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THURSDAY DECEMBER 17, 2009



Photo by Lance Cpl. Damary S. Coleman

Service members, friends and families placed balsam fir wreaths on more than 15,000 headstones at the Arlington National Cemetery Dec. 12. A row after row of these stone figures bore the names, ranks and occupations of the men and women who fought for their country, from far back as the Civil War.

'In life they honored their country, in death their country honors them'

LANCE CPL. VICTOR A. BARRERA
Marine Corps Base

All was quiet, there was no laughter, no chatter, not even the children spoke. Everyone knew this was a sacred and hallowed place. It is where family and friends come to see their loved ones who died while serving this country. The day began with the sun glinting off the rolling hills of marble, flowing across the land as far as the eye could see. Hundreds of thousands of men, brothers, sisters and mothers were here, all of whom gave the ultimate sacrifice fighting with honor, courage and the utmost commitment for their country in conflicts from as far back as the Civil War.

It was a bitter cold day, but the sun

warmed up the faces that reflected off of the rows of white headstones in Arlington National Cemetery. They stood as symbols of service and sacrifice, but this time they did not stand alone.

On Dec. 11, 55 Marines with Marine Corps Combat Service Support School, Camp Johnson, N.C., embarked on a seven-hour trip that would take them to Arlington, Va., the final resting place for more than 300,000 service members, civilians and presidents.

The Marines came to pay their respects to service members who came before them and those who made the ultimate sacrifice. For many Marines, this was the first time visiting the cemetery.

"It's a new experience for me," said

Pfc. Dennise Alava, a student with MCCSSS. "I came to pay my respects and show my gratitude for those who fought for this country."

What started out with a few dozen friends laying 5,000 wreaths in a corner of Arlington in 1992, blossomed to thousands of people coming to lay wreaths every second Saturday of December from places as far as California, Washington and Florida. The amount of wreaths placed on the headstones now totals more than 15,000.

Although the numbers are staggering, each wreath is placed with tender care and thought.

Wreath-layers were asked to take one wreath and then take the time to select one hero to honor with a

wreath and if they have a religious preference, a prayer.

Throughout the cemetery Marines took time out of the day to stand, kneel or sit by a grave and offer a prayer, talk or shed a few tears for someone they never knew.

The Marines placed their wreaths covering an entire section of the cemetery, however, they weren't quite finished, they still had wreaths to lay at one more section of Arlington. A section often called "the saddest acre in America."

The United Service Organization sponsored 1,000 extra wreaths for section 60, the final resting place for fallen service members from the wars

SEE ARLINGTON 3A ▶

BELMOPAN, BELIZE

SCMAGTF Marines, sailors lend helping hand in Belize

SGT. HEATHER BREWER
Security Cooperation Marine Air-Ground Task Force

Marines from the recently organized Security Cooperation Marine Air-Ground Task Force, which is currently deployed to the U.S. Southern Command area of focus, arrived in Belize recently. While there, they will work as part of Southern Partnership Station-Amphib 2009. Participating in the Theater Security Cooperation event are Marines and sailors from Company F, 2nd Battalion, 9th Marine Regiment; 8th Communication Battalion; engineers from 2nd Marine Expeditionary

Force Headquarters Group; and a fly-in Dental Echelon from Marine Corps Base, Camp Lejeune, N.C.

The detachment has a myriad of projects they are involved with in Belize, according to Capt. Jason R. Dempsey, the Belize detachment officer in charge.

"The ground combat element has been conducting military-to-military training with the Belize Defense Force. Their cross training with the BDF included basic and urban patrolling, setting up entry and exit control points, heavy weapons implementation, combat lifesaving training, and basic hand-to-hand tactics through the Marine Corps Martial Arts Program," said

Dempsey. "The logistics combat element was able to provide an assortment of humanitarian projects for the Garden City Primary School. They were able to repaint all seven buildings of the school and pour three sidewalks and a lunch pad.

Additionally, they installed ceiling fans, which had been donated before the Marines' arrival. The detachment also has Navy dental personnel who are providing oral care for the children of the school plus their parents if they want."

With any luck, the effects of the work being done for the community by the Marines and sailors will be long lasting.

"As a native of Belize, I find that our work has great benefits to the people here because half the time, proper dental care gets put on the back burner due to cost," said Petty Officer 3rd Class Carleton Daniels, a hospital corpsman with 2nd Dental Battalion. "Hopefully, this will make a positive impression on the people of Belize."

Maj. Gen. Cornell A. Wilson Jr., commander of U.S. Marine Corps Forces South, echoed Daniels' hopes during a visit to the work sites in Belize.

"Having a presence here means that the people of Belize have an

SEE BELIZE 3A ▶

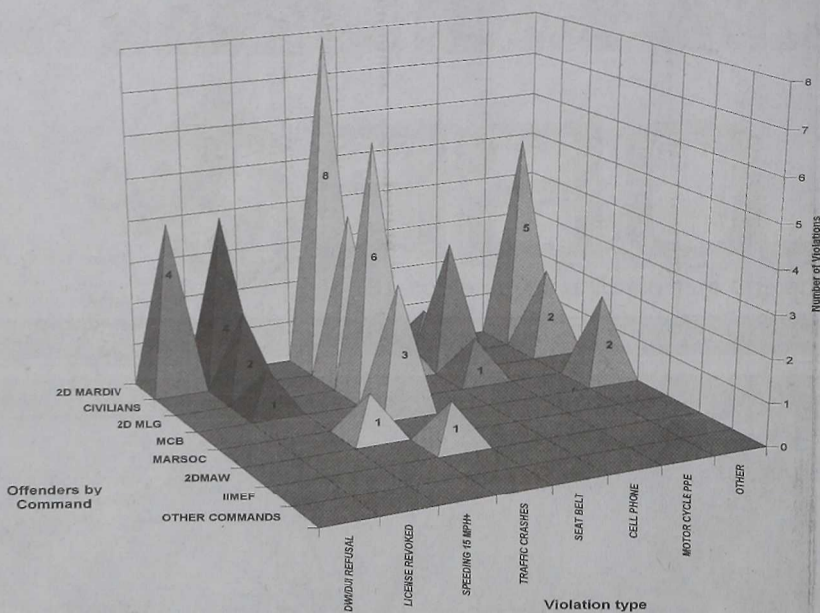
AROUND THE GLOBE



AFFGHAN VILLAGERS
EMBRACE MARINES
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LIVES 3C
CALIFORNIA LIVING 1D

Traffic violations aboard Camp Lejeune



This graph represents traffic violations and driving while intoxicated / driving under the influence refusals for Camp Lejeune during the week of Dec. 7 through Dec. 11. Traffic violations are defined as: driving while license revoked, speeding in excess of 15 mph or over, traffic crashes, seatbelt, cellular telephone and motorcycle personal protective equipment violations.
Source: Command Inspector General's Office for Marine Corps Base Camp Lejeune

Legal Advice

Deployment, lease termination

M.S. ARCHER
Marine Corps Installations East

In his Dec. 1 speech at the Military Academy at West Point, the president outlined his military strategy for Afghanistan, which includes the deployment of 9,000 additional Marines to the region, beginning in January. Accordingly, now is a good time to review the rights deploying members have to terminate a residential lease.

Ordinarily, a renter is obligated to pay rent up through the end of the lease term. If the renter vacates early, he is still obligated to pay rent through the end of the lease, or at least until such time as another renter moves in and begins paying rent. In addition, there may be other costs the vacating renter must pay, such as costs associated with re-renting the premises.

In the case of a military deployment, section 535 of a federal law, the Service member Civil Relief Act (50 U.S. Code Appx 535) changes the rules, giving renters a break when the early move out results from answering the call to duty. In order to terminate a lease early under the SCRA, the member must present

the landlord with a written notice saying that he is ending the lease due to deployment or permanent change of station orders. This notice must be accompanied by a copy of those orders or a letter from the commanding officer confirming the requirement of the member to deploy or to execute a PCS move.

The lease terminates, as does the renter's obligation to pay, 30 days after the next rental payment is due. For example, if the proper written notice is provided Dec. 28, and rent is due on the fifth day of each month, the lease terminates 30 days after Jan. 5. The actual date of deployment or execution of PCS orders is irrelevant to the determination of the lease termination date. The termination of a lease under the SCRA also terminates any obligations of resident family members to pay rent.

North Carolina law also provides certain rights to service members to terminate a lease early (NC Gen Stat 42-45). The deploying service member therefore has a choice of laws under which to terminate the lease. Termination under North Carolina law, like the federal law, occurs 30 days after the

next rental payment is due after notice is provided (but caps this amount at 45 days). However, renters who use North Carolina law to terminate are liable to pay a penalty if vacating after less than nine months. The penalty is equal to one month's rent if vacating after less than six months, and half a month's rent for those vacating after renting for six to nine months. Accordingly, it is almost always more cost effective for renters to use the federal law to terminate, thereby avoiding the penalty under the state law.

If you are vacating after nine months and would otherwise wind up paying more than 45 days rent under the SCRA due to the timing of the notice, you will pay less by terminating under the state law.

Additional information concerning early lease termination, the text of the federal statute, and sample letters from tenants and commanding officers can be found at the web site of the Staff Judge Advocate, MCB / MCIE. Go to: www.marines.mil/unit/mcieast/sja/Pages/default.aspx. Then click on "legal assistance" and then "landlord and tenant."

Naval hospital H1N1 vaccine clinics

Naval Hospital Camp Lejeune will administer the H1N1 Influenza vaccine to all eligible military spouses, retirees and their family members at the Tarawa Terrace II Community Center (Bldg. TT44) located on Tarawa Boulevard today from 9 a.m. to 6 p.m.

Additionally, those listed as high risk below, are highly

encouraged to get the H1N1 vaccine:

- Pregnant women.
- People who live with or provide care for infants younger than 6 months (e.g., parents, siblings, and day care providers).
- Health care and emergency medical services personnel.
- People 6 months

through 24 years of age (especially those with higher risk for influenza-related complications like children younger than 5 years and those who have high risk medical conditions).

- People 25 through 64 years of age who have certain medical conditions that put them at higher risk for influenza-related

complications.

Eligible military members must present a military ID to receive a vaccination.

For more information please visit the Naval Hospital Web site at <http://lej-www.med.navy.mil> or call the Naval Hospital immunization information line at 450-4648 and select option 1.

Flip Flop Doodles

By Matt Kellogg



MAN ON THE STREET

"Are you spending more or less on the holiday season?"



Petty Officer 3rd Class Brandon Deve
Joint Maritime Training Center, Training Command, Marine Corps Base Camp Lejeune, Hagatna, Guam

"More, I have a 6-month-old baby and a new house."



Cpl. Andrew Blackwell
Truck Company, Headquarters Battalion, 2nd Division, Westminister, S.C.

"More because I'm getting caught on my shopping states."



Cpl. Donald Richards
Company A, 2nd Combat Engineer Battalion, 2nd Division, Kalamazoo, Mich.

"More just because they want and getting myself off of the things I want but keep off."



Doris Payne
Marine Corps Exchange Employee, Jacksonville, Fla.

"More because I've employed this year have more money."



Staff Sgt. Garrison Busker
Reserve Support Unit, Deployment Processing Center, Marine Corps Base Camp Lejeune, Fort Worth, Texas

"Average, in circumstances have changed much."

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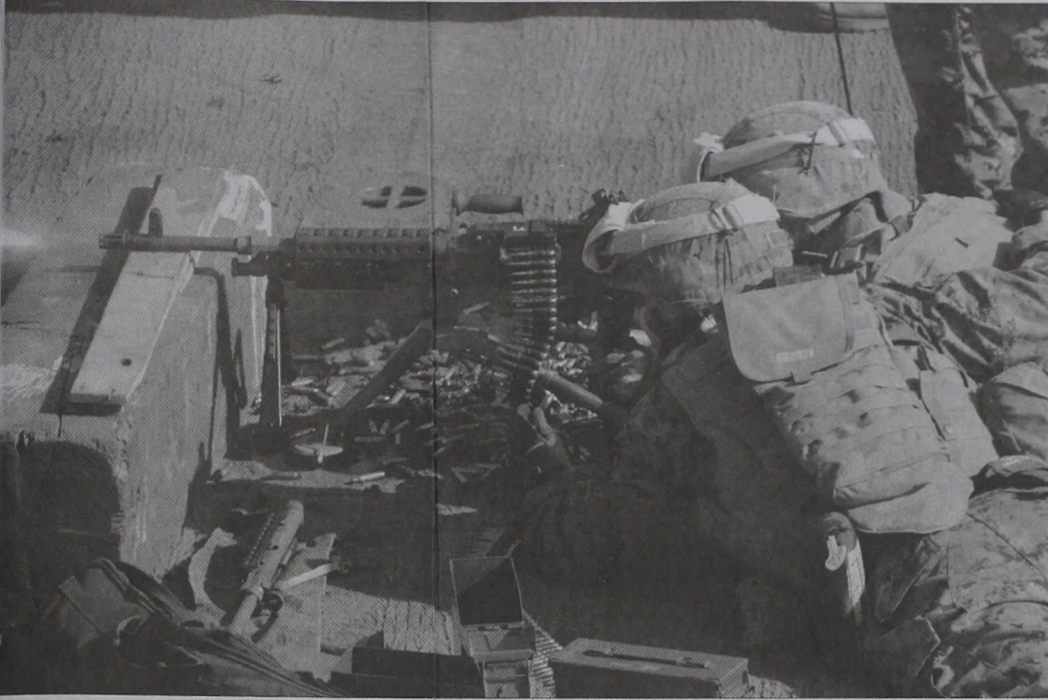
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Marines conduct shipboard combat marksmanship exercise



Photos by Petty Officer 3rd Class David Smart assigned to Company F, 2nd Battalion, 9th Marine Regiment, currently deployed onboard the multi-purpose amphibious assault ship USS Wasp (LHD 1) fire an M-240B machine gun during a combat marksmanship shooting exercise on the flight deck Friday. The Wasp is currently deployed on Southern Partnership Station-Amphib with Destroyer Squadron 40 and embarked Security Cooperation Marine Air-Ground Task Force.



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Photo by Lance Cpl. Dwight A. Henderson
Sgt. Stephen G. Patten, a squad leader with Company G, 2nd Battalion, 2nd Marine Regiment, talks to a local villager during a patrol through the fields and town of Amir Agha, in Garmsir, Afghanistan, Dec. 2.

HELMAND PROVINCE, AFGHANISTAN

Afghan villagers embrace Marines Afghan forces after months of hiding



Photo by Cpl. Dwight A. Henderson
Lance Cpl. Christopher G. Chestnut, a rifleman with Company G, 2nd Battalion, 2nd Marine Regiment, jumps across a canal during a patrol through the fields and town of Amir Agha, in Garmsir, Afghanistan, Dec. 2.

LANCE CPL. DWIGHT A. HENDERSON
Regimental Combat Team 7

A previous fear of the Taliban would have kept the people of Amir Agha hidden in their compounds, as Marines patrolled through their fields and town. Their willingness to talk increases with a growing sense of security. "We want to help you. We need to talk to you. It is good," said a local village elder, as the Marines passed by his home. Marines from Company G, 2nd Battalion, 2nd Marine Regiment, along with members of the 4th Civil Affairs Group, currently attached to 2nd Battalion, 2nd Marine Regiment, and local members of the

Afghan Border Police patrolled through Amir Agha, in Garmsir, Afghanistan, Dec. 2, to survey the atmosphere of the village. "What we saw today was pretty positive," said Maj. Matt Ciancarelli, the civil affairs group officer for 2nd Battalion, 2nd Marine Regiment. "We have people coming to talk to us, which is good, and they were seeking out the Marines in order to tell them that they're happy we're here, and they're happy that we're looking to join forces with their government in order to help them."

