

THE CONTINENTAL MARINE

MAGAZINE

JAN/FEB/MAR 2008



Census Ops

> Co. E, 2/24

> *New neighborhood 'family'*

TOW Co. training

Inside:

- > Pre-deployment training at unique civilian facility
- > Old Corps and New Corps training together

Wish made reality

- > Determined 8-year-old
- > Proves how far you can go through adversity

We've seen another quarter go by and with it more and more changes incorporated. The most noticeable change is the facelift on the Marine Forces Reserve Web site (www.mfr.usmc.mil). Our web management staff put together a beautiful looking site, and soon, you should see more of the multimedia products I mentioned in the last edition of the magazine.

Our writers continue to cover all manner of stories, and you might run into them covering an annual training exercise. If you do, remember, they're the ones who will make you famous, so help them out as much as you can!

In this edition, I'd like to talk a little about a pesky issue that seems to be occurring more frequently. Increasingly, we are receiving requests for coverage right at the last minute - sometimes even hours before an event in another state. We thoroughly enjoy covering our Marines, Sailors and civilians and love every opportunity we get to do that. Unfortunately, if we don't have enough notice, it becomes very difficult to dispatch a correspondent to cover the event.

So how much time is enough time? For the vast majority of our units, we would like at least a week's notice in order to do Temporary Additional Duty orders in the Defense Travel System. Of course, we would love more notice than a week, but that amount of time gives us the minimum required lead to maneuver all the pieces into position to cover your event.

One other thing I'd like to touch on is the determination of which events we cover. In one way, we operate very much like a civilian newspaper or magazine. We have requests for coverage come in, and then, the powers that be decide which requests we fulfill based on various aspects of merit. If your event does not get covered, please don't take it personally. Know that there are many factors we take into account when evaluating an event for coverage. If we can't make it, we'd gladly consider publishing submissions from you, even if it's just a digital image and a description of what's going on. Also realize we have a very small staff, and when they are already dispersed, we can't conjure up more through some mystical incantation.

If you haven't already, I encourage you to visit our readership survey available at <http://tinyurl.com/3zkjgk>.

Semper Fi,
Sgt. G. S. Thomas
Editor, Continental Marine Magazine

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COVER SHOT



Lance Cpl. Bryant A. Crot, a radio technician with 2nd Battalion, 24th Marines, keeps an eye on his surroundings during a census patrol in Saqlawiyah Feb. 12. Photo by Pfc. Jerry Murphy

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In Brief

Taking a brief look at MFR Marines' accomplishments.

Arizona dedicates monument to Navajo code talkers

The Copper State recently paid homage to covert World War II exploits of a southwest Indian tribe with the dedication of a monument at the Wesley Bolin Memorial Plaza in Phoenix Feb. 28. For their creation and use of an unbreakable, Navajo-based code which was instrumental in Marine victories against the Japanese throughout World War II, the Navajo Code Talker Memorial foundation honored these veterans by funding the monument.

More than 20 Navajo veterans were present in the state legislature as their important history was celebrated in Navajo custom with a flag song, celebration song, and the Navajo code talker song.

Their most important contribution came on Iwo Jima when 800 faultless messages crisscrossed the island allowing the Marines victory in their most famous battle

The names of the 400 code talkers that fought in battle were engraved on plaques that circled the pedestal of the bronze statue which depicts a code talker on one knee as he radios a message to his fellow Navajos.



Georgia reserve unit wins food service award

Headquarters and Service Battalion, 4th Marine Logistics Group, won the 2008 Major General W. P. T. Hill Memorial Award for Food Service Excellence Best Reserve Field Mess competition.



The food service Marines, who were evaluated in October 2007, were pleased and surprised to receive the award.

“At first the Marines were nervous about competing against the other units,” said Chief Warrant Officer Steven L. McAlister, food service officer for H&S Bn. “However, after a lot of classes and training, the Marines proved they could win. They definitely earned it.”

The W. P. T. Hill Award was established in 1985 to improve food service operation and recognize the best messes in the Marine Corps. Competitors are judged on areas such as operations, sanitation, taste and quality of food. The unit will receive the award May 17 at Headquarters Marine Corps.

1/23 I & I staff shares lunch, experiences with Iwo Jima vets

The 1st Battalion, 23rd Marine Regiment, inspector-instructor staff held an Iwo Jima luncheon at the Bay Oaks Country Club in Houston Feb. 19. Current Marines and Iwo Jima veterans gathered to share experiences and celebrate the 63rd anniversary of the amphibious assault the Japanese island which proved to crucial to the Pacific Campaign. The veterans who attended also had an opportunity to sign the battalion's Iwo Flag Raising picture, which was painted and donated by a local artist.



Marine Forces Reserve Band

Members of the Marine Forces Reserve band perform during halftime ceremonies at the New Orleans Saints/St. Louis Rams game in the Louisiana Superdome Nov. 11. The event was part of a Veteran's Day halftime presentation that also included the unfurling of a giant American flag by members of all four branches of the military.



Cpl. Brandon S. Mountain



Lance Cpl. Christopher J. Gallagher

The Marine Forces Reserve Band has performed at many venues over the past few months. Here are some highlights of those performances.

Mardi Gras 2008 - The MFR Band performed in 10 parades during this year's Mardi Gras season to an estimated crowd of over 1 million spectators. The band marched more than 40 miles in the 2 weeks of the Mardi Gras season and played in six balls. The Albany Marine Band also joined in the fun this year, covering parades that would have gone unsupported by the Marine Corps due to many parades being scheduled at the same time in different parts of the New Orleans Metro area. The Albany Marine Band marched in 5 parades and covered more than 23 miles in only 5 days.

