

The Highlander

Volume 2, Issue 4 Apr. 20, 2009



Highlanders learn from tough Sustainer Challenge



Capt. Selina Riedel, commander of A Co, 181st Brigade Support Battalion, dominates her opponent during the Sustainer Challenge combatives event at Joint Base Balad. The Highlanders were undefeated in combatives and won the marksmanship and weapons knowledge events.

Soldiers are natural competitors. Whether it's PT, Call of Duty, seeing who can down a gallon of milk or a friendly boxing spar while waiting for the turnaround on a mission. The Highlanders are no different. So when the 3rd Expedition-ary Sustainment Command announced its Sustainer Challenge event, the Highlanders naturally accepted.

The event aimed to test the skills and stamina of soldiers from across the command. The competition's events and team make-up reflected the diverse capabilities and demographics of the command.

Events included infantry and basic soldiering tasks such as marksmanship and weapons knowledge, maintainer tasks like the humvee tire change, several medical tasks and gut-check events like the 5-mile road march and a modified physical fitness test. To ensure teams were well-rounded, unit's five-soldier teams in-

cluded at least one officer, one soldier over thirty years old and one woman.

The Highlander team consisted of two officers – one of whom was a woman, two non-commissioned officers and one enlisted soldier all with a mix of infantry, armor, medical and logistics backgrounds.

Spc. John Colyer Gunner, A Co
The Highlanders lead from the front – they're an infantry task force – and naturally expected to do well. But after two days of exertion and they watched the awards ceremony instead of standing in it. Obviously disappointed, the Highlander competitors still found reason to be positive.

Recently promoted Capt. David Redman, a former platoon leader and assistant operations officer from Everett, Wash. said the event and the effort "was worthwhile. I liked the physical demand, the test of mettle. We had good teamwork and worked well together. We balanced each other."

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Highlander 6 sends:

Hey Muldoons, 90 days and counting, Hooah! Time may be getting short but our OPTEMPO isn't. We still have plenty of missions on our schedule with several more projected operational moves, so please continue to fight complacency. You guys have completely set the standard for all SECFOR battalions, and I can guarantee you that everyone in this theater knows that. Not only are we the most relied upon unit in country, but you have become the premier Convoy Security Battalion in which the majority of the TTPs that you have developed, have now become the standard across the 3rd ESC. That is a testament to your professionalism, your intestinal fortitude and your dedication to one another.

March and April have been rough months, but your training has paid off, so continue to train hard. I wish I could give you an answer to the number of lasing incidents that have occurred to us over this past month, but I need you guys to continue to "do the right thing". BG Lally, the CG, 3rd ESC gave accolades to three Spartan Muldoons, SSG Miller, SPC Creach and PFC Stripes for their superb actions involving EOF. What these three soldiers did is a reflection upon your NCO and junior officer leadership. Unfortunately, BG Lally also awarded two of our Crazy Horse soldiers with Purple Hearts, SGT Fletcher and SPC Lynn. Our thoughts and prayers are with these two outstanding warriors.

We are going to say "Good Bye" to one platoon from Bonecrusher who heads North to Mosul, but we are gaining back Mover Company (B/181) who arrives soon from Tallil. We've been very fortunate to have not lost many soldiers back to the rear for injuries, personal hardships, etc...but with the loss of our 1-293rd augmentees, we cannot afford to lose any soldiers before our mission ends. Continue to stress safety, work on your physical fitness and mental stamina, and keep in contact with your families. We'll be home soon.

See ya down range Hooahs,

Highlander 6



Staff Sgt. Brandt Gibbons, a D Co convoy commander from Yakima, Wash. agreed, "We meshed well as a team. It wasn't about rank or authority, but doing the best; we came together as team."

After over a month of training, the team grew into more than a collection of individuals.

"We became awesome friends.

We backed each other and pushed each other to do better,"

said Spec. John Colyer, an A Co gunner from Bremerton, Wash.