Gulbodin, a local member of the ABP, who operated in the same area just a year before, has seen a significant change in the attitude of the local population. "The situation is good," said Gulbodin, from Nawa. "It has gotten better. The people like us now, they don't hate us." As the Marines walked through the town, scores of children followed closely behind, hoping to get any items that the Marines may be able to give them. The Marines stopped for a few minutes to introduce themselves to the villagers, and ask a few questions about the living conditions and overall situation of the town. The most frequent thing the locals asked for was a new school. The children had not



Photo by Cpl. Dwight A. Henderson
Maj. Matt Ciancarelli, the civil affairs group officer for 2nd Battalion, 2nd Marine Regiment, talks to locals during a patrol through the town and fields of Amir Agha, in Garmsir, Afghanistan, Dec. 2.

attended school because the previous one is now partially destroyed, and is filled with anti-coalition propaganda, which has earned the school the moniker of "the Taliban School." "If they're asking for a school, then that means they feel safe enough that their kids can go to school," said Ciancarelli. The Marines spoke with one of the local teachers, who is willing to teach in the area. The teacher agreed that there is a need for a new school. "I am a teacher," he said. "Wherever there is a school built, I will go and teach there." Along with the Marines, members of the local ABP

came to help with the search compounds. "This helps the Marines with the government, and all locals to see their men step forward." While the Marines started the dialogue with the locals, it will ultimately be the government's job to make the advances and do the work. "This is their lead," said Ciancarelli. "We're here to assist with the development. They've done a great job. They're the ones with the greatest interest in what I've seen in the area so far."

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Photo by Lance Cpl. Walter Marino

Marines with 2nd Combat Engineer Battalion, 2nd Marine Division, conduct combat operations in Now Zad, Afghanistan, during Operation Cobra's Anger, Dec. 4. Operation Cobra's Anger disrupted enemy supply lines and communication in Now Zad, a safe haven for Taliban forces.

Marines blast through Now Zad with assault breacher vehicles

By Lance Cpl. Walter Marino

...vehicle that looks like a hybrid of a tank and bulldozer came to a stop. An enormous blast shrieked through the air and delivered 1,750 pounds of C-4 road ahead.

The Marine Corps assault breacher vehicle, had detonated a route clearing, line breaching, making its first assault in Marine Corps history.

The Marine Corps prepared the ABV crew and vehicle for combat for approximately two years. The morning of Dec. 3, the ABV fired its first line breaching during Operation Anger in Now Zad, Afghanistan.

Due to mass amounts of roadside bombs expected in Now Zad, ABV's way for the operation detonating numerous charges on the path to the Taliban stronghold, Now Zad.

There was no guide for this vehicle. They had to develop their own tactics and procedures. I think that's awesome. It's very rewarding. The project is kind of like a baby. It's pretty amazing to see it all come to-

gether," said Sgt. Jeremy A. Kinsey, an ABV vehicle commander for 2nd Combat Engineer Battalion.

ABV's played a pivotal role in the mission. Its demolition capabilities eliminated the Taliban's IED threat on the Marines' breach into the city.

"A lot of people say the engineer community is the tip of the spear," said Kinsey. "We have a saying: 'if we can't breach it, you can't reach it.' This operation is proving that. 3rd Battalion, 4th Marine Regiment, said that if they didn't have our support, that this mission was a no-go."

The Marines of 2nd CEB referred to the front end of the vehicle as 'Shredder' from the cartoon series, "Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles," because of the vehicle's pointed edges.

"We heard that the Taliban's radio communication said, 'get out, because the big boom is coming,'" said Kinsey. "I'd have to say; just the intimidation factor is enough to make anyone run. I know I wouldn't want 1,750 pounds of C-4 blowing up were I'm at."

A morale effect on the enemy was realized by the ABV Marines.

"I know the Taliban didn't want to give up this position and we took it very quickly," said Kinsey. "All

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26th MEU communications more than just hot air

ANIELLE M. ... Marine Expeditionary ... station this net, ... this net, ... o-five-bravo, radio ... over." ... Translation: "Can you ... now?" ... This was the theme as ... from 26th Marine ... Expeditionary Unit com- ... munication section honed ... kills during a lofted ... munication exercise ... SkySat, which merg- ... modern high-tech com- ... munication equipment ... technology that is ... ed of years old: bal- ... The only difference ... balloons are filled ... helium, made of lak- ... are about 13 feet in ... ter when inflated. ... SkySat is a mature ... ology. However, we ... egrating additional ... ities, such as im- ... aerial photography ... urveys," said Maj.

Roman Vitkovitsky, the MEU's communications officer. "The lofted communications exercise allows us to take receipt of new equipment, demonstrate interoperability and develop (standard operating procedures) to advise us in employment."

Two teams of communicators were sent approximately 200 miles in opposite directions from Camp Lejeune. One team drove to Charleston, S.C. and the other to Richmond, Va. to test the equipment's capabilities.

By floating relay equipment as high as 100,000 feet on a balloon, SkySat can extend the range of military radios from the traditional four miles up to hundreds of miles and allows communicators to overcome terrain features like trees, buildings and mountains.

This isn't the typical balloon on a string. The difference is this string

can be extended up to 600 feet and is strong enough to withstand 40 to 50 knot winds.

The non-tethered balloon's payload is expendable, according to Master Sgt. John Dick, communications chief for the MEU. Controllers on the ground can command the balloon to release the communications equipment, which floats to the ground by parachute. No secret or classified equipment is housed in the payload, so it doesn't have to be recovered after deployment. If it is recovered, it can be sent back to the manufacturer to be reset for future use.

Alternatively, the tethered design allows the balloon to be pulled back to a trailer and the payload retrieved.

"The tethered version was designed to be self contained. (The trailer) has its own power, helium, and the ability to deploy

and retract (the balloon)," said Rob Gribble, with Integrated System Solutions, the company who designed the trailer and wench system. "The tethered system also allows for power to be supplied to its payload."

The tethered balloon can stay up for about 24 hours on three-and-a-half helium tanks.

It just needs to be pulled down once a day to add helium, said Kevin Hess, who is with Aerial Products, the balloon developers.

"Communications is the key to success on the battlefield," said Col. Mark Desens, commanding officer, 26th MEU. "This is an asset that improves command and control by minimizing the impact from factors such as terrain, weather, and distance. The SkySat will improve our mission effectiveness and have a profound effect on our future operations."

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COMBAT OUTPOST NUKHAYB, IRAQ

Cookin up a dust storm; Marines puts TLC back into chow



Photo by Cpl. Joshua Murray

Cpl. Ryan Schmidt, a cook with Marine Wing Support Squadron 472, stacks ham steaks aboard Combat Outpost Nukhayb, Iraq, Nov. 18. Schmidt cooks breakfast by himself daily and gets help from Petty Officer 2nd Class Anastasia Dobbs, a corpsman with MWSS-472, in preparing dinner.

CPL. JOSHUA MURRAY
2nd Marine Aircraft Wing
(Forward)

In a small corner of Iraq known as Combat Outpost Nukhayb, Marines fended for themselves in the chow hall for some time. When they got a hankering for some down-home cooking, someone whipped up a meal on the four-burner stove, but without much extra time in their busy schedules, many found solace in the microwave oven. Cpl. Ryan Schmidt, a cook with Marine Wing Support Squadron 472, intends to make a few changes to the menu.

For nearly two months now, Schmidt has made his mark on COP Nukhayb's kitchen and served the men and women there with the intention of improving and maintaining healthy eating habits.

"You've got a lot of Marines here who lift weights, so I've got to think about protein for them," Schmidt explained. "We try to keep a starch, meat and vegetable without a lot of sweets. I keep away from frying foods and stick with baking because it's better for them, even though it might take a little longer to cook the healthy way."

Schmidt's day consists of waking up hours before anyone else to make sure the Marines and sailors have a hot meal before the day begins, and after nearly five hours of breakfast preparation and serving, he begins dinner preparation. Lunch is the only meal the service members are expected to make on their own.

"I love it here," Schmidt emphasized. "I like seeing the satisfaction on peoples' faces when they get chow. They come in with their eyes glowing and they eat and say thanks, and at least I know that they enjoy it."

Besides a few other augmented Marines from MWSS-472, Schmidt's unit resides on Al Asad Air Base, where mess halls are enormous structures that serve tens of thousands of meals every day. Cooking for a few versus thousands holds pros and cons for Schmidt, because he appreciates the individuality he can bake, boil or sauté into every meal he serves at COP Nukhayb.

"It's not that food at mess halls is bad, but they cook it in such quantity that they can't give it much (tender, loving care)," Schmidt said. "When you cook chow, you have to put

your care into it whether or not like it because it's your own creation. You be here every cooking chow as it my own than else."

Schmidt does all of his time alone though. A makes cooking a ing a nightly hob alongside COP N head chef.

"Being corps put the Marin ourselves, and ing what I do Marines and to cook chow fo well," mentioned ficer 2nd Class Dobbs, a corps MWSS-472. "It way of bonding v It's more like a f way because I Marines my fan from home."

Schmidt, Do even the occasio erby joins in to meal the best wil counterments they their disposal. N the undefined ro deployment may down, those who heads at COP Nul be sure at the ver hot meal will alw the table.

COMBAT OUTPOST NUKHAYB, IRAQ

Deputy commandant for aviation visits Marines in Iraq, discusses future

CPL. JOSHUA MURRAY
Multi National Force - West

There are many questions within the Marine Corps aviation community these days, including airframe transitions, future deployments and combat zone developments. To answer these questions, the Marine Corps sent the deputy commandant for aviation to Al Asad Air Base, Iraq, Nov. 29.

Lt. Gen. George J. Trautman III visited with the Marines of Marine Aircraft Group 26 (Reinforced) to give them a broader perspective of the future of Marine Corps aviation and to answer questions posed by the Marines in a town hall-style meeting.

"I'd really like to hear your questions," said Trautman. "The value of me coming out here to meet with you is to go back and reintegrate my staff's efforts with mine to get you the resources you need to be successful."

A widespread concern was aircraft replacement and the threat it posed to the Marines' careers. For many service members, the years of experience they have gained while working with a particular aircraft will come to an end as more modern airframes replace them. One such example is the MV-22 Osprey, which has slowly rotated

into use throughout the Marine Corps and will eventually replace the CH-46 Sea Knight. This has marked a career-changing transition for many.

"A lot of personal careers are affected by how these transitions go," said Col. James S. O'Meara, commanding officer of MAG-26 (Rein.). "It's a challenge to transition to another (military occupational specialty). The qualifications they have built up won't immediately transfer over. You can move up to that point quicker than (new Marines) because you can transition some of that knowledge and experience, but it is a starting-over point that has its challenges."

O'Meara also spoke personally with Trautman from a commander's viewpoint regarding the safety of MAG-26 (Rein.) personnel.

"It's Iraq, and threats have gone down significantly, but one thing that has not changed is the challenges the aviators have faced from the weather and the terrain, which can easily cause spatial disorientation, especially when the visibility is down or at night," explained O'Meara.

In addition to the residual risks in the operating area, the responsible

SEE VISIT 9A ▶

AL ASAD AIR BASE, IRAQ

Vietnam veteran serves in Iraq

LANCE CPL. MELISSA A. LATTY
Combat Logistics Regiment 27

From the battle at Belleau Wood, where Marines earned the name Devil Dog, to the iconic image of the flag-raising at Iwo Jima, Marine Corps history is embedded in every Marine from their initial training at boot camp and continues to provide inspiration to those who continue to serve. Some veterans of past wars, like Vietnam, are not only holding on to the memories of that time, but are also making new ones while they serve in support of Operation Iraqi Freedom.

The company first sergeant for Transportation Support Company, Combat Logistics Battalion 46, 1st Sgt. Viriato B. Sena, is one of the few Vietnam veterans still left among the ranks of currently serving Marines.

Sena, who joined the Marine Corps in 1973, participated in the evacuation of Vietnam and is now deployed to Iraq during the responsible drawdown of U.S. forces and equipment in Iraq. The military drawdown from Iraq has been noted to be the largest operation of its kind since Vietnam.

During April 1975, Sena, who was attached to Battalion Landing Team, 1st Battalion, 4th Marine Regiment, participated in the evacuation of Saigon, Vietnam while working as part of a security team aboard the ships USS Midway and USS Enterprise.

"There were 10 of us, all combat engineers," Sena said. "Our function was to make sure that Vietnamese civilians brought nothing on to the ship that would jeopardize the mission, such as weapons or grenades."

Once on the ships, the civilians were taken to refugee camps in the Philippine Islands.

Sena then became part of a team of Marines who helped set up more refugee camps for the Vietnamese civilians and provide security for displaced South Vietnamese nationals.

"I was only 19 at the time and it was of an experience," Sena remembers. "It has been a drastic change from those days."

Sena also noticed physical changes first joining the corps 36 years ago. "I'm reminiscing, Sena, a reservist out of duty, R.I., recalled his recent visit to his first duty station at Camp Lejeune."

"I remember being back at Camp Lejeune right before this deployment," Sena said. "I was driving on base with a young Marine and we passed by what used to be an open squad bay. Now the area is a parking lot."

Camp Lejeune, which was a small barn, farm house and temporary quarters back in 1941, has grown to a 24-mile military training facility, according to the official Camp Lejeune web site. The base boasts 11 miles of beach, capable of supporting amphibious operations. There are 78 live-fire ranges, 98 miles of roads, 34 gun positions, 540 tactical zones and a state-of-the-art Military Operations on Urban Terrain training facility.

"Things have changed so much since I was stationed there when I was active duty," Sena said. "Who would have thought I would be back there on the base that I was on and it's now 2009."

Now as the Transportation Support Company first sergeant, Sena is leading his company through the responsible drawdown. Their missions include retrograde of equipment from Al Asad and other forward operating bases in western Iraq and general service support to the Marine Corps.

Sena used his knowledge of the evacuation of Vietnam to prepare his Marines for the Iraq mission in support of the drawdown of Marine forces and gear.

Four months ago, Sena gave a class

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Photo by Lance Cpl. Victor A. Barrera
Cpl. Kenneth C. Jasik, a Basic Public Affairs Specialist Course student at the Defense Information School, Army Base Fort George G. Meade, Md., places a wreath on the headstone of a fallen service member in Arlington National Cemetery.

WREATHS FROM 1A

Iraq and Afghanistan. Alongside the Marines, families of the fallen placed wreaths on the graves of their loved ones. One of the family members present was Ruth Stoner, who lost her son to a Black Hawk crash during first night of Operation Enduring Freedom and is a member of the American Gold Star Mothers. "Sometimes during moments of panic we fear that children will be forgotten," said Stoner. "Seeing a group of strangers paying their respects to their loved ones gives us hope that they will not be forgotten." Although each wreath was a simple one made in balsam fir trees with a bright red bow, they had great impact on people attending. Throughout the ceremony, mothers, fathers, friends and siblings cried they reached out to touch the headstone of a deceased loved one. Each headstone bears the name, rank, military branch, birth date and the day they passed away. Most of the members were in their early to mid-20s, who were not yet to experience a full life, raise a family or get back to see their loved ones. "The goal for Wreaths Across America is to remember the fallen, honor those who serve, and teach our children the value of freedom," said Morrill Worcester, founder of Wreaths Across America. "These families here, they're not just stones, they're not just names, this is our history."