The band went to the Rifle Range at Ft. Polk, La., from Feb. 29 to March 6. This included the newest version of the Table II, Field Firing Qualification.

The MFR Band performed with a brass quintet from the "President's Own" Marine Band at Isidore Newman High School March 29. Members of the prestigious group travel to New Orleans annually to train MFR Band members in the finer points of musical performance and rehearsal techniques. Beginning last year, the groups have put on a free concert for the public at the conclusion of the week to display the lessons learned and give MFR Marines a chance to perform with musicians of Major-Symphony Orchestra caliber.

Exercise: 7 benefits of regular physical activity

LIFELINES SERVICES NETWORK

CONTRIBUTOR

Need motivation to exercise? Here are seven ways exercise can improve your life - starting today!

Want to feel better, have more energy and perhaps even live longer? Look no further than old-fashioned exercise.

The merits of exercise - from preventing chronic health conditions to boosting confidence and self-esteem - are hard to ignore. And the benefits are yours for the taking, regardless of age, sex or physical ability. Need more convincing? Check out seven specific ways exercise can improve your life.

1. Exercise improves your mood

Need to blow off some steam after a stressful day? A workout at the gym or a brisk 30-minute walk can help you calm down. Exercise stimulates various brain chemicals, which may leave you feeling happier and more relaxed than you were before you worked out. You'll also look better and feel better when you exercise regularly, which can boost your confidence and improve your self-esteem. Exercise even reduces feelings of depression and anxiety.

2. Exercise combats chronic diseases

Worried about heart disease? Hoping to prevent osteoporosis? Regular exercise might be the ticket.

Regular exercise can help you prevent - or manage - high blood pressure. Your cholesterol will benefit, too. Regular exercise boosts high-density lipoprotein (HDL), or "good," cholesterol while decreasing low-density lipoprotein (LDL), or "bad," cholesterol. This one-two punch keeps your blood flowing smoothly by lowering the buildup of plaques in your arteries. And there's more. Regular exercise can help you prevent type 2 diabetes, osteoporosis and certain types of cancer.

3. Exercise helps you manage your weight

Want to drop those excess pounds? Trade some couch time for walking or other physical activities.

This one's a no-brainer. When you exercise, you burn calories. The more intensely you exercise, the more calories you burn - and the easier it is to keep your weight under control. You don't even need to set aside major chunks of time for working out. Take the stairs instead of the elevator. Walk during your lunch break. Do jumping jacks during commercials. Better yet, turn off the TV and take a brisk walk. Dedicated workouts are great, but

activity you accumulate throughout the day helps you burn calories, too.

4. Exercise strengthens your heart & lungs

Winded by grocery shopping or household chores? Don't throw in the towel. Regular exercise can leave you breathing easier.

Exercise delivers oxygen and nutrients to your tissues. In fact, regular exercise helps your entire cardiovascular system - the circulation of blood through your heart and blood vessels - work more efficiently. Big deal? You bet! When your heart and lungs work more efficiently, you'll have more energy to do the things you enjoy.

5. Exercise promotes better sleep

Struggling to fall asleep? Or stay asleep? It might help to boost your physical activity during the day. A good night's sleep can improve your concentration, productivity and mood. And, you guessed it, exercise is sometimes the key to better sleep. Regular exercise can help you fall asleep faster and deepen your sleep. The timing is up to you - but if you're having trouble sleeping, you might want to try late afternoon workouts. The natural dip in body temperature five to six hours after you exercise might help you fall asleep.

6. Exercise can put the spark back into your sex life

Are you too tired to have sex? Or feeling too out of shape to enjoy physical intimacy? Exercise to the rescue.

Regular exercise can leave you feeling energized and looking better, which may have a positive effect on your sex life. But there's more to it than that. Exercise improves your circulation, which can lead to more satisfying sex. And men who exercise regularly are less likely to have problems with erectile dysfunction than are men who don't exercise, especially as they get older.

7. Exercise can be — gasp — fun!

Wondering what to do on a Saturday afternoon? Looking for an activity that suits the entire family? Get physical!

Exercise doesn't have to be drudgery. Take a ballroom dancing class. Check out a local climbing wall or hiking trail. Push your kids on the swings or climb with them on the jungle gym. Plan a neighborhood kickball or touch football game. Find an activity you enjoy, and go for it. If you get bored, try something new. If you're moving, it counts! □

Family activities on a budget

KELLI KIRWAN

LIFELINES SERVICES NETWORK

Being on a budget, even a tight one, doesn't mean you have to sacrifice quality family time. A little creativity, some advance planning, and your enthusiasm are often all you need to create good family memories.

Things to Do at Home

If the weather outside is frightful, don't think the TV and video games are the only ways to beat boredom:

- Family picnics: Have lunch on a colorful blanket in the family room. It's amazing how an indoor picnic makes a peanut butter and jelly sandwich taste that much better.
- Build a city: Chairs and blankets transform any rainy day into a magical kingdom in anyone's home. Once it's built, have lunch and story time in your new world. If it's dark outside, take flashlights into your tent and have yummy snacks and campfire stories.
- Games: Card games, board games, or indoor hide and seek keep boredom at bay.
- Bake a memory: Bake with your children and help them enhance their math and reading skills. Plus, you all get a tasty reward for your efforts.

Take It Outside

When you play together as a family, you not only create family unity, but wonderful teaching moments for parents. Set time aside and take it outside.

