday at the same field.



PHOTO BY CPL. ALEJANDRO BEDOYA

Marines with Marine Wing Support Squadron 374 and Marine Corps Communication-Electronics School demonstrate good sportsmanship by congratulating each other on their performance during the Preseason Jamboree at Felix Field.

## Liberty Call



### Combat Center Events

**Marine Corps Community Services** is scheduled to host the 239th Marine Corps Birthday Endurance Relay Run. Participants will compete in teams of 10. The overall goal for the run is to complete 239 miles. The race will be held above the East Gym and will begin Oct. 3 at 5 p.m.

**Marine Corps Community Services** is scheduled to host Century Anger Management classes at building 1438 in classroom 1. The sessions will be held Sept. 11, 16, 18, 23, and 25 from 9 a.m. to 11 a.m. The classes are open to service members and families.

**The Combat Center Fire Department** has begun selling tickets for its 17th annual chili lunch. This year's event will take place at fire station 451 or Bldg. 1516, from 10 a.m. to 2 p.m. Oct. 8. For more information, please call coordinators at 830-5239.

**The Single Marine Program** is offering several volunteer events and group outings to active-duty Marines aboard the Combat Center. The "Marines Got Talent" show is scheduled to be hosted at the Sunset Cinema Sept. 5 for all hands to watch for free. The talent show is one of several events that can be attended through the SMP.



### Sunset Cinema

#### Friday - September 05, 2014

8:30 PM-Dawn of the Planet of the Apes (3-D) PG-13  
11:30 PM-Guardians of the Galaxy (3-D) PG-13

#### Saturday - September 06, 2014

10:00 AM-Mr. Peabody and Sherman (NDVD - Free Admission) PG  
12:30 PM-Guardians of the Galaxy (3-D) PG-13  
3:30 PM-Dawn of the Planet of the Apes PG-13  
6:30 PM-Hercules PG-13  
9:00 PM-Get On Up PG-13  
11:50 PM MIDNIGHT - 12AM  
MIDNIGHT MOVIE - LUCY R

#### Sunday - September 07, 2014

12:00 AM-Lucy R  
12:00 PM-Guardians of the Galaxy PG-13  
3:00 PM-The Hundred-Foot Journey PG  
6:00 PM-Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles (3-D) PG-13  
8:30 PM-Into the Storm PG-13

#### Monday - September 08, 2014

5:00 PM-Hercules (3-D) PG-13  
7:30 PM-Sex Tape R

#### Tuesday - September 09, 2014

5:00 PM-Dawn of the Planet of the Apes (3-D) PG-13  
7:30 PM-Lucy R

#### Wednesday - September 10, 2014

5:00 PM-The Fluffy Movie PG-13  
7:00 PM-Guardians of the Galaxy (3-D) PG-13

#### Thursday - September 11, 2014

3:30 PM-Hamburger Hill (Free Admission) R  
5:10 PM-Black Hawk Down (Free Admission) R  
8:00 PM-Into the Storm PG-13

#### Friday - September 12, 2014

4:00 PM Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles (3-D) PG-13  
6:30 PM Guardians of the Galaxy (3-D) PG-13  
9:30 PM Dawn of the Planet of the Apes PG-13  
11:50 PM MIDNIGHT - 12AM  
MIDNIGHT (12AM) MOVIE - THE GIVER PG-13

## Old Soldiers

Stallone & Co. are showing their age in third testosterone fest

NEIL POND

### "The Expendables 3"

Starring Sylvester Stallone, Arnold Schwarzenegger & Mel Gibson  
Directed by Patrick Hughes  
PG-13

In the opening scene of this slambang, testosterone-fest reunion of aging action-movie icons, Sylvester Stallone's character points to a frankfurter-sized finger of his meaty fist and a skull-shaped glob of silver—his Expendables "lucky ring."

The Expendables franchise, about a group of super-covert, battle-scarred warriors hired to do the U.S. government's dirty work, has indeed been lucky for Stallone. He's had both his bank account and his ego fed by the success of the previous two movies, which he also had a big hand in either directing or writing.

In the movies, his team is "expendable" because their work is so dangerous, and their missions so secret, no one knows—or can afford to care—if they live or die.

How ironic—since the Expendables don't seem expendable at all. They just

keep coming back, again and again, and Stallone and his co-stars are a veritable, tried-and-true Hollywood guy-movie who's who. These are some "dependable" Expendables.

And if anything, they just keep getting more "expandable." In this excursion, the grizzled, gung-ho wagon train links up former E-team stalwarts Arnold Schwarzenegger, Dolph Lundgren, Terry Crews, Wesley Snipes, Jason Statham, Randy Couture and Jet Li with new additions Harrison Ford, Mel Gibson, Kelsey Grammer (yes, Dr. Crane from Cheers and Frazier!) and Antonio Banderas, and a group of younger Expendables-in-training—Kellan Lutz, Glen Powell, boxing champ Victor Ortiz and mixed martial arts fighter Ronda Rousey, the sole female invited into the boys'-club sandbox of bullet-spraying machine guns, missile-launching bazookas, exploding trains, dive-bombing helicopters and ka-booming army tanks.

There's a wisp of a subplot about the old-school Expendables (with their knives and guns) vs. the new young high-tech Expendables (with their computers and cameras and drones). But now, four years and three movies into the franchise, the just-plain-old Expendables are beginning to wear vis-

ibly thin, the plots have ground down to near nothingness, the wisecracks aren't wise or crack-y anymore, and the original stars mostly lumber around like middle-aged slabs of spa-toned beefcake. And this movie, in particular, is so bloated with actors, there's not much space for any of them. Some, like martial arts champion Jet Li, are relegated to little more than a cameo.

When the first movie came out, in 2010, it was an homage to Hollywood's long tradition of Dirty Dozen-style, action-caper, military-mission flicks, as well as an adrenaline shot of career-rejuvenating mojo for Stallone and some of his action-movie pals from the '80s and '90s. Now, as Neil Young's "Old Man" plays and Stallone's character proudly watches his young protégés carouse in a barroom, it seems like the original Expendable is thinking about finally easing out of the picture—or at least making much more room for a younger, leaner, greener set of espionage and counter-terrorism experts.

At one point, Trench (Schwarzenegger) tells Barney (Stallone) he's through. "I'm getting out of this business," he says, "and so should you." Maybe it's finally time for Stallone to take that Expendables advice to heart.

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