BELIZE FROM 1A

opportunity to interact with U.S. Marines on a personal level. When we provide them with the things they need, it builds a positive image for us," said Wilson. "The military-to-military training events we are participating in also have a significant impact on our relationship with Belizeans because it shows that we are truly partners. When we have the chance to share our similar experiences, it shows them that we are not that different from them."

"I am delighted that we can share military training with the BDF and provide humanitarian assistance. This is a very exciting time for both of our countries - we can learn a lot from one another," he added.

In addition to the training the GCE Marines are providing to the BDF, they are receiving training from them as well.

"The guys from the

BDF are doing great and picking up the techniques we are teaching them very well," said Cpl. Travis Zimmerman, a team leader with Company F, 2nd Battalion, 9th Marines. "They are going to be doing jungle warfare classes for us to teach us about their army and how they do things. We haven't really had a lot of chances to learn about jungle warfare, so we are looking forward to it."

Even with the heavy schedule and amount of physical labor, the Marines and sailors have performed admirably, Dempsey said.

"The detachment has done an incredible job of representing the U.S. through the variety of operations being conducted here," he said. "The detachment was able to build long lasting relationships with the BDF and the people of Belmopan. Those relationships will last long after we depart."

VETERAN FROM 8A

battalion about the difference between the evacuation of Vietnam and the current responsible drawdown of U.S. forces and equipment.

One of these differences is the speed at which U.S. forces are withdrawing. During the Vietnam War, as soon as the fight was over U.S. troops were on their way home.

However, troops in Iraq have stayed past the fight to assist the Iraqis in rebuilding their country

and training their military forces.

"(A contrast of the current drawdown and Operation Frequent Wind is we're taking our time because we're not forced to pull out all at once as we were in the fall of Saigon," he said.

Back in the states, Sena works as a Lt. Supervisor with the Department of Veterans Affairs Police in Boston. He has served a total of 23 years of active duty in the Marine Corps.

VISIT FROM 8A

drawdown of Marines and equipment from Al Anbar province has brought many units near the end of their deployment, which can sometimes mean an increase of on-the-job accidents.

"Almost all incidents happen within the last 30 to 60 days (of a deployment)," O'Meara commented. "Their minds are focused on home and the advanced parties have left, so there is reduced leadership on the flight line. We've historically seen ground mishaps go up during that time, and occasionally there have been aviation mishaps. Statistically we're in a riskier time, but what's different is that we're all going at the same time, rather than normally just a few units. We have to really fight complacency. We really have to manage the risks."

After meeting with the officers of MAG-26 (Rein.), Trautman visited with junior enlisted Marines to discuss their priorities as well.

The day proved a worthy experience for many Marines, who now hold a better understanding of aerial innovations and enhanced perceptions of what the future holds for them and the entirety of Marine Corps aviation.

"Marine aviation has never been in better shape or in better hands," Trautman emphasized. "It's easy for me to be the deputy commandant for aviation when I have Marines like you. As you leave here you should be very proud of yourselves. This is an incredible accomplishment."

"The Marine Corps has made me a better person and has guided me in the right direction," he said. "I love the responsibility that the Marine Corps instills in me to take care of my junior Marines."

"I'm going to stick around for the Marines until they kick me out," Sena joked. "I have a great bunch of Marines in my company. They are the future of the Marine Corps."

VEHICLES FROM 5A

really have left is Marine. To take something so important to the Taliban, so deadly, is like a big slap in the face for them."

what we were capable of. Now that the Marine Corps knows we can (fight), I think we will be used more."

"I was proud and excited to do something that's never been done before in the Marine Corps," said Lance Cpl. Randy J. Davis Jr., an ABV operator for 2nd CEB. "Hopefully it helped the Marine Corps grow. This vehicle allows us to go through rougher terrain faster and I think the percentage of IED's will go

down with the use of this vehicle."

Although the Marines engaged in combat, many wished they could have done more.

"I was actually hoping for more resistance," said Davis. "I think our explosion ran them all off. I was happy to fight for my country. We came out here to kill Taliban and liberate the peaceful people of Now Zad. All the Taliban kicked out the Afghan civilians.

Now were just trying to give them back what's theirs."

The Marines could not be more pleased with the ABV's performance.

"The performance of the new ABV's was outstanding to say the least and I couldn't be happier with the mission and the opportunity," said Davis Jr. "We paved the way for 3rd Battalion, 4th Marine Regiment, Company L to clear the city. I feel it's an honor to fight with my brothers in battle."

"These vehicles have been doing great," said Lance Cpl. Brian S. Rutledge, an ABV mechanic for 2nd CEB. "We haven't needed to do much maintenance with these vehicles. We were right there in case anything broke down, but it didn't. We've done more work for other units than our own."

The tight knit family of the ABV Marines suffered a loss before their deployment. Out of love and respect,

they dedicated their first vehicle to their fellow Marine.

"I dedicated this vehicle in honor of 2nd Lt. Mevey, our first platoon commander who died in a motorcycle accident," Kinsey said. "I think it would mean a lot to him that this ABV was the first to fire a line charge in combat, breach in combat, plow through a compound, and survive an IED blast. I think he would be very proud."

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DEVIL PUPS STIFLE SWANSBORO



Photos by Jamie Cameron

(Top) Lejeune High School's C.J. Crenshaw drives through the heart of the Swansboro High School defense during their Dec. 9 showdown.
(Above) Taylor Bodine splits a pair of Pirate defenders as the Devil Pups beat Swansboro, 48-14.

JAMIE CAMERON
Assistant managing editor

The Lejeune High School varsity boys basketball team is riding a hot streak into the fourth week of the season, most-recently adding Swansboro High School to its growing list of vanquished foes. The Devil Pups traveled to Swansboro, Dec. 9, and came home with a 48-14 victory that was as easy as the lopsided score would indicate.

Having already beaten the Division 2A Pirates once this season, Lejeune was able to concentrate on offensive and

defensive shortcomings identified by head coach Doug Erny.

"We're still making adjustments," said Erny. "We have improved on offense by taking care of the ball and being patient. On defense, we looked at video from our last game against (Swansboro) and identified their best players and how to stop them."

The extra homework paid big dividends for the Devil Pups, who kept the Pirates' offense off the scoreboard for an astounding 13:10 to start the first half. By the time Swansboro banked in its first bucket of the game, Lejeune was cruising with a 23-2 lead that only grew larger as the game wore on.

Led by senior point guard, Tyrone Brooks, the Devil Pups

got the most out of every possession; often making more than 10 passes around the perimeter while they rotated for an open shot. More often than not, it was sophomore, Gavin Allen, making easy lay-ups behind the Swansboro defenders. Allen was also a force to be reckoned with under the defensive boards; rarely allowing the Pirates a second chance to score.

John Aranda took up the task of blanketing the Pirates' top-scorer and smothered his opponent throughout the game.

Four-year Devil Pup, Mikey Elkins, split time with newcomer, Taylor Bodine, as the team's immovable big men underneath the basket. Each player gave a good account of himself during his time on the court.

"Last year we started three freshmen and basically fed them to the wolves," admitted Erny. "Now they're sophomores and their experience is showing through."

C.J. Crenshaw was one of those Devil Pup veterans who helped push the offense forward with timely outside shooting and slashing drives to the basket.

As they move forward this season, Erny said he wants his team to continue to work hard on its weaknesses.

"We watch videotape of every game; break down scouting reports and maintain a good attitude," he said. "We're pretty pleased with the way things have gone so far, but there's still a lot of work to do between now and February."

Winter weather systems give duck hunters reason to hope for opener



Lejeune Outdoors

With Jamie Cameron

Watching the extended weather forecast, I know every waterfowler in Eastern North Carolina is chomping at the bit to get back on the water Saturday for the first day of the late season. The weather for much of the middle season was not conducive to duck movement, but recent storms across the Northern tier and Wednesday's cold front should bring some birds in from the North.

The cooler temperatures have also given a boost to the winter fishing scene, which had all but dried up earlier in the month. As water temperatures drop, speckled trout start to bite and reports from New River, Bogue Sound and along area beaches give everyone hope that 2009 will end with a bang.

According to Richard Ehrenkauf, a.k.a. Dr. Bogus, keeper trout are showing up in all the usual places.

The jetty at Cape Lookout has been productive, with fish in the 2- to 3-pound range coming out of the surf. Live baits almost always outperform artificials, but the trout are also hitting MirrOlures and soft-body grubs.

The sounds and creeks

are also giving up some fish. In addition to the improving speck bite, gray trout and puppy drum are making their presence felt. All three inshore species can be caught using the same techniques, so it's quite likely anglers can come home with a mixed bag for some fine holiday meals.

Just offshore, the tautog have moved in to their winter habitat. These are bottom fish that hang around hard structure like artificial reefs and rock piles.

Tautog have powerful, chisel-like teeth and can pull as any reef fish around. Terminal tackle that can put up with the sharp structural edges of this underwater environment are key to putting some fish in the boat. Tautog specialize in eating hard-shelled crustaceans. Small, live crabs make excellent baits, though some fishermen swear by frozen mole crabs, collected during the summer months and stored away specifically for the winter tautog run. Places to try your luck include the port wall in Morehead City, the Radio Island rock jetty and Artificial Reef 315.

As always during the winter, check the local forecast before you throw lines from the dock; the

ocean in December is an unforgiving place.

Just a bit farther offshore, there are giants being caught. The North Carolina bluefin tuna fishery has begun in earnest and charter boats are catching the dickens out of these magnificent beasts that can weigh up to 800 pounds when they reach our waters. Bluefins are the piscatorial equivalent of a freight train, and heavy tackle is an absolute necessity. Not many recreational fishermen have the 130-pound class reels required to outlast a bluefin, but the local charter fleet has done an excellent job in mastering what it takes to succeed. If you want to catch the fish of a lifetime, and do it from as little as 12 miles from the beach, head down to the docks and find out which captains are putting their clients on the fish.

If battling for hours on end with a fish that can

make a grown man cry isn't your cup of tea, the king mackerel bite is still popping on the East side of Cape Lookout Shoals. Don't be surprised, however, if a bait gets hit and the line on your reel screams off toward Portugal. Bluefins tend to swim in the same areas as the kings.

I put away my deer rifle a couple of weeks ago, but anyone who keeps up online with white-tailed hunting in North Carolina is well aware there have been some absolute monsters harvested this season. If I had any room left in my freezer, I'd be in the woods looking for a wall-hanger of my very own.

Most recently, I just returned from a weekend trip to Florida to hunt wild pigs in the orange groves around Tampa, but that is a story for another day.

Until next week, good luck out there.



Photo by Jamie Cameron

Brian Degan, left, and Nate Bacheler show off the spoils of a recent swamp hunt with Maple, the yellow Labrador retriever.



Have you been on an outdoor adventure lately? Share your photos, send them to jamie.cameron@militarynews.com

TIDE TABLES FOR NEW RIVER INLET

National Oceanographic and Atmospheric Administration

THURSDAY		
High tide	7:52 a.m.	8:09 p.m.
Low tide	1:18 a.m.	2:26 p.m.
FRIDAY		
High tide	8:31 a.m.	8:49 p.m.
Low tide	1:58 a.m.	3:04 p.m.
SATURDAY		
High tide	9:09 a.m.	9:28 p.m.
Low tide	2:38 a.m.	3:41 p.m.
SUNDAY		
High tide	9:46 a.m.	10:09 p.m.
Low tide	3:18 a.m.	4:18 p.m.
MONDAY		
High tide	10:24 a.m.	10:52 p.m.
Low tide	4:00 a.m.	4:54 p.m.
TUESDAY		
High tide	11:03 a.m.	11:38 p.m.
Low tide	4:46 a.m.	5:31 p.m.
WEDNESDAY		
High tide	11:45 a.m.	12:21 p.m.
Low tide	5:36 a.m.	6:09 p.m.

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Bowling tournament

The Toys For Tots Bowling Tournament is scheduled for Sunday at Bonnyon Bowling Center, aboard Camp Lejeune. The format will be scratch 5 pin no tap. Entry fee is \$20 and a new unwrapped toy per participant. They will be awards for both the men's and women's divisions. For more information, call 451-5121.

Church basketball league

The Onslow County Parks and Recreation Department is sponsoring an adult church basketball league. Team registrations will be accepted through Jan. 6. The cost is \$375 per team and \$10 per player. For more information, call 347-5332.

Youth boxing program

Training for future boxers is available with All-Marine Boxing Team head coach, Ron Simms. Classes are held Monday, Wednesday and Friday, from 5:30 to 7 p.m., at the Area 3 Gymnasium aboard Camp Lejeune. Youth athletes ages 8 through 17 are invited to join and learn self-confidence, hand-eye coordination, balance, offensive and defensive techniques and, most of all, have fun. The cost for one year of instruction is \$30 per child. Additional family members pay \$20 annually. This opportunity is open to all authorized personnel. For more information, call 451-2629.

Mountain bike training

Both veteran and inexperienced mountain bikers are invited to participate in weekly training rides, held every Tuesday and Thursday until Feb. 25. The rides take place from 11:30 a.m. until 12:30 p.m. at the Brig Trail aboard Camp Lejeune. The rides are open to all authorized patrons, age 12 and up. Cyclists under 18 must be accompanied by an adult. For more information, call 451-8499.

Ski trip

It's not too early to start planning for the MCCA-organized ski trip to Sugar Mountain, scheduled for Jan. 15 through 18. Call 451-1440 for information.

Marine by trade, hunter at heart

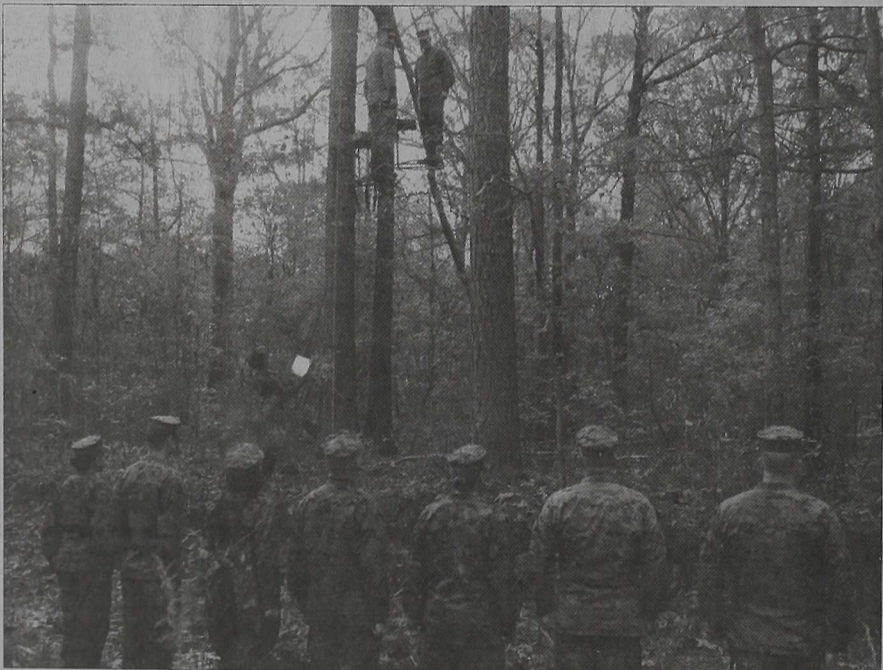


Photo by Lance Cpl. Jonathan Wright

Master Sgt. Anthony T. Ball, corrections specialist with Headquarters and Support Battalion, Marine Corps Base Camp Lejeune, and Chief Warrant Officer 2 John J. Nolan, corrections officer with the battalion, pose in a hunting tree stand during Ball's re-enlistment ceremony, Dec. 10. Ball thought up the idea while dragging a deer out from the woods recently, thinking it would be fitting to have his re-enlistment in his tree stand.