- Camping: If you don't have your own gear, check with the Navy MWR or Marine Corps MCCS to find out what you can rent at minimum cost. Also get a list of MWR- or MCCS-run campsites, cabins, beach cottages, and other recreational facilities located all over the country.
- Use your parks: Local parks offer opportunities to picnic (from a full-on Sunday fried-chicken dinner to a snack of granola bars or homemade cookies) and play (badminton, Frisbee, or plain old catch). Walk on the beach

or by a river, feed the birds or chipmunks, hike in the woods, or ride your bikes around — you'll promote fitness and find that it costs very little to spend quality time with your family. Tuck some treats in your fanny pack, stop for ice cream on the way back, or have popcorn and apples when you get home.

Look Where You Live

Many towns offer museums, festivals, recreation areas, and other activities at little or no cost. Look for an entertainment paper or a city's web site to find out what's offered in your area.

Take advantage of stores and shopping malls. Window-shopping with your children teaches them prudent purchasing and frugality, and helps you create the perfect birthday or Christmas wish list. Children learn you don't have to buy every time you go to the store.

Check out surrounding towns. With a little budgeting, weekend trips are a refreshing change of pace and can offer your family a mini-vacation.

On Base and ITT

Discounts on movies, theme parks, and other events are available at the ITT ticket office on base. And most bases offer other activities for your family such as bowling alleys, movie theaters, stables, pools, and boat marinas. There are often lessons offered for different activities for both youth and adults at a reasonable cost.

Reading Time

Choose a good book or a short story to read as a family. Use different voices or act out some of the scenes. A love of literature is a wonderful legacy to leave to your children. Your local librarian is a valuable resource to help select your first reading adventure.

No matter what you do, do it with enthusiasm and you'll be building close relationships and warm memories for the most important people — your family. □



Lance Cpl. Mary A. Staes

Marines from Anti-Armor Tube-launched, Optically tracked, Wire-guided missile (TOW) Company, 4th Marine Division, fire at targets at the introduction to pistol shooting station held during a drill weekend March 1. TOW Co. Marines had an opportunity to drill at the United States Shooting Academy (USSA) facility in Oklahoma. The Marines participated in classes such as pistol introduction and reaction to an ambush, which both included live fire.

TOW Co. trains at unique facility

LANCE CPL. MARY A. STAES

MARINE FORCES RESERVE

BROKEN ARROW, Okla. – Reserve Marines get together to brush up on their skills during drill weekend every month. Recently, one unit took the opportunity to practice marksmanship training on an unfamiliar, yet welcome course.

Anti-Armor Tube-launched, optically tracked, wire guided missile (TOW) Company, 4th Marine Division, traveled to the United States Shooting Academy (USSA) in nearby Tulsa for a day of trigger time.

The Marines participated in pistol training and reacting to an ambush, both of which included live fire. Marine Corps Martial Arts Program (MCMAP) and clearing a house were also covered. The Marines traversed five

different stations, each lasting 90 minutes.

USSA offered the Marines many different options for training. The one-year-old facility boasts 93 acres with 35 ranges, and many of the instructors at USSA are former and current military and law enforcement.

“Training these Marines has been the highlight of my time here,” said Brad DeLauter, director of operations at USSA and a retired Marine master sergeant. “It’s not just because these are Marines, but these are some of the finest that Oklahoma has to offer, and we get a chance to teach them what we do best.”

Instructors from USSA teamed up with Inspector-Instructor staff from TOW Co. to cover all aspects of the training.

“Seeing these Marines take what they’ve learned and put

it into use is great,” said TOW Co. armorer Sgt. Brandon M. Austin, an instructor on the ambush reaction range. “Another thing is that this range is something we are not familiar with, these guns are not ours. Seeing the Marines adapt and use them correctly is great. This facility also provides different training areas in a small space. That way it’s easier for the command to move around and keep a good track of what the Marines are learning.”

Even though the training was not at a military facility, the unit benefited from it in many different ways.

“Bringing the unit by Humvee to the nearest military training facility is expensive,” said Maj. Michael A. Purcell, inspector-instructor for TOW Co. “At USSA there are much better training options. The academy offers many different types of ranges. Also, their instructors have excellent expertise in marksmanship; this is what they teach all day. They provide more instructors to help the Marines, which is something we would not have on a regular range.”

The Marines liked the change of scenery for their weekend drill.

“I really enjoyed this,” said Cpl. James Burnett, a Tulsa native and field radio operator for TOW Co. “Usually, we don’t get to shoot M240’s.”

Teaming with USSA introduced the Marines to another side of marksmanship outside of the military community by having civilians instruct the Marines and bringing them to a non-military facility.

“It broadens their horizons,” said Purcell. “They become more embedded into the community. Hopefully we can make this an annual training event.”

The instructors at USSA seem more than happy to make that happen.

“I think the Marines came out of this today with more attitude,” said DeLauter. “The fact they know they have to win the fight, that’s the only option that’s acceptable. We’d love to see them here again and help take their training to another level.” □



Lance Cpl. Mary A. Staes

A Marine from Anti-Armor Tube-launched, Optically tracked, Wire-guided missile (TOW) Company, 4th Marine Division, practices armbar drills during the Marine Corps Martial Arts Program (MCMAP) station held during drill. TOW Co. Marines had an opportunity to have drill at the United States Shooting Academy (USSA) facility. The Marines participated in classes such as pistol introduction and reaction to an ambush, both which included live fire.

Modern South Pacific reflects World War II Marine occupation



Courtesy photo

American servicemen arrive at the island of Tanna in 1941 with many ships packed as tightly with cargo as this one.

CPL. FRANS E. LABRANCHE
MARINE FORCES RESERVE

NEW ORLEANS – The world changed forever in 1942 when the Japanese bombed Pearl Harbor and brought America into World War II.