The team's coach, A Co First Sgt. Shawn Powell from Kennewick, Wash. said the experience "was rewarding and satisfying . . . to see the team come together, to want to get better, to listen and to truly want to work together."

Powell also praised the efforts of the "2s," those soldiers

who trained and battled but weren't one of the five competition-day soldiers. About ten days before the competition five-soldier team was selected, "but everyone continued to give their best effort. You couldn't tell who were 1s and who were 2s. They were fantastic and always enthusiastic and increased the efforts of everyone. They were a tight 9-man team."

"He's the epitome of a senior NCO."

Cpl. Abraham Velasco, Medic, A Co, describing team coach, 1SG Shawn Powell

The team also appreciated Powell's efforts. Cpl. Abraham Velasco, an A Co medic from Seattle,

Wash. said, "He's the epitome of a senior NCO. He was there for everything, all the training while he was still doing his first sergeant duties. We couldn't have done this without him."

Despite obvious disappointment in not winning the competition, the Highlander team came away with valuable lessons learned and an experience to use in their positions as leaders in the task force.



Angry Tom's Book Review - MSG Tom Bigley

The Wild Trees: A Story of Passion and Daring
By Richard Preston

Occasionally in life you meet the right person, read an exceptional book, and work at your dream job. A very good friend of mine gave me this book- it's exceptional, and something I would have chosen had I run across it in a book store. As for the job I'm still looking, this one here in Balad certainly isn't the one.

Wild Trees, however, is an interesting read. Richard Preston not only describes the key figures and their work in the tree tops, but he actively participates in the work. The work is more a passion, discovering the world's tallest trees and studying them in their natural ecosystem from the top of the canopy down to the ground. This may not sound like a big deal, but for Redwoods, large ones average 300 feet or more from the base and contain thousands of cubic feet

of lumber. The coastal Redwood of antiquity rivaled or surpassed the giant sequoias of the Kings Canyon and Yosemite National Parks. Sadly, 96% of the original forest is gone and the remnants are scattered in a few isolated areas of the northern California coast. These are the tallest trees in the world reaching 379 ft for the record tree;

one can only imagine had a larger area been saved from logging what would be possible 400 ft or more? The author weaves an interesting story about not only the trees but the dedicated people whose life's work is to study the forest and the canopy high above the forest floor. Climbers will be impressed

at the complex rope systems that allow the climbers to traverse the treetops in relative safety and with limited impact. This book, like other technical and scientific works, is too long on Latin names but refreshing in steering away from liberal ecocatastrophe end of the world hype.



Pvt. Murphy's Law- Mark Baker



Chaplain's Corner - CH (MAJ) Joe Hammiel

EASTER: HOPE IN HARD TIMES

Life is hard for everyone! Whether we're in good or bad health, whether we're financially secure or homeless and wondering where we will get our next meal, whether we're deployed in the desert, separated from loved ones, or sitting comfortably at home surrounded by family, whether we are people of faith or absolute atheists – all people, in all places, in all times have to face life's challenges, difficulties, and hardships. Some may believe that if we are rich, strong, good-looking, healthy, and surrounded by those we love that we can be free from facing hard times. But the rich person is often stressed and worried about losing his wealth, the strong person will eventually grow weak and frail, the good looking will get wrinkles and grow old, those surrounded by loved ones will eventually find that even family and friends will let us down, and even those in perfect health will eventually die. No matter which way we slice it, life is hard!

But a little more than 2,000 years ago, something changed. A man who claimed to be the promised Messiah (or Christ) that the Jewish people were anticipating, who claimed to be no one less than God in the flesh, was betrayed by one of His closest companions – someone he lived with and taught and shared his life with for three years. His betrayal led to his arrest, then to a sham trial before both Jewish and Roman officials, then to his brutal beating at the hands of Roman torturers, and finally to his cruel death by crucifixion, one of the most agonizing methods of capital punishment ever devised by human beings.