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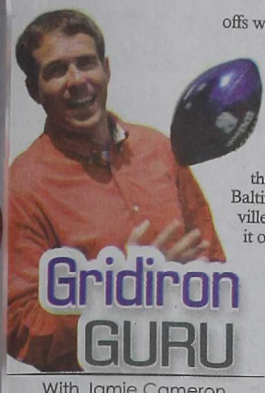
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AFC playoff picture becomes clouded



Gridiron GURU
With Jamie Cameron

offs would make for some great television. Speaking of the AFC, could the wild card race be any more confused than it is now? Miami, the New York Jets, Baltimore and Jacksonville are all 7-6, battling it out behind Denver (8-5) for the last berth into the playoffs. This is going to be interesting. For the third time this season, I was perfect in picking my five games of the week. The

to grow with every snap of the football. I don't see any letdown from the Titans' offense in this game; it's the defense that will have to come up with enough stops to get in front and stay there. Pick: Tennessee

Cincinnati (9-4) at San Diego (10-3)

It's the game of the week, on paper. The Bengals face their second big test in two weeks after failing miserably against the Vikings, Dec. 13. Cincinnati is all about defense and I'm betting the recent embarrassment at the hands of Adrian Peterson and company will light the fires in the bellies of the Bengals. The Chargers, on the other hand, are streaking toward the playoffs, with eight straight wins; some of them against serious competition. San Diego's offense is firing on all cylinders, with Phillip Rivers playing as well as any quarterback in the league and LaDanian Tomlinson getting the most out of his waning career as a featured running back. The Chargers' defense is playing well enough to make the Bengals cherish every point they get, especially since they'll be playing on the road. Cincinnati has proven it can bounce back after a tough loss, but I'm not so sure this time. Pick: San Diego

Green Bay (9-4) at Pittsburgh (6-7)

This match-up features two teams going in opposite directions. The Green Bay Packers have won five games in-a-row, thanks to the improved play of the offensive line. With the starters back from injury, Aaron Rodgers has the time he needs to find his top receiving threats; Donald Driver and Greg Jennings. Green Bay's defense is playing better as well. If only the Packers had been able to split their 2-game series with the hated Minnesota Vikings and they could have been thinking about an NFC North championship instead of a wild card berth. On the other hand, the Pittsburgh Steelers are

trying to finish the season with some of their dignity intact. Even Ben Roethlisberger's return from injury two weeks ago hasn't helped stop the fall. In fact, since Roethlisberger's return to the huddle, the Steelers have lost back-to-back games against league bottom-dwellers; Oakland and Cleveland. Coach Mike Tomlin promised to shake up his line-up for last week's game and didn't do it. I think you can bet he'll make good on his word this time, but it's not going to help. Pick: Green Bay

Cleveland (2-11) at Kansas City (3-10)

In keeping with the tradition of picking one doggo a week, here's Week 15's worst game. The Browns

played a great game to beat Pittsburgh, Dec. 10 and have the added bonus of getting a few extra days to prepare for this one. Head coach Eric Mangini may have saved his job by beating the defending Super Bowl champs, but I'm guessing he feels the need to at least win two or more games for security. Playing Kansas City might get Cleveland on its first winning streak of the season, but the Browns have a way of playing down to their competition. This is also a game the Chiefs must be licking their chops to play. Kansas City is more talented than Cleveland, but infuriatingly inconsistent when it comes to effort. Pick: Cleveland

Atlanta (6-7) at New York Jets (7-6)

Many people wrote off the Falcons' chances after starting quarterback, Matt Ryan and running back, Michael Turner went down with injuries, but the team has held up admirably. Atlanta almost beat New Orleans last week without them, and can build on that effort to make a run at a playoff spot. Chris Redman has filled in for Ryan and played very well by all accounts. The Falcons travel to face a Jets team fighting for a playoff spot of its own. New York has won three straight and sits in a logjam of teams looking for an AFC wild card berth at 7-6. In a game featuring back-up quarterbacks, the Jets have the most to gain, and the most to lose. Pick: New York

is it possible we could have a season finale pitting undefeated teams in the Super Bowl? This amazing development continues to evolve. Indianapolis and New Orleans squeaked by their 14 opponents to keep streaks intact. I still believe the Saints have a better chance at finishing 16-0 and making it all the way to the championship. They are a more complete team than the Colts, but it's been a little while since they dominated an opponent (remember Week 12 vs the Patriots). The Colts' coaching staff is likely to start putting their star starters on the bench and recuperate for playoff run. This tactic often employed when Peyton Dundy was the head coach at Lucas Oil Stadium is it's within reason his successor, Jim Caldwell, will follow suit. But wouldn't it be awesome if these two teams did meet up as undefeated juggernauts in Miami? The New England Patriots may have beaten Carolina last week, but new questions have arisen on the team's legendary discipline all-for-one attitude. If he was sent home in practice Dec. 9 for being tardy, wide receiver Edy Moss played one of the worst games of his career. Even the Panthers' backerbacks said publicly they thought Moss quit. Brady threw himself the sword in an effort to deflect some of the criticism from his top receiver, but the Panthers are howling they want this day would come. Moss is heading back to his old ways of selfish maturity, New England's chances for post-season success will most certainly be cut out. We already know Indianapolis and New Orleans will be forces to be reckoned with, but there are a few others making their way up the ladder. The Philadelphia Eagles played a great game against the New York Giants and, putting them in the driver's seat atop the NFC East. San Diego is playing some fantastic football these days too. A Chargers/Colts showdown in the AFC play-

Miami (7-6) at Tennessee (6-7)

The Dolphins have given themselves a shot by winning their last two games (against AFC East rival New England and wild card contender Jacksonville). Chad Henne is throwing the ball better than he has all season and the Miami receivers are stepping up. The running back committee is down to one, and Ricky Williams is reminding people why he was considered a premier rusher back in the day. More importantly, the Dolphins' defense is playing with a chip on its shoulder and making opponents pay heavily for every yard gained. If Miami is to win this crucial game on the road, the defense must find a way to minimize Tennessee's Chris Johnson and Vince Young, and the offense must hold onto the ball like grim death. Tennessee may have missed its chance at a miraculous turnaround that would have put them back in the playoffs, but don't tell the Titans they're out of it yet. Johnson had another huge game against the Rams last week and Young's confidence as a starter continues

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- In the event of a tie between perfect (10) picks, the tie breaker will be closest to total points scored in designated Monday night's tie breaker game.
- If there is still a tie, the winner will be picked out of a hat.
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GAME 10 - BUCCANEERS VS. SEAHAV

Lady Devil Pups struggle with non-conference schedule

JAMIE CAMERON
Assistant managing editor

Lejeune High School's varsity girls basketball team made a run in the fourth quarter, but it wasn't enough to overcome Wilmington Christian Academy during a non-conference game, Monday. The Lady Devil Pups lost, 36-21.

The Lady Patriots jumped out to an early lead in the first quarter by taking advantage of numerous Lady Devil Pups' turnovers. Lejeune tried to establish inside presence at the start of the game, but WCA's superior height and swarming defense made it difficult to get the ball into the hands of the team's post players: Ashley Robertson and Anna Coots. Down 14-3 after the first quarter, the Lady Devil Pups tried to bump up the tempo by turning to their perimeter guards. Jasmine Davis and Kristie Moss fought at the teeth of the Lady Patriot defense and managed to keep pace offensively through the second quarter, and went into the halftime break down 22-13.

Lejeune struggled again in the third quarter, scoring just one basket while their opponents increased the deficit to 31-13.

Davis managed to turn the tide in the final stanza with the help of fellow sophomore, Aaliyah Lucky. After struggling to find her shooting stroke throughout the game, Lucky found her rhythm in the fourth quarter. The team also managed to free up shooters for some easy buckets underneath the hoop. Lejeune's next home game is scheduled for Jan. 19 when the Lady Devil Pups take on North Duplin High School. Tip-off is set for 6 p.m.



Photo by Jamie Cameron
Lejeune's, Jasmine Davis, drives to the basket during Monday's game against Wilmington Christian Academy.

Photo by Jamie Cameron
Lady Devil Pup, Aaliyah Lucky, spots up for a jump shot against a Wilmington Christian Academy defender. Lejeune lost Monday's home game by the score of 36-21.

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Combine health, holidays through canning



With the holidays quickly approaching many of us are looking for creative gift ideas. One idea may be home canned foods. Home canned foods are making a comeback and rightly so, given the current economy.

Health & Fitness

Amber DeVore, RD, LDN, CSSD
Senior Fit Health Promotion Dietitian

In addition to their obvious nutritional value, canned goods are

one way to decorate the kitchen — from colorful peppers to pickles, home canned items add a pop of color to the décor.

During the winter months, most local fresh produce is unavailable, adding another great reason for canning. Canning fruits and vegetables allows for the preservation of foods, as long as they are canned immediately after being picked from the garden. Canning removes oxygen and enzymes that cause deterioration of produce. In general, canning does not significantly affect most nutritional values of food. The exceptions are vitamins A and C, which are lost due to the heating stage of canning. The 2005 Dietary Guidelines for Americans encourage consumers to increase their intake of fruits and vegetables, whether canned, frozen, fresh or dried. One should always consider that although you may be buying fresh produce from a store, this produce may have come from Costa Rica or other countries that require a long trip before reaching store shelves. Produce begins losing nutrients immediately after being harvested.

Canning isn't for everyone, it is labor intensive. Here is some basic information about canning: Use only standard jars when canning (also called Mason jars). Do not re-use commercial marmalade or pickle jars for home canning. Canning jars must be in good condition. Always check for cracks or chips, any damage to them may cause failure to properly seal.

There are two main types of canners; water bath and pressure canners. Always clean produce thoroughly before canning. Always check canned foods for signs of spoilage before consuming. Look for leakage, bulging or loss of seal which may be signs of spoilage. When in doubt throw it out.

To learn more about canning, contact your extension service or find info online at the National Center for Home Food Preservation's site.

If you are interested in learning more about nutrition, please attend the Semper Fit Health Promotion Education Workshop. This class is open to all Department of Defense identification holders. Call 451-2865 for upcoming workshop dates and to register for the class. Limited spots are available.



Members of the Lacrosse team scrimmage each other, working on set plays to get the ball in the net aboard Marine Corps Air Station Miramar. Members of the team encourage anybody to come out to practice and play in games throughout the year.

MARINE CORPS AIR STATION MIRAMAR, CALIF.

Little known lacrosse team has big time dreams

LANCE CPL. MANUEL F. GUERRERO
Marine Corps Air Station Miramar

The Marine Corps currently sanctions 23 All-Marine teams, ranging from basketball to chess, but not for the oldest Northern American sport created.

More than 20 Marines from military installations across Southern California meet aboard Marine Corps Air Station Miramar every Saturday morning and Wednesday afternoon to practice lacrosse.

The team started four years ago when Christopher R. Castleberry, team captain, started recruiting Marines interested in the

sport. Marines interested can join anytime as long as they have gear for practices and scrimmages.

In the past five months, the team has seen an influx of Marines interested in joining the physical sport, which has helped them get recognition.

"Marines are always approaching us during practice all the time," said Nicholas S. Samaras, a midfielder for the squad. "It's encouraging to see people interested."

The bid to make the team an All-Marine team has not come without work. Members of the team play against college and semi-professional teams, and they competed in the 2009 Hawaii Lacrosse Invitational. They

are also slated to host a Wounded Warrior tournament next year, bringing top lacrosse competition to the air station.

Some members of the team have had dialogue with Headquarters Marine Corps regarding how to make lacrosse an All-Marine sport. The progress has been slow, but everything they do is geared on recognizing them as All-Marine, commented Castleberry.

"We've pushed it pretty hard," said Castleberry, who hopes to have an All-Marine lacrosse team by next year. "We're staying with it and doing the right things to get recognized."


Since the team has expanded recently, members

can now focus on building team camaraderie and playing the game they love.

"We're definitely starting to get more of a bond as a team lately," said Brian J. Foersch, an attacker for the team.

The fast-paced and physical game of lacrosse is played on a 110 yard-long field with four quarters ranging from 10 to 15 minutes. Teams play 11-players deep with four key positions: goalie, defenseman, mid-fielders and attackers.

Although the team does not have a set name, members know that if they stay the course, they will have an All-Marine team when it's all said and done.



The U.S. Marine Corps announces the availability of the Final Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) assessing the potential environmental impacts of the Grow the Force initiative at Marine Corps Base Camp Lejeune, Marine Corps Air Station (MCAS) New River, and MCAS Cherry Point, NC. By the end of Fiscal Year 2011, the Marine Corps plans to permanently increase its military and civilian personnel by about 9,900 across the three installations.

The public may download an electronic version of the Final EIS by visiting the project website at: www.GrowTheForceNC.com. The waiting period for the Final EIS will end 30 days after publication of the Notice of Weekly Receipts in the Federal Register by the Environmental Protection Agency. For further information or to request a paper or CDROM copy of the Final EIS, please contact the EIS Project Manager at the address below:

USMC Grow the Force in North Carolina EIS Project Manager
Naval Facilities Engineering Command Mid-Atlantic, Code BMEV31
Building C, Room 3012, 6506 Hampton Blvd.
Norfolk, VA 23508-1278

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Matthew, 8
I wish to be a pilot

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Demolition
AMCC and IT residents
celebrate last demolition
of 1950s homes | 3C

ROYAL NETHERLAND MARINE CORPS BASE, CAMP SUFFISANT, CURACAO



Photo by Pfc. Andrew D. Johnston
(Top) A Marine with II Marine Expeditionary Force, Force Reconnaissance Company, ascends to the surface as he advances toward the shoreline during a closed-circuit amphibious reconnaissance exercise. (Above) A Navy Special Amphibious Reconnaissance corpsman, with II MEF, Force Recon Company, participates in the water obstacle off the Caribbean coast of Curacao. (Below) A Marine with II MEF, Force Reconnaissance Company, plunges into the water as he takes part in an open-circuit diving exercise.

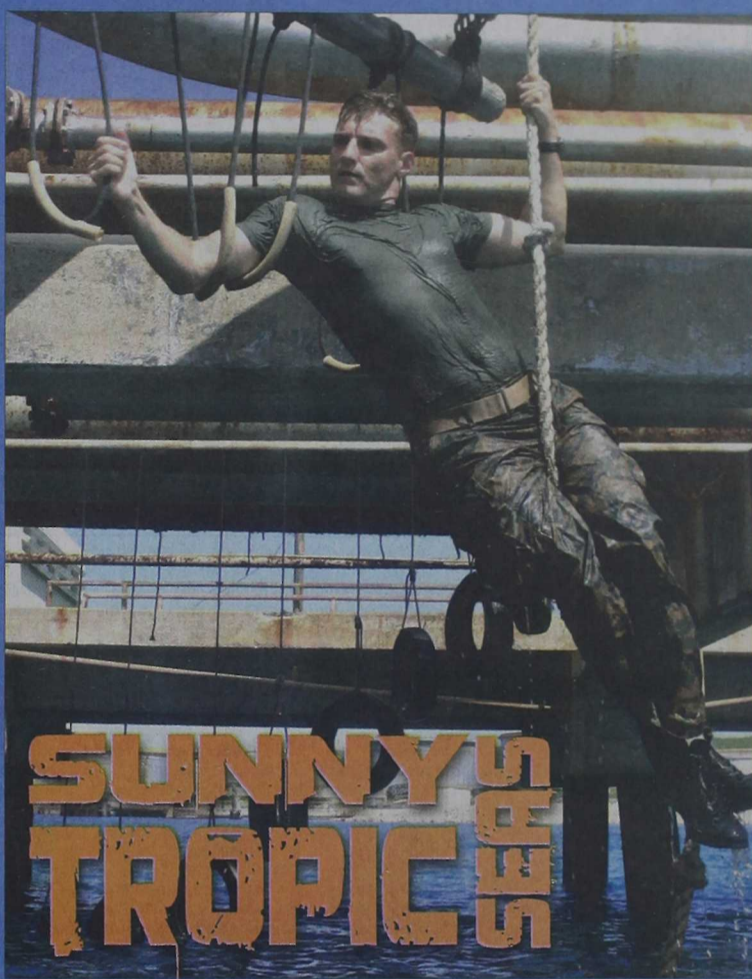


Photo by Pfc. Andrew D. Johnston
A Marine with II Marine Expeditionary Force, Force Reconnaissance Company, participates in the Danish's water obstacle off the Caribbean coast of Curacao. The course consisted of more than a dozen obstacles all of which required participants to tread water in-between.