As American Marines and service members flooded various South Pacific islands, vying for strategic positions in a larger-than-life chess game against Japan, tribes and natives of each island were shocked into the modern era.

Imagine, your family inhabiting a place for hundreds of generations, knowing only the technology that the earth's raw natural resources provide when, one day, American Marines push up your beach in giant steel canoes.

For the indigenous people of Tanna island, in the island nation known now as Vanu'atu, the goods that these men came ashore with and that fell from giant birds, could only come from the gods and it was obvious to the natives that the Americans must know how to talk to the gods.

"They only know that the strangers possess things they don't have," says Walt Burgoyne, the National World War II Museum's education program coordinator. "These are things they've never even thought of – things they could not ever have thought of, given their environment."

As the Americans moved forward to what became one of the most valuable positions in the Pacific, Espiritu Santu, the Tannans watched how they acquired cargo by raising a flag, standing in groups holding sticks, smashing the land so the giant birds would bring cargo and they mimicked the daily operations of Marines and service members.

At some point an American named John spoke with the natives, promising them all the cargo they could want and more. The islanders called him John Frum, shortening the name "John Frum America."

The people of Tanna saw John Frum as their savior, a hero that would bring them dignity, identity, honor and, most importantly, cargo upon his return.

For 51 years the followers of John Frum have celebrated

John Frum Day on Feb. 15, the day that John Frum is supposed to return from America by way of an undersea corridor which exits at the mouth of the volcano Yasur.

The cultists celebrate by raising the American flag, flattening fields into makeshift runways, building bamboo control towers and crafting mock aircraft in hopes that this will signal real planes to land.

Marines have been given nicknames around the world, teufel hunden, leatherneck, jarhead, and, unknown to all except this small tribe which still waits for cargo, gods.

Vanu'atu is an island surrounded by crystal clear water and white sand where many Americans travel for vacation. Be careful if your name is John, though, for your followers may be expecting gifts. □



Courtesy photo

Cargo left over from World War II still litters the island of Tanna and much of the South Pacific.

2/24's Company E conducts census ops

PFC. JERRY MURPHY

1ST MARINE DIVISION

SAQLAWIYAH, Iraq – Getting to know the family living next door can sometimes be a challenge, but Marines of Company E, 2nd Battalion, 24th Marine Regiment, Regimental Combat Team 1, patrolled through the streets of Saqlawiyah Feb. 12, introducing themselves as the new ‘family’ next door.

The battalion, also known as “Mayhem from the Midwest,” recently stepped on-deck in Iraq, and is introducing themselves to the people in the area who they will be helping during the next seven months.

Sgt. Josh K. Bloomquist, a squad leader with 2nd Platoon, Company E, 2nd Battalion, 24th Marine Regiment, speaks with a local Iraqi man through a company interpreter during a census Feb. 12. Photo by Pfc. Jerry Murphy





Pfc. Jerry Murphy

Sgt. Adam P. Buonadonna, a radio operator with 2nd Battalion, 24th Marines, mingles with an Iraqi boy during a census patrol Feb. 12.

“We do census’ to get a feel for who is living in the area and where they live,” said Sgt. Josh K. Bloomquist, a squad leader with 1st Platoon, Company E. “It also helps us put our face out there so that the (Iraqis) know who we are and that we want to help them. It becomes personal, like we’re their neighbors.”

Much like the Census Bureau does in America, the Marines went door-to-door, speaking to the head of the household and introducing themselves to the community. It is an exhausting, time-consuming project, but the Marines are determined to get to know the Iraqis who they will be sharing the streets with during their deployment.

“This helps us figure out who belongs here and who doesn’t,” said Bloomquist, a resident of Omaha, Neb. “If we hear a name, we don’t need to worry about who they are or where they live. It takes time and a lot of work, but it will ultimately help us.”

The information gathered on these census patrols is not only designed to help the Marines, but it will eventually be used and tracked by the Iraqi Government.

“We’re here to help this country get back on its feet,” said HM2 Adam F. Kinney, a 41-year-old Hospital Corpsman from Elizabethtown, Ky. “Eventually we can turn the paperwork over to the Iraqis; give everything back to them.”

During the census patrols, the Marines are accompanied by an Iraqi interpreter who helps interview the families

that do not speak English.

“We go so that we can translate everything the Marines say,” said Moe, an interpreter with Company E. “(The Iraqis) feel comfortable with us being there. It helps us get all the information we need.”

With the help of Moe, Bloomquist asked one man if there was anything the Marines could do to help his family. The man mentioned that his brother was very sick and wanted to know if anything could be done to help him. Bloomquist jumped on the opportunity to help the man and immediately called the platoon Corpsman over the radio.

“His brother was very sick and there wasn’t a whole lot I could do right then and there, but we relayed it to our command and they have already set up an appointment to help him,” said Kinney, who is an attorney when not either deployed or drilling with the Reserve Battalion. “With us setting up (the appointment) so fast, it shows how much we care about the Iraqis and how much we want to help. That is why we’re here; to help them, not hurt them.”

The Marines finished their patrol with a sense of accomplishment, knowing that they had shown their face to the community and helped a family in need.

“We did a good job today introducing ourselves to the people,” Bloomquist said. “They really seem like they are warming up to us and want to help us as much as we want to help them.” □

Marine deploys to Iraq, puts Ultimate Fighter dream on hold

PFC. JERRY MURPHY
1ST MARINE DIVISION

HABBANIYAH, Iraq – Sacrifices are made when preparing to deploy. When a reserve battalion is activated, the Marines are required to put their entire lives on hold. Not only do they sacrifice being away from family, friends and jobs, some of them even put their dreams on hold.