All along, this man claims to His closest that all of his suffering was necessary to satisfy of the one true and that death would matter, but on the third day, he would come again. Even his closest all he promised his resurrection – we consider that him being tortured hands and feet saw him breathe and saw the Roman a spear to make sure of his death made their sorrows and



had been making incredible companions – he claimed suffering and death were the righteous requirements of the holy God. He also claimed not have the last say in the third day after his execution back to life, never to die. His closest friends quickly forgot what would happen regarding his resurrection, easy to understand when many of them actually saw by the Romans, saw his being nailed to the cross, his last breath as he died, the guard pierce his body with a spear to make sure he was dead. The reality of his death made them forget everything but their fears.

But on the third day after his death, just as he promised, he rose from the dead. Most of his confused and fear-filled followers were locked away in a room afraid of the same thing happening to them, when this man appeared to them and reassured them that he was very much alive! In fact, the record shows that he appeared to his closest companions as well as to more than 500 eyewitnesses, talking with them, teaching them, and eating with them. He left no doubt that he had kept his promise – he was alive!

But how did everything change? Since that time, more than 2,000 years ago, death no longer has the final say – it is not the undefeated champion anymore! Because of this man, people can now have hope that the grave is not the end. His death, burial, and resurrection provided a way for all who believe to be made right with God and to have eternal life! And this eternal life he provided is more than just something we can experience after we die, but it begins the moment we come to him in faith.

Life is still painfully hard, even for (perhaps especially for) the person who believes, but we know that this life is not the end and something so much better awaits us on the other side of death - something so wonderful that it cannot be adequately described. That's why Paul, a former hater and persecutor of this man and his followers, would eventually write, "If all we get out of Christ is a little inspiration for a few short years, we're a pretty sorry lot. But the truth is that Christ has been raised up, the first in a long legacy of those who are going to leave the cemeteries." (1 Corinthians 15:19 & 20) That's why in the middle of all of life's hard times, we can still have hope - Easter brings hope in hard times!

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The Unit Ministry Team is located in the small building inside the fence south of battalion HQ



ABOVE: BG Michael Lally, Commanding General, 3rd Expeditionary Sustainment Command, shakes hands with SGT Mark Fletcher, lead scout, 3rd Platoon, Crazy Horse, after awarding him the Purple Heart.



BELOW: SGT Mark Fletcher jokes that his new "bad guy marksmanship award" allows him to fish for free in the state of Washington. When BG Lally asked Fletcher if he could do anything for him, Fletcher asked if he could "think on it" saying he didn't want to waste the offer "on just beer."

From the field -- Highlanders in "action"



LEFT: BG Michael Lally, Commanding General, 3rd Expeditionary Sustainment Command, awards SPC Wilbur Lynn the Purple Heart. SPC Lynn and SGT Fletcher were injured when their vehicle was hit with an IED.

BELOW: Members of Crazy Horse's 3rd Platoon at the Air Force Theater Hospital on Joint Base Balad after SGT Fletcher and SPC Lynn were awarded the Purple Heart.

Write a "LETTER TO THE EDITOR"

- story ideas - announcements
- suggested changes, additions

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The Highlander is published as a command information resource for the soldiers of 1-161 Infantry.

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*(All photos, illustrations and content by Highlander PAO,
unless otherwise noted)*





ABOVE: Highlanders walk atop the reconstructed walls of the house of Abraham, regarded as the patriarch of Jews, Christians and Muslims, during a tour of the ancient city of Ur near Camp Adder / Tallil Air Base, Iraq.

BELOW: Highlanders stand at the base of the ziggurat at Ur with Dhaif Mhesen, curator of the site, following a tour of the ziggurat and nearby ruins.



From the field -- Highlanders in "action"



ABOVE: Abu Company's SFC Nick Nickolas connects for a hit during the Highlanders recent softball tournament.

LEFT: LTG Clyde Vaughn, Director of the Army National Guard, talks college basketball with Highlanders from Hustla Company during his recent visit to Joint Base Balad.



ABOVE: Highlanders stand in front of their RG-33 and MaxxPro+ MRAPs with LTG Vaughn at the end of his visit.