Force Recon trains in Caribbean

PFC. ANDREW D. JOHNSTON
2nd Marine Division

Not far off a rooster crowed into the air, as if it were an ordinary morning. The early crack of dawn peeked through the clouds, filling the sky with an array of tropical colors, setting a lighter tone for the week's extensive training schedule that lay ahead.

As part of a three-week bilateral training operation that started Oct. 25, with the Royal Netherlands Marine Corps, Maritime Special Operations Force, more than 45 Marines and sailors with II Marine Expeditionary Force's Force Reconnaissance Company

packed into a small convoy of white trucks and vans and headed for Curacao's coast, to kick off their first week of training and diving head first into a sea of amphibious exercises that would test their unit's underwater capabilities and fine-tune their pre-existing skills.

The sounds of Curacao's daily bustle filled the atmosphere as the group drove along the twisting roads of the inner city. Small pastel and terracotta colored homes flashed by as locals honked their horns during the morning rush hour.

As the group traveled farther and farther away from the city, the noises silenced and the houses disappeared. Only a slight breeze could be heard as exotic tree limbs

appeared to move about in the desolate Caribbean air.

As the winding road neared their destination, a tunnel of thick desert foliage engulfed the convoy, leaving just enough space for the largest vehicle to make it through. At the end of the tunnel, a crescent shaped cove, surrounded by palm trees and cactus-covered cliffs, welcomed them as their trip came to a halt. Although their day had begun three hours prior, the real work had just begun.

"For the platoon, this is their dive package," said 1st Lt. Colin J. Carroll, executive officer for Force Reconnaissance Company, II MEF. "In order for them to be chopped to a (Marine Expeditionary Unit) they have to establish that they are proficient in all

amphibious aspects. This is their opportunity to train for that."

During the week, Marines were able to observe and work with Dutch Marines, allowing the unit to build stronger foreign relations and work with allied forces.

"Lets not forget one of the main reasons we came down here," said Navy Master Chief, Mark M. Leet, a master diver assigned to 2nd Reconnaissance Battalion, 2nd Marine Division. "This gets them operating with foreign nations. (The Dutch) dive with very similar equipment and have very similar missions. We get to sit down and go over procedures with them. We pick up a couple of tricks from them; they

SEE RECON 3C ▶

Honoring fallen heroes of 'America's Battalion'

CLAYTON L. VONDERAHE
Marine Division

Marines and sailors of 2nd Battalion, 8th Marine Regiment, 2nd Marine Division gathered together with the families and friends of the battalion's fallen Marines at the base theater aboard Marine Corps Base Camp Lejeune, Dec. 4, to pay respect to those who laid down their lives in their recent deployment.

The 2nd Battalion deployed to Helmand province Afghanistan in spring of 2001 in support of Operation Enduring Freedom, said Maj. Tom Garnett, the battalion's executive officer. While there, they provided the first presence of Marines in the region, provided security for the local population and helped train the local Afghan forces.

The battalion established several combat outposts in a highly dangerous area, including Gunnersy Sgt. Kevin R. Mays, the battalion's operations chief.

"We set up multiple positions to help the area of insurgency and carry out our president's mission," said Mays. "There was nothing when we arrived, and we made it up as strategic as possible."

During their six-month deployment, 13

Marines were killed in action during the frequent firefights and engagements. A memorial was held in honor of the ultimate sacrifice these Marines made.

The memorial featured a solemn monument, reminiscent of field expedient headstones for past battlefields, consisting of a pair of boots, rifle, helmet, and dog tags in front of a portrait of each of the fallen Marines. An invocation initiated the service and was followed by two scripture readings. Lt. Col. Christian G. Cabaniss, the commanding officer for the battalion, shared his heartfelt remarks and U.S. Navy Lt. Terry A. Roberts, the battalion's chaplain, offered a pastoral reflection and words of support to those who suffered loss.

"Some would say we only lost 13 and that our losses could have been a lot greater in number, but for us who have lost, the loss is 100 percent," said Roberts during his reflection.

Before the traditional final roll call and the playing of taps, personal reflections were given for each fallen Marine by a friend or mentor who had served with him, sharing thoughts and memories with the audience. After each speaker had

SEE HONORING 2C ▶



Photo by Pfc. Clayton Vonderahe
A Marine pays respect to a fallen friend at a ceremony held Dec. 4 at the base theater aboard Marine Corps Base Camp Lejeune, for the Marines of 2nd Battalion, 8th Marine Regiment, 2nd Marine Division who lost their lives in their previous deployment. The ceremony honored those Marines with the traditional field expedient headstone of boots, rifle, helmet and dog tags, along with reflections from friends and mentors whom they had served with.

Manning named Superior Achievement Award recipient



Photo by Col. Annita Best

Officer Gary Manning (center) of the Camp Lejeune Civilian Police Force, is flanked by Maj. Timothy Akers, Deputy Provost Marshal, Marine Corps Base, Camp Lejeune (left) and Col. Grover Lewis, assistant Chief of Staff for the Department of Public Safety, immediately following his recognition as the Fall Class 2009 Basic Law Enforcement Training Superior Achievement Award recipient. The award and a check for \$500 were presented by Joe Yanness, chairman of the Jacksonville/Onslow County/Marine Corps Base Crime Stoppers, at the annual awards and recognition lunch Dec. 10. Crime Stoppers provides cash rewards of up to \$2,500 for anonymous tips leading to arrests or apprehensions. For more information, contact the 24-hour hotline 938-3273.

SHOPLIFTING FROM 1C

their pockets. Our 'store detectives' will spot them and follow them with the cameras throughout the entire store."

Camp Lejeune MCCS security does not go by N.C. state law, so they do not approach a person until they have passed the register area and exited the building. In the case of the Main Exchange, the foyer, or food-court area, is where they will be approached.

"Once they enter that area, they've had every

chance in the world to pay for that merchandise and that's when we'll detain them," said Carver.

The person is taken into the security office where they will fill out processing paperwork and wait for the military police to come pick them up. MCCS security stops playing any role in the matter once the MPs have picked up the person.

At the Provost Marshal's Office the stolen merchandise will be retrieved and video footage

will be viewed if needed.

"We apprehend the Marine, advise him or her of their rights, contact the command and release them to their command," said Master Sgt. Bernard Coe, PMO operations chief. "After that, we have no more involvement unless the command requests a copy of our report."

It is left to each individual command to do any discipline of a Marine. It can include non-judicial punishment to court-martial depending on the

extent of the crime. They may also be required to pay a \$200 fine to MCCS along with the price for the item stolen.

"Marines who steal are not really Marines," said Carver. "They're imposters in uniform because Marines are raised with honor, and by shoplifting they show everyone that they don't have honor."

So before walking out the door without stopping at the register, it's time to stop and think about what the price really is.

HONORING FROM 1C

shared their peace on behalf of the fallen Marines, the speaker would then respectfully hang the fallen Marine's dog tags from the grip of his rifle on the display, finalizing the monument.

The ceremony concluded with the families and distinguished guests followed by the remaining audience, going on stage to individ-

ually pay respect to each fallen Marine, some kissing dog tags, some placing their hands on the helmet, and others in silent reverence.

At the end of the ceremony, the lights were turned on and the crowd slowly dispersed. Many remained behind to reflect on the lives and service of the Marines honored during the memorial.

"They served well and fought hard," said Capt. Brian Hill, a forward air controller with the battalion. "They knew what their job was and they did it with vigor and enthusiasm."

For more information on 2nd Marine Division, visit the unit's Web site at iimefpublic.usmc.mil/2dMarDiv.



Photo by Staff Sgt. Ryan Smith

Lieutenant Col. Douglas J. MacIntyre, 8th Marine Regiment, 2nd Marine Division, received the General Holland M. Smith Award for Operational Competence during the ceremony of the United States' 107th National Convention in Corpus Christi, Texas, recently.

8th Marines officer recognized for operational competence

STAFF SGT. RYAN SMITH
2nd Marine Division

A Marine from 8th Marine Regiment, 2nd Marine Division was recognized for his contributions to the operational art by the Navy League at a recent ceremony held at the Navy League of the United States' 107th National Convention in Corpus Christi, Texas.

Lieutenant Col. Douglas J. MacIntyre, executive officer, 8th Marine Regiment, 2nd Marine Division, received the General Holland M. Smith Award for Operational Competence during the ceremony recently.

"It's a tremendous honor," said MacIntyre. "It was unexpected; certainly a highlight for me and my family. Listening to the citations for some of the other awardees, I was humbled and honored to be in their company. This award really recognized the Marines that I worked with and for above everything else."

According to Marine Administrative Message 91/09, "The General Holland M. Smith Award for Operational Competence recognizes a Marine Corps officer or enlisted Marine who has made an outstanding personal contribution that has advanced the readiness and competence of the naval service in the course of actual operations."

"The award is in reference to General Holland M. Smith, one of the Corps' great innovators and amphibious warfare commanders, and it recognizes an individual's contribution to the fight," said MacIntyre.

MacIntyre was nominated for the award by Col. John K. Love, the commanding officer of 8th Marine Regiment.

"Lieutenant Col. Ma-

Intyre was... of an operat... every aspect... "He demons... 1954 to 195... ordinary oper... men prepar... tal Combat... 2009 Operat... dom deploy... deployed, his... logical and p... coupled with... operational e... sured the att... objectives se... RCT's camp... ability to ef... chronize all... activity with... area of resp... sulted in u... unity of eff... lines of oper... Col. MacInty... tionably des... prestigious a... erational com... unmatched."

The award... the Navy League... vice Awards... board screen... nals for the... sea service aw... ed a former... the Navy, ret... and Marine gra... "I had the opp... through these... deployments... transition from... hold-build ta... OIF to coab... transferring ser... Iraqi security... MacIntyre, we... total of 23 mon... deployed to I... this last depl... RCT-8 as oper... executive off... able to see the... transition, as I... thorties devel... own capacity... ity. Through... namic periods... many operat... tical lessons l... new techniqu... to serve the M... well in other d... as Afghanistan...

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Off-limits establishments

The following businesses are designated by the base commander as "off-limits"

Bell Auto Salvage II	136 Abbots Branch Rd., Hubert
Botta Booms (A.K.A. Private Dancer)	3054 Wilmington Highway, Jacksonville
Carland	2911 Routs 17/ G.W. Highway Tabb, V.A.
Cash-N-Advance	2235 Lejeune Blvd., Jacksonville
Centennial Enterprises, Inc.	1489 East Thousand Oaks Blvd, Suite 2, Thousand Oaks, CA (Headquarter's Office)
Club Mickey's	4441 Richlands Highway, Jacksonville (Closed)
Doll House	Highway 258 West, Jacksonville
Easy Money Catalog Sales	233-F Western Blvd., Jacksonville
Fantasies	4951 Richlands Highway, Jacksonville
Illusions	Richlands Highway, Jacksonville
Jacksonville Speedway Auto Parts (A.K.A. Raceway Auto Parts & Raceway Used Auto Parts)	401 Blue Creek Elementary School Road
Joshua Experience/Club Access	200 Golden Oak Court, Virginia Beach, V.A.
Laird's Auto and Truck Repair	1197 Piney Green Rd., Jacksonville
Par Tech (A.K.A. Military Circuit of Jacksonville)	487-A Western Blvd., Jacksonville
Playhouse	6568 Richlands Highway, Jacksonville
Pleasure Palace	Highway 17, Jacksonville
Private Pleasures (A.K.A. Carriage House)	5527 Highway 258, Jacksonville
Reflection Photo	353 Western Blvd., Jacksonville
Smitty's R&R	Highway 17, Jacksonville
Southern Comfort	2004 Highway 172, Sneads Ferry
Student Assistance Company	244 South Randal Road, Suite III Eglin, I.L.
Talk of the Town II (barbershop is not off limits)	114 Texie Lane, Jacksonville
Tender Touch (A.K.A. Baby Dolls)	Highway 258, Jacksonville
Veterans Affairs Service	Jacksonville

Hotline numbers to report fraud, waste, abuse and corruption

Department of Defense	800-424-9098
Inspector General, Marine Corps	703-614-1348/1349/1698
Camp Lejeune (Recorded line)	451-3928
Hearing impaired	451-2999
To report business fraud	451-3928

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AMCC, TT residents celebrate last demolition before rebuild

CPL. DAMANY S. COLEMAN
 Marine Corps Base

...ply living in a place
 ...lling it home can be
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 ...ggle. For others, re-
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 ...forward to.



Photo by Lance Cpl. Damany S. Coleman
Dave R. Short, a resident of Tarawa Terrace from 1954 to 1959, shared his thoughts Dec. 10 during the celebration of the demolition of the last Tarawa Terrace home from the 1950s era.



Photo by Lance Cpl. Damany S. Coleman
House number 2657 was the final 1950s era home to be demolished in Tarawa Terrace Dec. 10. Dave R. Short, a resident of Tarawa Terrace from 1954 to 1959, "gets some" while using an excavator to do the initial damages to the last 1950s era home.

...ntic Marine Corps
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 ...built in the 1950s,
 ...10. These demoli-
 ...will provide ample
 ...and resources for
 ...omes to be built in
 ...a for military fami-
 ...the future to enjoy.

done," said Dave R. Short. "There's a lot of history here."
 Tarawa Terrace was a little military neighborhood filled with all creeds and colors. It also had a bustling shopping center, which was prominent then and included food stores and a barbershop.
 Families like the Shorts spent some of their childhood years in the same Tarawa Terrace streets, and the same neighborhood, which was "cutting edge" in that time. They also endured many deployments together from the conflicts in the Dominican Republic and the Cuban Missile Crisis.

"It was a bunch of us thrown together," said R. Short. "All races, all creeds... we grew up here. We were all here together."
 R. Short had the privilege of aiding in the demolition of the last 50's era home, and used an excavator to jump start the demolition. Short shared his excitement immediately after exiting the big, yellow machine.
 "Remember, men are just grown up boys," he said. "It just doesn't get any better than tearing something down."
 Kahleen Murney, project director with Atlantic Marine Corps Communities, reflected on their re-

demolition success with the demolitions and future plans for Tarawa Terrace.
 "It's pretty amazing that we're just taking them down today to replace them with something new," said Murney. "These were wonderful homes in the 50s, 60s and all the way up to today. But it's time for a change."
 AMCC has a long 50-year partnership with the Department of the Navy and Actus Lend Lease

through the Military Privatization Act. They are working together to build, renovate, finance and manage more than 8,000 homes for the North Carolina Marine Corps Installations of Marine Corps Air Stations Cherry Point and New River, and Marine Corps Base Camp Lejeune.
 "These homes were wonderful in their time," said Murney. "They've served the military and Marine Corps many, many years

and many, many families have lived in them."
 The materials from demolished homes are scheduled to be recycled for future use and construction in Tarawa Terrace as cement, air conditioners, refrigerators and vinyl siding. More than 780 homes have been demolished and rebuilt, which are all a part of a \$750 million project. In the most recent phase 166 new homes are to be constructed.