One Marine attached to 2nd Battalion, 24th Marines, Regimental Combat Team 1, put his dreams on hold to fight for the freedoms Americans enjoy on a daily basis.

Before being activated to deploy to Iraq in support of Operation Iraqi Freedom, Lance Cpl. Sean E. Varriale, a radio operator with Headquarters and Service Company, was training to get a shot at becoming a professional mixed martial arts fighter and possibly trying out for and competing on the popular television show, the Ultimate Fighter.

“My goal going through training was to be a professional fighter, make it to on the show and eventually make it to the Ultimate Fighting Championship,” said the 27-year-old from Old Bridge, N.J. “My training partner, Chris Finnelli just made the Ultimate Fighter for the upcoming season and I feel like I have a chance to make it as well, because of my attitude, heart, will and drive.”

Varriale volunteered to deploy to Iraq and was

Putting his dreams of becoming a professional mixed martial arts fighter on hold to deploy with 2nd Battalion, 24th Marines, Lance Cpl. Sean E. Varriale spends his off time staying in shape and training with Marines interested in learning the basics of mixed martial arts.

individually selected to augment to 2nd Bn., 24th Marines, putting his chance to make it on the show and turn pro on hold, but he said he has no regrets.

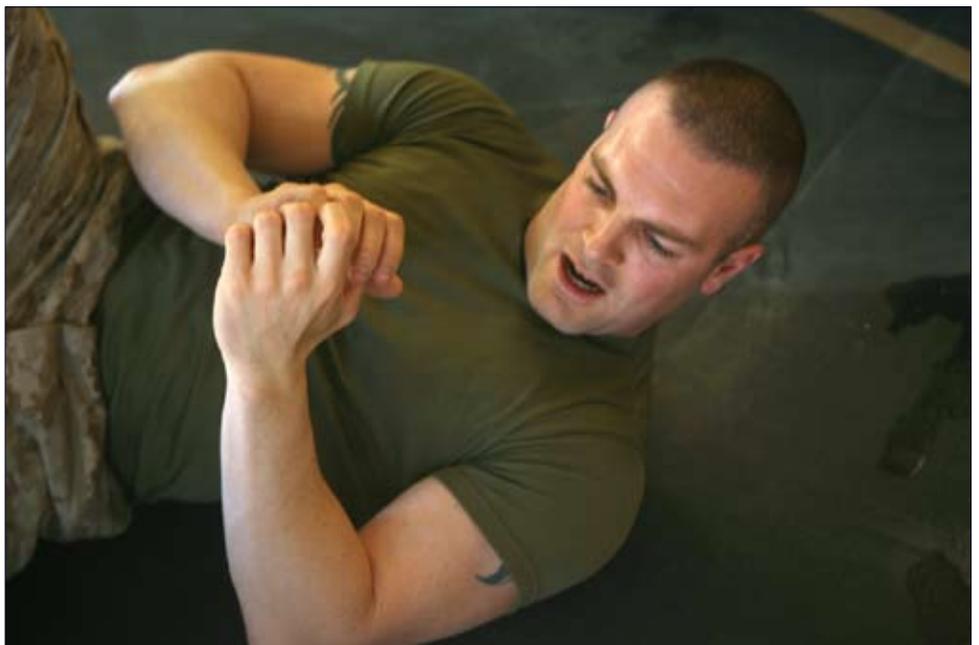
“I love fighting and I love the Marine Corps. I don’t regret volunteering to come out here at all,” Varriale said. “Even though I’m not training at home, we’ve put together a bunch of great guys that want to train and learn (martial arts). So now, I’m right back at it, teaching MMA and getting to train along side the Marines.”

Varriale began learning boxing and mixed martial arts at the age of five, learning from his father.

“My dad taught me never to fear anyone and most of all, to take the edge and never let anyone get the upper hand,” he said. “My dad was a huge influence on me.”

Throughout the years, he continued to train in MMA and eventually joined the New Jersey International Martial Arts and Boxing Team, where he sharpened his skills in several different styles of martial arts, including; maui tai, Brazilian jui jitsu, boxing, submission grappling, eskrima and jeet kun do.

“I started with the team when I was 23, and my coach, Jerry Fatjo, said that I wasn’t ready to start cage fighting until after two years with the team,” said Varriale, who graduated from Old Bridge High School in 1998. “Fatjo has coached me since I joined the team and has become like a second father to me.”



When asked how his coach felt about him volunteering to deploy to Iraq, Varriale said his coach was worried, but he also said that he is supportive.

Varriale will get back into training as soon as he returns home from his deployment and said that if he does not stay in shape while he is in Iraq, his coaches will ‘enjoy’ getting him back into shape.

Varriale would like to recognize his coaches and his teammates saying, “I would like to wish all my teammates good luck in their upcoming fights and I will be home soon to train with them.” □



Lance Cpl. Sean E. Varriale, a radio operator from Old Bridge, N.J., watches over Staff Sgt. Kevin T. Crown, company gunnery sergeant for H & S company, 2/24, as he warms up for a work out. Varriale is teaching Marines the basics of MMA during his off time in Iraq. Photo by Pfc. Jerry Murphy

Echo 2/25 hits the range

CAPT. PAUL L. GREENBERG

MARINE FORCES RESERVE

MARINE CORPS BASE QUANTICO, Va. – As the sun rose over Range 3 at Weapons Training Battalion here on the morning of Feb. 9, Reserve Marines from Company E, 2nd Battalion, 25th Marine Regiment prepared for a long day behind the trigger.