CON FROM 1C

...up a couple tricks from us. It allows o build a rapport with them. They're d forces, the next time you see these s could be in combat, on a beach, or on ountain-top. Now that we've worked ther, you have an idea of how they rate, who they are and what they're all ut."
 One of the largest focuses of effort was et the Marines comfortable executing a ed circuit, amphibious reconnaissance rt, said Leet.
 Closed-circuit diving uses special diving ipment that allows divers to remain unct from the enemy by eliminating air bles rising to the surface, in turn, com- mising their location.
 One component of the exercise consists quipping the Marines with a full-com- load, which not only brings weight to equation but a level of uncertainty as l.
 "Our largest focus of effort has been king on the insertion piece," said Leet. us training allows the Marines to get r ruck sacks (a large backpack used to y equipment) packed and adjusted for yancy. This allows them to reach their ctive carrying all of the gear that's re- red for a Force Reconnaissance Marine omplete their mission."
 On top of the initial gear these Marines e to carry, they sometimes add addi- tional weight in order to establish proper yancy that's needed to stay underwater, out dragging them to the ocean floor.
 "At a minimum these guys are carry- ough gear to get them through six s. A minimum of 100 to 150 pounds of r," said Leet. "Now these guys have to

add more weight to correct their buoyancy. You're looking at something that weighs 200 pounds out of the water. That's not an easy task to take on."
 Once the Marine cruised off shore, the 40-foot diving depth that they're used to at Camp Lejeune, N.C., disappeared. Now, approximately 800 yards off the coast, the dangers and complexity of their job became real.
 "These closed circuit rigs that we dive with are designed for shallow depths," said Leet. "They become very dangerous once you hit depths below 50 feet. That's where they get that subconscious safety net at Lejeune. They know that if they start to sink (from the weight of their rucks), they can say to themselves, 'oh I'm just going to hit the bottom.'"
 Leet further explained how one wrong move could be a Marine's last while diving in deep waters.
 "Here we're talking thousands of feet of water," said Leet. "In fact we take these guys 800 yards out and were looking at 2000 feet of water. If that ruck takes them down, it's a one-way trip. The psychological beast for a guy to overcome is huge. It makes you focus more. It's much better for them to overcome that fear here, then somewhere down the line when they're put in a situation without the experience."
 In addition to closed circuit diving, the Marines trained in open circuit diving as well.
 Open-circuit diving is basically using traditional diving equipment to perform search and rescue operations, ship and dock inspections, or any non-tactical operation that might require underwater as-

sistance, said Leet.
 "Now that we were starting to get more of our (Force Recon) Marines on MEU cycles, open circuit diving is very likely to be tasked to them," said Leet. "They will be the only people with diving capabilities there. It's not a combat situation, but if something is wrong with the ship, or gear falls in the water they will have the resources to solve the problem and complete their objective."
 One of Force Recon's primary objectives is to create hydrographic surveys. This requires teams to map and layout an underwater floor plan in order to generate imagery to establish a safe passage-way for follow-on forces during a beach assault or land invasion. The Marines were able to train using Diver Propulsion Devices, which is one of the tools the unit utilizes, to complete this task in a timely matter. DPDs are essentially submersible vehicles that allow a single operator to maneuver underwater at approximately twice the speed of a typical diver, allowing the teams to relay information at a more real-time speed to their command, said Leet.
 As the Marines progressed through their busy training week they were able to find some time to participate in the Dutch Marines water obstacle course. The demanding event put Force Recon's speed, endurance, and swimming capabilities to the test.
 "If you can't swim or tread water you won't make it," said Cpl. Wayne R. Haas, a Marine with Force Recon. "You will fail."
 The course consisted of more than a dozen obstacles, all of which where sus-

ended over water. The Marines climbed ropes, ladders, nets, monkey-bars and wooden pallets. In-between each obstacle the participants had to tread water in order stay afloat above the approximately 15 feet of water that lay below them.
 "Compared to what we're used this is very untraditional," said Haas. "The fact that it's in water adds an additional element. And the fact that it's three or four times longer than the obstacle courses we have back at Lejeune, makes it that much more complex."
 Even though the course took its toll on the Marines, the ever so familiar feeling of self-achievement derived from completing a demanding task as this, still had its after-effects.
 "The course is challenging," said Haas. "It requires a lot of upper body strength and a lot of technique. If you didn't have good technique, it would wear you out very quickly. Someone who tries to muscle their way through it probably won't make it. It tests your body, but you always feel good accomplishing something like this."
 As the Marines pushed through the week, some days training for more than 16 hours straight, only taking breaks to eat, the teams were able to complete an astounding number of drills and exercises utilizing the limited amount of dive time and resources available to them.
 "Things have been very successful," said Leet. "The amount of training that these guys have been able to accomplish in the limited amount of time that we've had is phenomenal. This is a great place to go. We can truly focus strictly on the training at hand."

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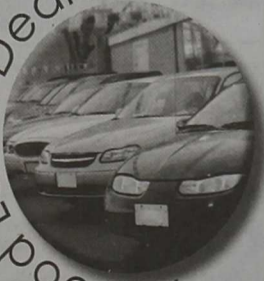
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Graphic courtesy of Gunny Sgt. Charles Wolf, USMC; photos by Heather M. Owens

Gunny Claus, as shown at left and below, has been spotted all over base this holiday season. The jolly staff noncommissioned officer said he is here to spread Christmas cheer to Marine families, especially the children. Gunny Claus' schedule is so full, he has to carry an iPhone to keep track of where he is supposed to be. With visiting battalion Christmas parties aboard Marine Corps Base Camp Lejeune and Marine Corps Air Stations Cherry Point and New River, Gunny Claus will literally meet scores of children this month. "I see a lot of kids," he said. "And you know you can tell parents by their children. Of the hundreds of kids I've seen so far, quality family values show in every one of them." Below left, Gunny Claus receives a hug from Riley Kenyon, 4, son of Staff Sgt. J.B. Kenyon and his wife, Christina.

HEATHER M. OWENS
Carolina Living editor

Every Marine who has earned the eagle, globe and anchor is imbued with knowledge of the rich history of the Marine Corps.

However, this holiday season, there is one aspect of the Marine Corps which young Marines and their families may be finding out about for the first time: The legend of Gunny Claus.

Turns out the jolly old elf is also a seasoned staff noncommissioned officer.

It has been said one of the first sightings of a Marine Corps Santa Claus came in the trenches of World War I. "Gunner Claus" wore a red rain coat and a beard made out of toilet paper.

"And, you know, whenever an officer comes up with a good idea, he is going to make sure a staff NCO takes care of it," said Gunny Claus with a twinkle in his eye. "So there you have Gunny Claus."

Gunny Claus has turned up around Christmastime at all of the wartime theaters in which Marines have fought: from WWI through the present day. In fact, he honors Marines who have fought throughout Christmas by wearing the commemorative medals of each battle in which Marines have served during the holidays.

With area Marines deployed all over the world and preparing to support a troop surge in Afghanistan, Gunny Claus has been spotted throughout the Coastal Carolina region this December, from Marine Corps Base Camp Lejeune to Marine Corps Air Stations Cherry Point and New River.

Part of the mystery is how the squared-away elf can be in so many different places at once.

"There's a lot of Gunny Clauses," he said. "Gunny Claus is here to protect Christmas, and it takes more than one to do it. And, occasionally, a helicopter and a little Marine Corps magic helps."

Not surprisingly, Gunny Claus even speaks in tactical terms.

"I'm part of the ammunition against the adversity which our Marines and their families face," he said.

In recent years, Gunny Claus has taken on the special assignment of bringing the spirit of Christmas to children and spouses of Marines. In combat, Marines take care of themselves, he said. Plus, plenty of individual Americans and civic groups have been honoring the warriors themselves.

But sometimes

in this high operational tempo atmosphere, the children can be forgotten.

For that reason, Gunny Claus has made a special effort to share the joy of Christmas with service member's children.

He's been turning up at battalion Christmas parties, delighting children, spouses and Marines alike. Those who have been fortunate enough to encounter Gunny Claus thus far have felt the warm glow of the Christmas spirit which emanates from his very being: from his red, smokey-the-bear cover to his polished, black combat boots.

Julianne Barulich, family readiness officer for Marine Medium Tiltrotor Squadron 261 at New River, said Gunny Claus was a big hit at the unit's children's Christmas party.

"They related to him very well because he was in uniform," she said.

At the 2nd Combat Engineer Battalion party a few nights later, Gunny Claus spent hours hoisting children onto his lap and listing to their Christmas wishes.

Among them were Aeja Barrows, 4, and her sister Nia, 2, daughters of Petty Officer 2nd Class Laportia Barrows and her husband Petty Officer 3rd Class Ryan Barrows.

"It's really exciting because this is the first time Aeja has taken a picture with Santa. She was usually scared of him. So this made my year," said the proud mom, watching her children interact with Gunny Claus. "And then to see the youngest one go up there was great too."

For his part, Gunny Claus said strengthening the bonds of

military families is a large part of his mission.

"In the Marine Corps, Christmas is not about politics or any other thing," he said. "It's about remembering and being with family. The Marines hold that dear to their heart, and it shows through."

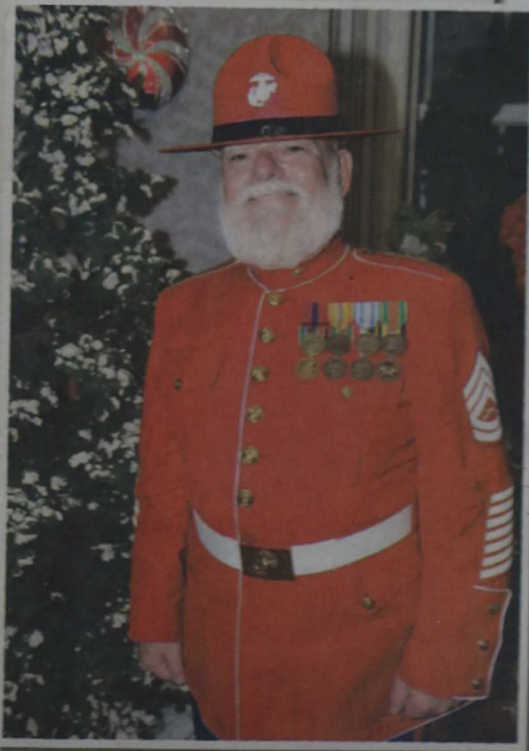
Just like the list of all the good boys and girls, the list of Gunny Claus' scheduled events is also quite lengthy. In fact, the gunny's schedule is so tight, he carries an iPhone to keep them all straight.

With all the Christmas parties he's attending, Gunny Claus meets scores upon scores of children.

"I see a lot of kids," he said. "And you know you can tell parents by their children. Of the hundreds of kids I've seen so far, quality family values show in every one of them."

Marines and their families will have Gunny Claus' love and support for years to come. When asked about Christmas future, Gunny Claus said he would stand his post until properly relieved.

Editor's note: To learn more about Gunny Claus and his mission, visit his Web site, gunnyclaus.org. Messages may also be sent to Gunny Claus at his e-mail address, Santa@GunnyClaus.org. Gunny Claus is scheduled to be at the United Services Organization's holiday dinner for service members and their families, Christmas day. For more information, call 455-3411.





MovieReview



From the front row with Reinhold Moldenhauer Huneycutt

This week's fare: Characters going rogue everywhere

Now Playing at Midway Park

"PIRATE RADIO" (R)

"Pirate Radio" is a comedy about a music-loving group.

In the swinging 1960's, a group of eight rogue DJs played rock records on a boat in the middle of the Northern Atlantic. By doing this, they broke the law, all for the love of music.

Apparently, the English radio would only play the popular rock and roll music for a few hours a day and people had to listen to it on pirate stations.

The songs this group played united and defined an entire generation and drove the British government crazy.

By playing rock and roll, they stood against the uptight British government, which did everything in its power to shut them down.

Philip Seymour Hoffman ("Doubt," "Capote") plays The Count, an American deejay, hell-bent on rocking the UK radio restrictions on rock music.

Bill Nighy ("The Pirates of the Caribbean") portrays Quentin, the station owner and ship's captain, who provides a platform where the band of rogue DJs can broadcast from outside the government's reach.

Kenneth Branagh ("Valkyrie," "Sleuth") stars as Sir Alistair Dormandy, who vows to pull the plug on the pirate radio station.

Also appearing are Rhys Ifans ("Hannibal Rising") as Gavin, the competitor of the Count; Nick Frost ("Penelope") as Dave; Jack Davenport ("The Pirates of the Caribbean") as Twatt and January Jones (TV's "Mad Men") has a small part as Elenore, the future bride of one of the DJs.

Britain's most successful romantic comedy writer, Richard Curtis, ("Four Weddings and a Funeral," "Notting Hill") based this story on real-life events. This is also the first movie he has both written and directed since 2003's hit, "Love Actually."

"Pirate Radio" is a period

piece, a lightweight British comedy with lots of good old rock and roll music.

The film was released in Britain as "The Boat That Rocked."

Now playing in Jacksonville

"BROTHERS" (PG-13)

"Brothers" is a war-related family drama about a decorated Marine who goes missing and is presumed dead in Afghanistan.

The story follows two siblings, one an outstanding serviceman and one a misfit, and how the course of events changes them.

When the Marine brother goes missing overseas, his black-sheep younger brother cares for his wife and children with consequences that will shake the foundation of the entire family.

Tobey Maguire ("Spider Man," "Seabiscuit") stars as Capt. Sam Cahill, a stolid U.S. Marine and steadfast family man, who married his high school sweetheart with whom he has two daughters.

Capt. Cahill is about to embark on his fourth tour of duty.

Natalie Portman ("New York I Love You," "V for Vendetta") portrays Sam's strong military wife, Grace Cahill.

Jake Gyllenhaal ("Brokeback Mountain," "Jarhead") stars as Tommy Cahill, Sam's younger, charismatic brother, a drifter just out of jail, who has always gotten by on wit and charm.

When Sam is declared missing in action and presumed dead in Afghanistan, Grace turns to his brother for solace.

Tommy lends a hand and gives comfort to his grieving sister-in-law and two children back in the states.

Changed by his brother's sacrifice, Tommy tries to fill in for his brother by assuming newfound responsibilities for himself, Grace, and the children.

When Capt. Cahill suddenly

returns home, traumatized by his experience on the battlefield, the domestic situation gets hot.

The family as a whole must come to terms with all that happened since Sam left for Afghanistan, while Sam is trying to heal the scars of what he had to endure in captivity.

Co-starring are Sam Shephard ("Stealth") and Mare Winningham ("Swing Vote") as Hank and Elsie Cahill, the parents of the siblings.

Directed by Jim Sheridan ("In America"), "Brothers" is a story as old as Cain and Abel; Sheridan based this tale on the 2004 Danish movie "Brodre."

"Brothers" is more of a homecoming movie than a film about the war.

The melodrama tries to blend the battlefield with the homefront and the talented actors pull it off with beautifully understated and subtle performances.

"ARMORED"

"Armored" is an action thriller about a heist.

A rookie armored-truck guard finds himself standing between his fellow guards and the \$42 million they aim to steal from their truck.

A wrinkle in the seemingly fool-proof plan divides the group, thereby leading to a potentially deadly resolution.

Columbus Short ("Stomp the Yard") plays Ty Hackett, a newly hired guard for an armored truck company, who has just taken a job at the same armored car com-

pany his late father had

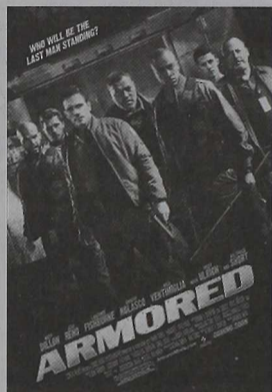
Ty is having problem keeping his house and give his younger brother a

So when Ty's godfather Cochrane, played by Me ("Old Dogs," "You, Me, pree"), reveals to him a p one of their company's t reluctantly agrees to the join in the heist attempt.

Armed with what lieved to be an air-tight guys plan on making o fortune with harm to no

When an unexpected interferences, the plan quavels and the crew of o the armored transport firm, who risk their liv they embark on the heist, turn against ea as they desperately try themselves.

Co-starring are I Fishburne ("21," "Bike as Baines; Jean Reno ("Retreat") as Quinn; Nolasco ("Street Kin



Palmer; Ward agemen Dunca croft; Wil Venti ("Ga as E tra and Sh U rich will Dobbs, rod An Vanc cancy," Lin troll") the m "Arri is you can dard, ves thriller, with

a formula which has be duced numerous times be

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INVICTUS PG-13 • DTS • DLP • 12:45 • 3:40 • 6:35 • 9:30

ARMORED PG-13 • DTS • DLP • 1:45 • 4:05 • 6:35 • 9:00

BROTHERS R • DTS • DLP • 1:35 • 4:15 • 6:55 • 9:35

BOONDOCK SAINTS II: ALL SAINTS DAY R • DTS • DLP • 1:00 • 3:45 • 6:35 • 9:25

OLIVIA IN WINTER WONDERLAND G • DTS • DLP • 2:00 (SAT. & SUN ONLY)

OLD DOGS PG • DTS • DLP • 2:00 • 4:20 • 6:40 • 9:00 (NO 2:00 SAT & SUN)

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NEW MOON PG-13 • DTS • DLP • 1:00 • 3:50 • 6:40 • 9:30

THE BLINDSIDER PG-13 • DTS • DLP • 1:05 • 4:00 • 6:50 • 9:40

2012 PG • DTS • DLP • 1:20 • 4:40 • 8:00

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FRIDAY "The Fourth Kind," PG-13, 6:30 p.m.; "2012," PG-13, 9:15 p.m.	FRIDAY "Astro Boy," PG, 6:30 p.m.; "Pirate Radio," R, 9:15 p.m.	FRIDAY "Astro Boy," PG, 7 p.m.; "Law Abiding Citizen," R, 9:30 p.m.
SATURDAY "Planet 51," PG, 3:30 p.m.; "Cirque Du Freak," PG-13, 6:30 p.m.; "2012," PG-13, 9:15 p.m.	SATURDAY "Disney's A Christmas Carol," PG, 3:30 p.m.; "Amelia," PG, 6:30 p.m.; "Pirate Radio," R, 9:15 p.m.	SATURDAY "Astro Boy," PG-13, 7 p.m.; "Cirque Du Freak," PG-13, 9:30 p.m.
SUNDAY "Planet 51," PG, 3:30 p.m.; "Cirque Du Freak," PG-13, 6:30 p.m.	SUNDAY "Disney's A Christmas Carol," PG, 3:30 p.m.; "The Box," PG-13, 6:30 p.m.	SUNDAY "Astro Boy," PG-13, 3 p.m.; "The Box," PG-13, 6 p.m.
TUESDAY "Paranormal Activity," R, 7:30 p.m.	TUESDAY "Amelia," PG, 7:30 p.m.	MONDAY "The Box," PG-13, 7 p.m.
WEDNESDAY "Michael Jackson's This Is It," PG, 7:30 p.m.	WEDNESDAY "Astro Boy," PG-13, 7:30 p.m.	WEDNESDAY "Paranormal Activity," R, 9:30 a.m.

WE'RE PROUD TO SERVE YOU Tickets and concessions open 1 hour prior to movie time. Pricing: \$2 Adults, \$1 Children

What's happening in CAROLINA

For information on concerts, festivals, special events and classes up and down the Carolina coast, check out What's Happenin' Carolina each week. To contact your event, e-mail heather.owens@militarynews.com. Space is limited to availability.

Multiple Sclerosis Self-Help Group meeting Thursday, 7 to 9 p.m.
The Jacksonville Multiple Sclerosis Self-Help Group has scheduled its December meeting for Thursday at the Onslow Memorial Hospital Education Building. Meetings are typically held the third Thursday of each month. For more information, call Margaretta at 2243.

VFW Toys for Tots Dance Friday, Dinner starts at 5 p.m.
Jacksonville Veteran's of Foreign Wars Post 118 is hosting its annual Marine Corps Reserve Toys for Tots Dance, Friday. The admission price is a \$10 unwrapped toy for the Toys for Tots program. The public is invited to attend. Dinner will be served 5 to 7:30 p.m., then Taco and Maria will be on hand providing entertainment and karaoke starting 8 p.m. The Post is located at 1450 Piney Green Road. For more information, call 353-6810.

"Command Attention" book signing Monday, 11 a.m. to 1 p.m.
Keith Oliver, retired colonel and former public affairs officer for Marine Corps Base Camp Lejeune, recently written a book, "Command Attention: Promoting Your Organization the Marine Corps Way." This book will be of interest to Marine Corps leaders and others who deal with public information. Oliver is scheduled to sign copies of the book at the Marine Corps Association Bookstore at the Hadnot Point Exchange Annex, Monday, For more information call the bookstore at 451-7500.

Christmas skate Tuesday, 1 to 5 p.m.
The Onslow County Parks and Recreation Department and the Recreation Station are sponsoring a Christmas Skate, Tuesday. The event is open to the public. The cost is \$4 per person and includes skate rental. Free laser tag game will be offered to the first 100 participants. Children 12 years old and under must be accompanied by an adult. For more information call 347-5332 or visit onslowcountync.gov/parks.

Writer's workshop Register now! Jan. 30, 10 a.m. to 4 p.m.
Robert Siegel, University of North Carolina Wilmington creative writing instructor, is scheduled to conduct a short story writing workshop at the Council for the Arts, 826 New Bridge St. Only a few class spots remain. The early registration is recommended. The \$15 fee must be paid on the day of the class. Siegel is the author of two novels, "All Will Be Revealed" and "All the Moments in the World." His web site is robertanthonysegel.com. Call 455-9840 to ensure your spot in class.

of the Pets Week

Photos by Kelli Huffman

My distinctive markings help me stand out from the crowd! I am a multi-colored domestic, medium hair kitten, just 8 months old. I'm a beautiful girl, and I look forward to meeting you.
Pet ID # A034719

Gutten tag! I am a female, German shepherd mix, and I am three years old. I would really like to be a part of your family. Won't you stop by and pick me up today?
Pet ID#A034836

The Onslow County Animal Shelter is open Monday through Thursday from noon to 7 p.m., Friday from noon to 3 p.m., Saturday from 10 a.m. to noon and 1 to 3 p.m.
To see more photographs of pets available for adoption, visit www.petsharbor.com.
For more information, call the Onslow County Animal Shelter at 455-0182.

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CPL. KATIE Marine Corp

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Law lets spouses keep residency

CPL. KATIE C. DENSMORE
Marine Corps Base

The struggles that accompany a military lifestyle do not end with the service member. Spouses often move from state-to-state alongside their loved ones. With every move, spouses have to change their states of residence, get a new driver's license and register to vote.

To help make life easier for those supporting their loved one's service, President Barack Obama signed bill S. 475 into law, Nov. 11.

The law often referred to as the "Military Spouses Residency Relief Act" grants military spouses the same rights as active-duty service members in regards to retaining home state residency.

The bill was originally introduced during February by Sen. Richard Burr, a republican representing North Carolina.

"I am pleased to see this important legislation signed into law," Burr said in a statement about the act. "Military families are often asked to move, and it is only fair that we give the same residency benefits to spouses as we give to active-duty personnel. This bill represents one small way we can help ease the burden of military families, who make sacrifices every day to support our men and women in uniform."

Frequent moves are often accompanied by the added stress of trying to figure out what the spouse needs to do to become a resident of their new state. Several states require a person to reside in the state for several months before gaining residency, which, for spouses can mean they are unqualified to vote.

In addition to the possibility of losing the right to vote, spouses are less likely to have their names included on deeds and titles because of residency issues.

The Military Spouses Residency Relief Act gives a military spouse, who moves out of state because of military orders, the option to claim one state of domicile, regardless of where they move, as stated by a press release from Burr's Web site.

The bill also relieves spouses from filing multiple tax returns and changing vehicle registrations with each move.

"This legislation will alleviate these and other burdens on our military families," Obama said at the bill signing. "As the Congress has recognized and as the legislative history reflects, this legislation is an important means of maintaining the morale and readiness of our armed forces and significantly enhances the ability of our military to effectively recruit and retain these highly valued service personnel."

Greenville: Much more than college town



With Cpl. Katie C. Densmore

With Christmas approaching, the need for time away is sometimes necessary. The stress of holiday party planning, finishing last-minute shopping and, of course, fighting off those holiday pounds can make it seem as if there is no time to slip away.

Fortunately, there is a destination that offers diverse shopping, plenty of sporting activities and artistic exhibits for viewing to help alleviate some of the common holiday drawbacks.

Greenville, N.C., offers everything even the most tightly-wound person needs to survive the holiday season with sanity.

The drive is about two and a half hours and pretty straightforward. When leaving the front gate take a right like you are heading toward Swansboro. Then take a left onto Belgrade-Swansboro Road; after nearly 14 miles the road will merge into Highway 17 north. Then take a left at South Glenburnie Road. Shortly after this left, take another onto Neuse Boulevard. Next, make a right onto North Carolina 43 North and continue on this road until you arrive in Greenville.

Greenville is predominantly a college town. It is the home of East Carolina University and of course the Pirates. The city has everything a college town is known for, including coffee shops and hippie stores, but it also has a more sophisticated side with galleries and museums.

I was a little disappointed that one of the most recommended museum stops on my trip was not there. I cursed

my global positioning system and tried re-entering the address; however, to no avail. The facility had been moved.

The East Carolina Village of Yesteryear is scheduled to open at its new location in early 2010 and once again display the architectural and agricultural life in eastern North Carolina from 1840 to 1940.

I overcame this slight setback and continued to the downtown area for a chance to do some Christmas shopping. I quickly noticed the closer I got to the heart of downtown, where ECU is located, the more I saw purple and gold buildings accompanied by pirates.

The downtown area is filled with eclectic shops and eateries. Clothing, book, antique and art stores fill the area, but there are also slightly offbeat establishments such as tattoo parlors, which make shopping for even those with the most discriminating tastes a simple task.

Despite being a college town filled with interesting shops and diverse dining, Greenville also has several venues to satisfy the nature lover's needs, which include several specialized parks.

"A lot of people don't know we have a great Frisbee-golf course, dog park and so much more," said Shana Kriewall, recreation superintendent with the recreation and parks department. "We also have several sports facilities for soccer, football and baseball."

Greenville's emphasis on the importance of physical fitness and sports did not go unnoticed. In 2004 Greenville was named Sportstown USA for the state of North Carolina by Sports Illustrated.

"Greenville was selected based on a number of criteria demonstrating the community's involvement in enhancing quality sports for its citizens," according to the Web site visitgreenvillenc.com. "Sports Illustrated also pinpointed the



A monument to the military is a highlight of the Greenville, N.C., Town Commons. The monument honors those locally who lost their lives in military conflicts.

positive philosophy, procedures, training strategies, commitment, innovation and scope of programming that the Greenville Recreation & Parks (department) employs."

Along with several facilities for conventional sporting events, Greenville is also home to several extreme sporting facilities.

"Greenville is often called 'Protown' because of all the professional skaters and bikers," said Kriewall. "The city has its own skate park and there are a couple of private parks. Greenville has been home to several big-name professionals like Ryan Nyquist, who used to live here."

For visitors who prefer something a little safer and closer to nature, River Park North can suit that need.

River Park North sits on 324 acres with five ponds nestled in the site. Visitors can spend a day in the park participating in activities as relaxing or sweat-breaking as they choose. Whether a person is interested in boating, kayaking, fishing or even spinning around a pond on a pedal boat, the park can suit these desires.

However, if staying on dry land is more your speed, the park is laced with nature trails perfect for bird watching and getting some exercise. If all of the park activities have worked up your

appetite, the park has two picnic shelters with grills.

The city also offers plenty of art museums and galleries for those who appreciate beautiful creations.

The Greenville Museum of Art has been a staple of the artistic community for nearly 75 years.

"The original impetus for the formation of the present Greenville Museum of Art was the first Women's Club Arts Festival in 1935," according to the museum's Web site. "The enthusiastic community support of this venture inspired the festival leaders to develop an initial momentum that resulted in the formation of a permanent art facility in 1939."

The museum has a permanent collection of approximately 550 pieces and hosts several traveling exhibitions throughout the year in its six galleries, according to the Web site. Each year these exhibits draw in more than 12,000 visitors.

So this year, rather than hurry through the holiday hoping to get past New Year's unscathed, spend some quality time in Greenville. You may be able to find that perfect last-minute gift or get active and show your waistline who's boss.

For more information on Greenville, visit the Web site visitgreenvillenc.com.

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Christmas Bash '09

DEC 30 @ 9PM

WHAT'S GOOD
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SLEEPING WITH THE SIRENS

Officers' Wives' Club scholarship program

The Camp Lejeune Officers' Wives' Club is now accepting applications for its 2010 college scholarship program. Military family members, who are either graduating high seniors or military spouses attending an accredited college or university, are eligible for scholarship. To download an application and view further criteria, visit the Officers' Wives' Club Web site at camplejeunewc.org. Applications must be postmarked or hand-delivered to Hidden Talents by Feb. 19. E-mail Cathy Close at davidcathyclose@msn.com for additional information.

2nd Marine Division Band Christmas Caroling Schedule

The 2nd Marine Division Band is scheduled to go Christmas caroling at the Berkley Manor and Tarawa Terrace housing areas, Dec. 17. The following schedule lists the times and street intersections where the caroling is scheduled to appear.

BERKLEY MANOR		TARAWA TERRACE	
TIME	LOCATION	TIME	LOCATION
6 p.m.	Maryland & Georgia	6 p.m.	Tarawa & E. Peleliu
6:10 p.m.	Maryland & Florida	6:10 p.m.	E. Peleliu & Matanikau
6:20 p.m.	Michigan & Washington	6:20 p.m.	Tarawa & Matanikau
6:30 p.m.	Michigan & Colorado	6:30 p.m.	Tarawa & Inchon
6:40 p.m.	Alabama & Washington	6:40 p.m.	Inchon & Naha
6:50 p.m.	Alabama & Florida	6:50 p.m.	Inchon & W. Peleliu
7 p.m.	Alabama & Vermont	7 p.m.	W. Peleliu & Roberton
7:10 p.m.	Alabama & Arizona	7:10 p.m.	Dimon & Roberton
7:20 p.m.	Alabama & Arkansas	7:20 p.m.	Tarawa Community Center
7:30 p.m.	Maryland & Oregon	7:30 p.m.	Haganu & Tulugi
7:40 p.m.	Delaware & Florida	7:40 p.m.	Haganu & Basilone
7:50 p.m.	Virginia & Carolina	8 p.m.	Haganu & Chosin
8 p.m.	Virginia & Oregon	8:10 p.m.	Saipan & Rogers

Holiday Services

St. Francis Xavier Catholic Chapel

Dec. 21 Mass 7 p.m.
 Dec. 24 Mass 5 p.m., 10 p.m., Midnight
 Dec. 25 Mass 10 a.m.
 Jan. 1 Mass 9 a.m., 10 a.m.