The day prior, the 126 Company E leathernecks traveled from their home base in Harrisburg, Pa. by bus and arrived at Quantico in time to bed down on the range under the stars just after midnight.

The mission of Harrisburg, Pa., based Company E was to conduct a day-long modified Marine Corps Combat Marksmanship Program live-fire exercise. The unit was joined by 47 Reserve Marines from 3rd Battalion, 25th Marine Regiment, who drove about 400 miles from their home base in Ohio to participate in this training.

“This range complex is utilized by The Basic School to train all Marine Officers and provides our company access to instructors from the Small Arms Weapons Instructor School, the top marksmanship instructors in the Marine Corps,” explained Maj. Charles Clark III, the Company E commander, who is a veteran of Operation Enduring Freedom in Afghanistan. In his civilian career, Clark is a counter-sniper requirements officer for the Quantico based Marine Corps Combat Development Command.

The training is specifically designed to prepare Marines to effectively utilize their rifle’s Advanced Combat Optical Gunsight (ACOG) and AN/PEQ-15 advanced target pointer illuminator aiming light with the M-16A4 rifle in combat. The M-16A2 rifle with M203 grenade launcher were also fitted with the new optical devices.

“We have a lot of new equipment such as ACOGs and PEQ-15s, and this is the first time they’ve ever got to train with it. Prior to activation, it is important to get them some range time with this equipment,” said Gunnery Sgt. Carl N. Lorio, a 10-year veteran of Company E and current 4th platoon commander. “Some of this stuff we’re getting from the Marine Corps is phenomenal.”

Lorio is very familiar with the latest state-of-the-art weaponry as a manufacturers’ representative for Keystone Mid-Atlantic company. He provides guidance, recommendations and training to state police and municipal agencies in purchasing body armor, ammunition, weapons and other security equipment.

The Marines from Company E understood how important the training was, as they prepared to mobilize in spring 2008 for upcoming deployment to Iraq with their battalion later this year.

Lance Cpl. Zachary T. Siekerman, a Company E rifleman from Etters, Pa., explained that the range training built his confidence level to keep himself and his fellow Marines alive overseas.

“It prepares you mentally and physically to ensure that you are able to use your skills properly so that you don’t have doubts about what to do.” Siekerman said. “It’s always good to get the muscle memory in by shooting and changing magazines.”

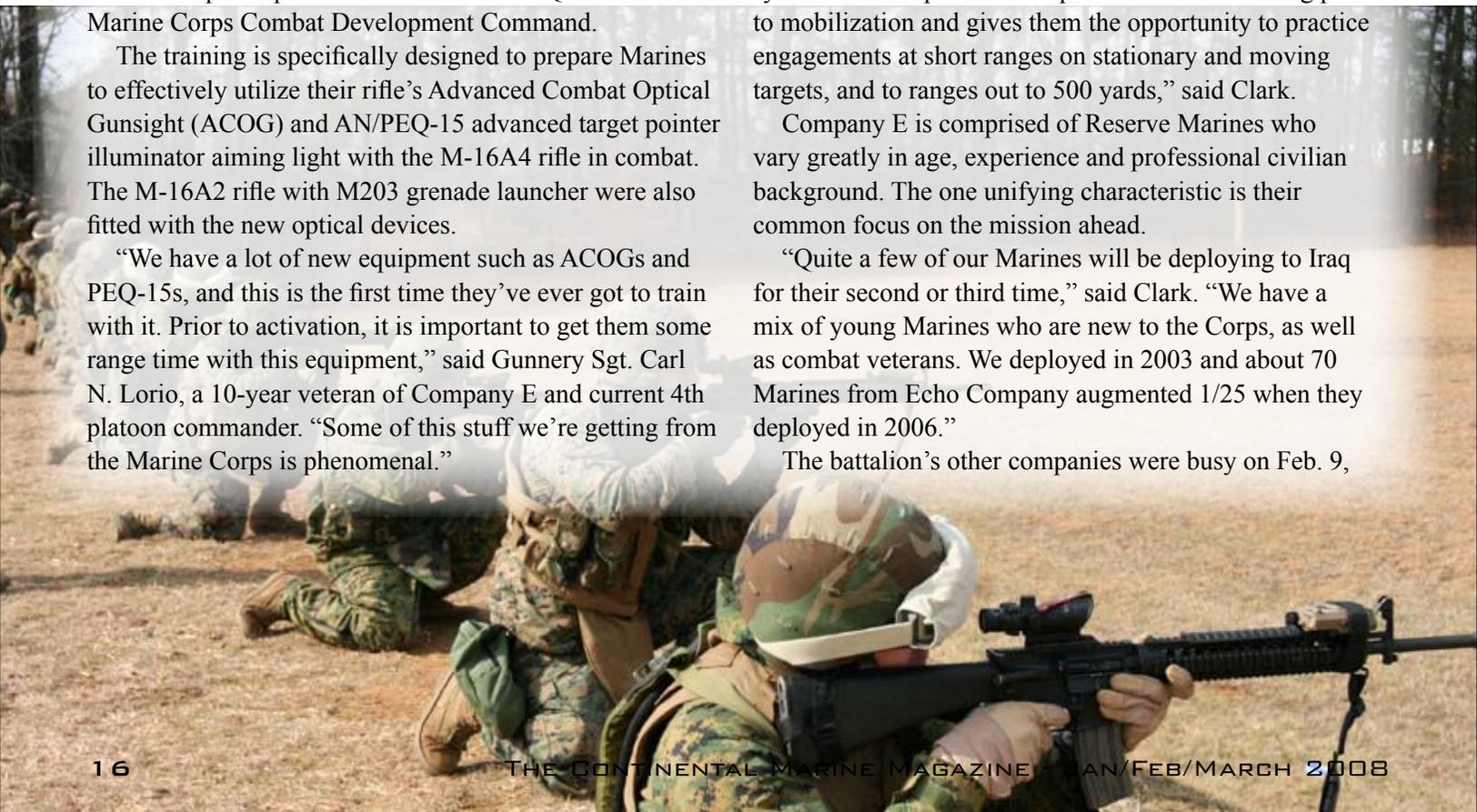
The day began with a cold nip in the winter air under a cloudy canopy of gray, but by noon the sun was out and conditions were ideal for marksmanship. Over the course of the training evolution, Marines shot from a range of distances and in various firing positions.