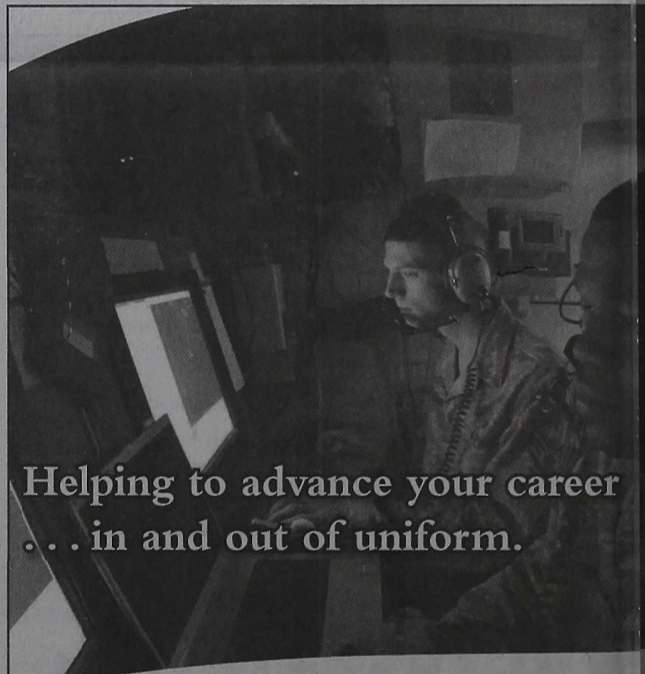
Main Protestant Chapel

Dec. 20 4th Sunday of Advent Service
 Dec. 24 Christmas Eve Candlelight Service

Camp Johnson - Eastern Orthodox

Dec. 24 Royal Hours of the Nativity of our Lord 8 to 10 a.m.
 Dec. 24 Divine Liturgy, Nativity of our Lord 6 to 7:30 p.m.
 Jan. 5 Feast of Epiphany
 Divine Liturgy 7 a.m.
 Blessing of the Waters 7 p.m.

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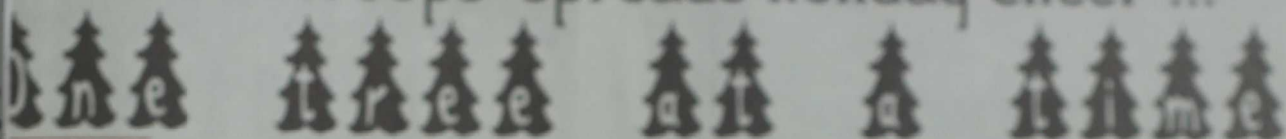
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Trees for Troops' spreads holiday cheer ...



JESSICA L. MARTINEZ
The Daily Star

Service members and their families scattered across the globe, the spirit of the holidays is still alive. The holiday spirit is alive at Marine Corps Community Services employees loaded Christmas trees and vehicles as they pulled all of the trees and SUVs lined up to see a tree service members and their families gathered at Onslow Beach, Dec. 10 to receive approximately 1,000 Christmas trees provided for free by Christmas Spirit Foundation, FedEx Corporation.

This is the fifth year for Trees for Troops and our last stop on a two-day tour of delivering about 60 trees for U.S. troops and their families this year," said Pam Hill, executive director of the Christmas Spirit Foundation and National Christmas Tree Association. "Our 725 trees, but the driver told her people kept giving trees and kept piling them in, so we're going to give them all out."

The Trees for Troops initiative which began five years ago, the Christmas Spirit Foundation and FedEx Corporation have collected and sent more than 65,000 Christmas trees nationwide. The trees come from across the United States and most donated by Christmas tree growers when their customers hear of the program they get involved.

"It's very important to do this,"

and Hill said. "The troops and their families scattered across the globe, the spirit of the holidays is still alive. The holiday spirit is alive at Marine Corps Community Services employees loaded Christmas trees and vehicles as they pulled all of the trees and SUVs lined up to see a tree service members and their families gathered at Onslow Beach, Dec. 10 to receive approximately 1,000 Christmas trees provided for free by Christmas Spirit Foundation, FedEx Corporation.

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"Christmas trees are kind of the center of attention during the holidays, and it's great that we can participate and bring all this to the troops who may not have been able to get a tree this year," said Buddy Hill, FedEx Corporation service center manager for Wilmington. "This is important to FedEx because it allows us to bring Christmas trees to all the troops, and the service members who are overseas — to bring a tree to their families. We thank (the service members) for their hard work, efforts and sacrifice throughout the year and hope this helps them out a little bit."

FedEx has about 400 service centers nationwide and they all participate in delivering the trees.

"All the freight charges, labor, handling, work and materials are contributed free by FedEx," said Hill. "We bring these trees to about 50 military bases of all services nationwide. We've been a part of this for five years, and each year it gets bigger and bigger, and we move more trees."



Photo by Sgt. Jessica L. Martinez
Buddy Hill, FedEx Corporation service center manager for Wilmington, holds a picture from a military family asking thank you for the Christmas trees.



Photo by Sgt. Jessica L. Martinez
Matthew with Matthew Special Operations Support Group, U.S. Marine Corps Forces, Special Operations Command, and Military Police Company with headquarters and support Battalion, Marine Corps Base Camp Lejeune, volunteered to load and transport the trees to Onslow Beach, Dec. 11.

In a time when Americans are struggling financially, the country came together to make sure Christmas happens for those who may not have had a Christmas otherwise.

"I think this is great and the really helps us out this year," said Cpl. Matthew Kartin, a motor transportation mechanic with 2nd Combat Engineer Battalion, 2nd Marine Division. "A lot of the families out here are having a rough time with the economy and it's a perfect chance for them to get a free Christmas tree."

Editor's note: For more information of Trees for Troops or the Christmas Spirit Foundation, visit www.christmasforus.org.

Share Your Military Story

Department of Defense's Joint Advertising, Marketing and Research and Development office is looking for service members from all echelons (active, reserve and retired) who are interested in military jobs and careers.

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Photo by Cpl. Jessica L. Martinez

A ribbon-cutting ceremony was held recently by Atlantic Marine Corps Community to officially open the Boundless Playground and Warrior Workout Trail for the Camp Lejeune community. From the left, Marc Sierra, of Actus Lend Lease, Col. Richard Gau Jr., base commanding officer and Robert Dickerson, retired major general, assisted the Garner family as they cut the ribbon during the ceremony. The playground is the first of its kind aboard any Marine Corps installation and is designed for children and parents with different needs and disabilities to play together in an environment where they feel safe and strong.

Children with all abilities will be able to enjoy new playground

JESSICA L. MARTINEZ
Marine Corps Base

to be a child again; each month, not to worry about going while getting to sound freely and play. Fortunately, not all are able to enjoy them as they should be. Now, all children at the Marine Corps Base Lejeune, regardless of disabilities and needs, can have some deserved down time playing on one of the playgrounds built specifically with their needs in mind. The five playgrounds include four handicapped-accessible areas Marine Community Services created out to be built at the Boundless Playground and Atlantic Marine Communities built, Marines and their

The handicap accessible playgrounds are located at Onslow Beach, Midway Park, Paradise Point and Tarawa Terrace, while the Boundless Playground is located in Watkins Village. The playgrounds were not only created to fit wheelchairs, but designed with ramps so that every child can reach the highest play deck.

The playgrounds were also built to support children's development with sensory-rich activities such as play equipment that demonstrate music and natural occurrences as well as elevated sand tables and activity panels to allow children with any ability to play together, and, at the same time, develop their social skills.

"These playgrounds are 100-percent wheelchair accessible," said Maria Ready, director for the Exceptional Family Member Program with MCCS. "In contrast to a regular playground, children in a wheelchair had a difficult time getting near the playground or the things they could play with were on a lower level. Now the complete playground is up on a wheelchair level."

"These playgrounds are important to Camp Lejeune because we have to take into consideration the families with children who have disabilities," said Ready. "Childhood should be filled with enriching activities. Children with disabilities should have the same opportunity as children without disabilities." For more information about the Exceptional Family Member Program or MCCS, visit the MCCS Web site, mccslejeune.com.



Photo by Lance Cpl. Victor A. Barrera

Each year, Beirut Memorial Chapter 642, Military Order of the Purple Heart members hand write the names of local fallen warriors on Christmas bulbs to decorate trees for Jacksonville's Festival of Trees. After the festival, the trees are put on display at the Marine Corps Exchange aboard Camp Lejeune.

Organization honors military heroes over holiday season

LANCE CPL. VICTOR A. BARRERA
Marine Corps Base

Many people who go to the Main Exchange walk by two white Christmas trees adorned with 408 purple Christmas balls, and a third white Christmas tree with 43 silver Christmas balls and dog tags, without realizing their significance.

Over the past few years, the Beirut Memorial Chapter 642, Military Order of the Purple Heart members have taken time during the holidays to pay their respects to service members who gave their lives for their country in the Iraq and Afghanistan wars, said John Cooney, a retired master sergeant and adjutant for the chapter.

"The reason we do this is to honor those who made the ultimate sacrifice," said Cooney. "We've all had buddies who got killed. Nobody wants them to be forgotten."

The Military Order of the Purple Heart Christmas tree tradition started four years ago with a white Christmas tree decorated with approximately 150 purple ornaments. Each ornament displays the rank and name of a fallen service member who served with the II Marine Expeditionary Force or resided in the surrounding area.

In the years that followed, the chapter had to add another tree because the number of casualties had increased.

The names on the Christmas ornaments are not just of Marines who have passed. Among the fallen, are 18

to 20 corpsmen who served with Marines as well as four National Guardsmen from Jacksonville, N.C.

If a family wants to keep an ornament with their loved one's name on it, the chapter is willing to make an extra ornament for them, said Cooney. Although the chapter pays for all the expenses, it is supplemented with donations from families and service members. In return, it offers stuffed animals, pins and other small accessories to those who donate.

The deaths of service members affect not just family members, but the community as well.

"A lot of people come here to pay their respects," said Cooney. "A lot of tears are shed in this area. People who don't understand, stop by and ask questions and you can see it has an affect on them."

In between the purple heart trees, stands another covered with silver Christmas balls. The Tree of Remembrance is sponsored by Rolling Thunder, Inc. Chapter N.C.-5.

The Tree of Remembrance is there to raise awareness that there are still prisoners of war and service members missing in action from the Vietnam War, said Paul Levesque, a retired master gunnery sergeant and chapter president.

Passing by these trees is a stark reminder of the price of freedom. The trees are there so that service members who laid down their lives for the flag are never forgotten.

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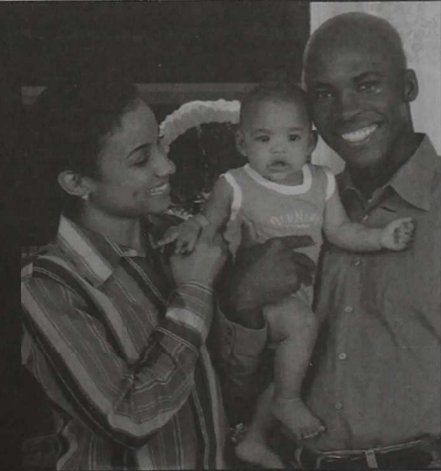
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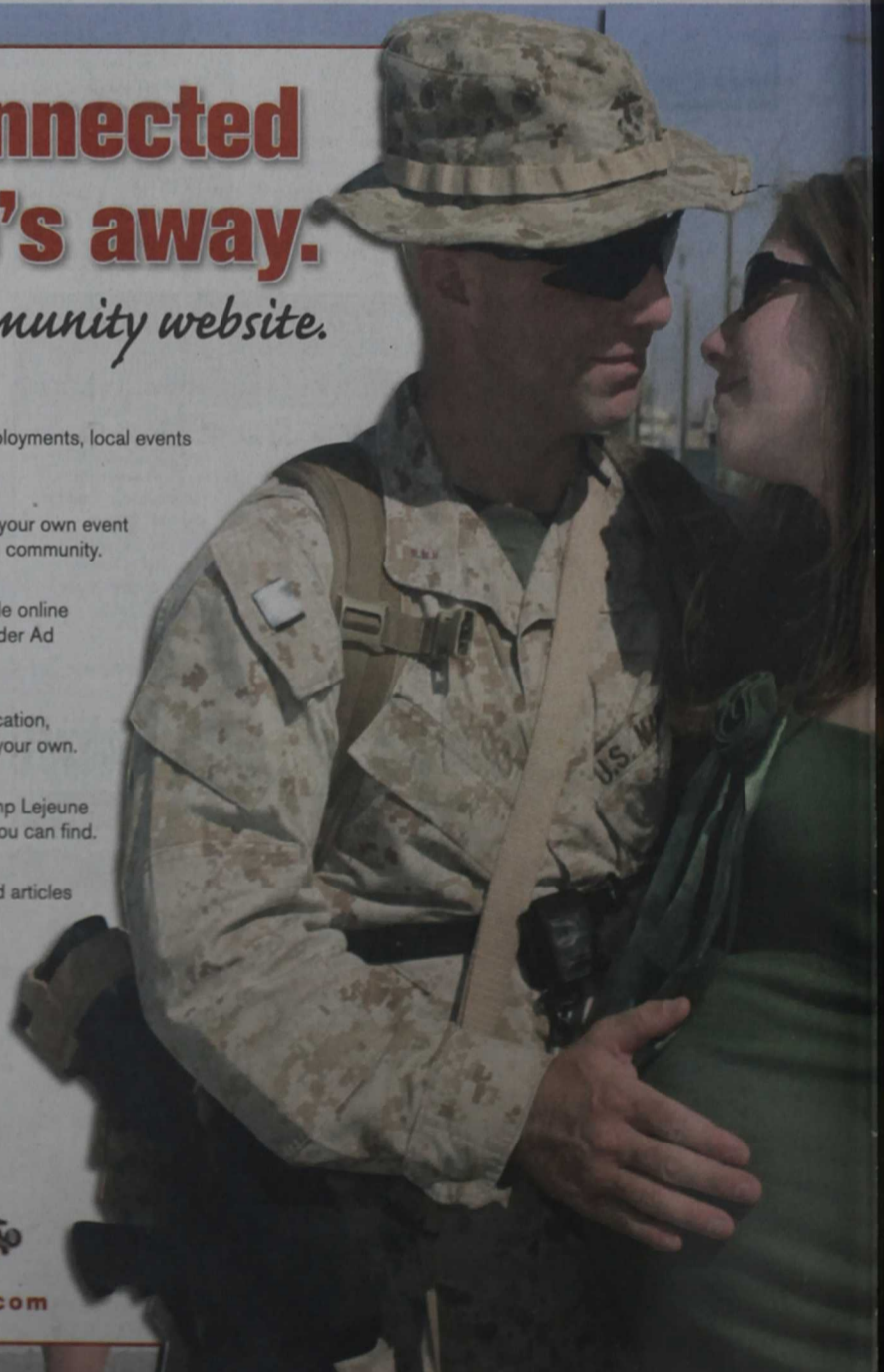
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