“It’s going to give them the confidence in their weapons system and completes the required blocks of training prior to mobilization and gives them the opportunity to practice engagements at short ranges on stationary and moving targets, and to ranges out to 500 yards,” said Clark.

Company E is comprised of Reserve Marines who vary greatly in age, experience and professional civilian background. The one unifying characteristic is their common focus on the mission ahead.

“Quite a few of our Marines will be deploying to Iraq for their second or third time,” said Clark. “We have a mix of young Marines who are new to the Corps, as well as combat veterans. We deployed in 2003 and about 70 Marines from Echo Company augmented 1/25 when they deployed in 2006.”

The battalion’s other companies were busy on Feb. 9,





Ryan K. Morton

Lance Cpl. Marqueon Z. Mauldin (shooting) and Lance Cpl. Hero P. Wenur from Company F, 2nd Battalion, 25th Marine Regiment, conduct a live-fire qualification course with the M249 Squad Automatic Weapon at Range 59C at Fort Dix, N.J., Feb. 9.

as well. More than 200 Marines from Company F. went to the range at Fort Devens, Mass. and conducted similar marksmanship training with ACOGs and the AN/PEQ-15. They were linked up with about 200 Reserve Marines from 1st Battalion, 25th Marine Regiment, also based at Fort Devens.

Additionally, Company F went through an individual movement course. This included high crawling to a covered position, engaging from windows and closing to another covered position, giving them the ability to conduct military operations in an urban environment.

“The range provided excellent feedback, allowing the Marine to walk away with a score depicting his ability to hit targets at a close range while moving. After completing this range, they are prepared to conduct room and building clearing at their annual training in March,” said Maj. Scott A. Lauzon, the Inspector-Instructor for Company F.

Company G, based in Dover, N.J., as well as Weapons Company and Headquarters and Service Co., both from Garden City, N.Y., received marksmanship instruction at

Fort Dix, N.J.

Over the course of 14 hours at Range 59C, Company G conducted a standard M-16 combat marksmanship program, M240G and M249 qualification ranges for company machine gunners and about 100 Marines did familiarization fire with both machine guns.

“It was a successful evolution in getting the Marines proficient in their T/O [table of organization] weapons so that they can properly employ them on the battlefield,” said Maj. John D. Fitzsimmons, the Company G commander.

The upcoming mobilization will be the battalion’s third since 2002 and their second tour in Iraq. Their counterparts from 1st and 3rd Battalions, 25th Marine Regiment, who participated in the Feb. 9 training, will join 2nd Battalion as individual augmentees for this deployment.

“This is a big work-up toward our mobilization. Marines are taking things seriously and the tempo has stepped up,” commented 1st Sgt. James T. Neal, the Company E first sergeant. “Any time we can come together as a group and train, it is helping us prepare for our combat mission.” □



Capt. Paul L. Greenberg

Marines from Company G, 2nd Battalion, 25th Marine Regiment, transfer a comrade from a collapsible litter to a poleless litter to begin the second leg of a litter carry relay race at Camp Upshur March 11.

2/25 races for life

CAPT. PAUL L. GREENBERG
MARINE FORCES RESERVE

MARINE CORPS BASE QUANTICO, Va. – Amidst the shouts of U.S. Navy corpsmen, Marines from Company G, 2nd Battalion, 25th Marine Regiment, hauled simulated casualties across a field at Camp Upshur in a litter carry relay race held here March 11.

This training is extremely effective in preparing the Marines for an upcoming deployment to Iraq, according to Petty Officer 2nd Class Jonathan P. Hancock, battalion leading petty officer who helped facilitate the exercise.

Hancock is a Navy Reservist from Piscataway, N.J., and has worked as an intensive care unit nurse at the Muhlenberg Hospital in New Jersey for the past three years.

“We’re having them use all these different stretchers and wearing them out physically ... It also promotes small unit leadership,” said Hancock.

Throughout the evolution, squad leaders shouted directions to their troops over the din of the hollering corpsmen, encouraging their Marines as they ran and directing them to transfer the casualties from traditional collapsible stretchers to the new, poleless litters.

“It gets you used to performing under stress,” said Sgt. Thomas Grosnick, a squad leader from Audobon, N.J. “And we need to learn to use these new stretchers. The competition adds more stress, which is good.”

In addition to being a veteran of Operation Iraqi Freedom, Grosnick is a seasoned corrections officer at the Camden County Jail in New Jersey.

“We need to make this training realistic so the Marines can carry out these activities under real combat stress” said Cmdr. Dennis P. McKenna, the battalion surgeon.

This relay competition was the culmination of several days of first aid classes which the battalion’s Marines participated in during their two-week annual training. □

Wounded warriors shoot it up in airsoft tourney

LANCE CPL. KATIE MATHISON
II MARINE EXPEDITIONARY FORCE

JACKSONVILLE, N.C. – Despite the rain and cool temperatures, approximately 25 people dressed in cammies, flight suits and even ghillie suits, carrying machine guns, assault rifles and pistols competed in an airsoft tournament at Sportsman’s Lodge here Jan. 26.

A few of the participants were Camp Lejeune Marines with the Wounded Warrior Battalion-East, Wounded Warrior Regiment, Manpower and Reserve Affairs.

“For the wounded warriors who can play, it’s great physical therapy,” said Lance Cpl. Brian Densmore, a wounded warrior and enlisted advisor with the Science and Technology Department, II Marine Expeditionary Force. “It really motivates us to get out there and do something physical, but it also serves as an awesome stress reliever.”

Airsoft is a hobby that began in Japan in the late 1970’s. The sport was created to provide an alternative for gun hobbyists, because the Japanese government outlawed gun ownership. The weapons look very similar to real firearms with the exception of their bright orange tips and 6mm plastic ball bearing ammunition. The BB’s can hurt, but cause minimal skin damage.

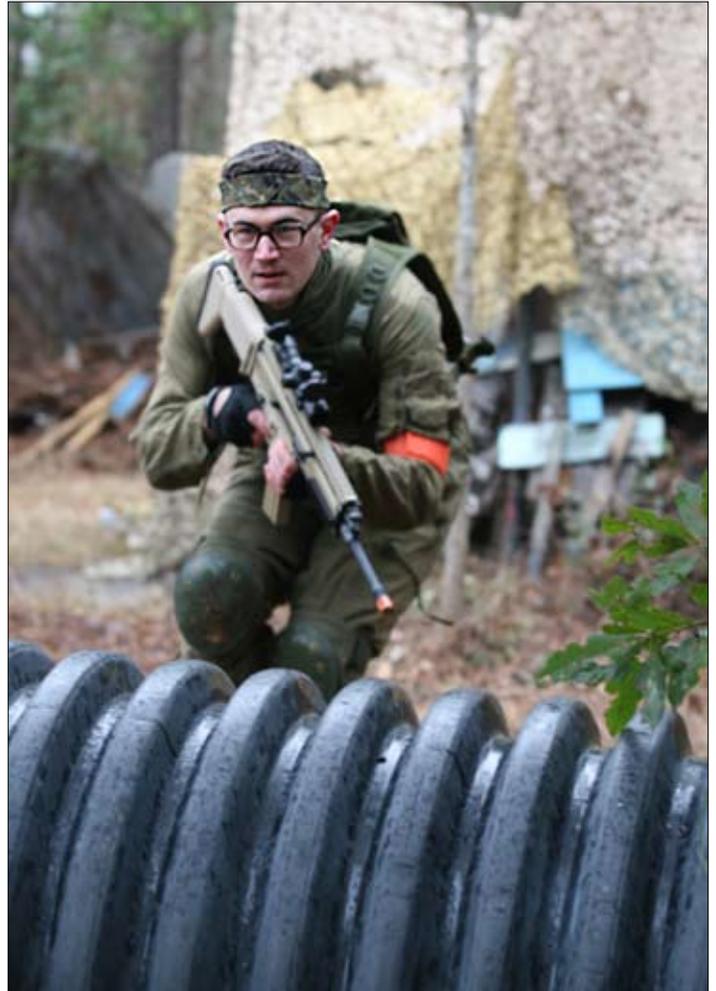
Sgt. Jason Bingham, the battalion’s police sergeant, began playing airsoft before he joined the Marine Corps.

“I began playing in high school,” Bingham said. “A friend of mine brought a gun over after school one day, and I thought it was cool. Then I looked it up online and started to get really into it.”

The difference between playing now and playing in high school is the military tactics, Densmore said. There really were no tactics just guys with weapons shooting each other, and now there are rules, scenarios and actual use of tactical maneuvering.

The entire game is based on the honor system; the teams rely on an individual’s integrity to identify when they have been shot. After an individual is shot, they exit the field holding their weapon above their head to let other players know they are out for the remainder of the round.

There are several games competitors play throughout the tournament and each round is a military simulation, combining airsoft play with military strategy.



Lance Cpl. Katie Mathison

Lance Cpl. Brian Densmore, a wounded warrior with the Wounded Warrior Battalion-East, Wounded Warrior Regiment, Manpower and Reserve Affairs, and enlisted advisor with the Science and Technology Department, II Marine Expeditionary Force, competes in an airsoft tournament at Sportsman’s Lodge in Jacksonville, N.C., Jan. 26.

“The games are fun to play because we actually get together as a group beforehand and set up the rules for each scenario,” Bingham said.

At the end of the day, the wounded warriors headed back to the barracks cold, wet and feeling pain in their injured limbs, but they felt it was well worth it, Bingham said. They were already working up strategies and plans for the next Saturday. □

Lt. Cmdr. Geoffrey R. Lockhart, and Lt. Cmdr. Johnny J. Sacco, certified registered nurse anesthetists with Company A, 4th Medical Battalion, 4th Marine Logistics Group, review the components of anesthesia equipment during annual training at the Navy Marine Corps Reserve Center San Diego Feb. 9.



Lance Cpl. Christopher A. O'Quin

Corpsmen practice setting up field 'ER'

LANCE CPL. CHRISTOPHER O'QUIN
MCAS MIRAMAR

NAVY MARINE CORPS RESERVE CENTER SAN DIEGO – “M-A-S-H”, a television show based around a mobile Army surgical hospital during the Korean War, has remained popular spanning decades. Corpsmen today have their own version of a mobile field hospital to operate in a combat environment.

More than 30 reserve corpsmen from across the country arrived at the Navy Marine Corps Reserve Center, near Marine Corps Air Station Miramar, Feb. 8, for training with a Forward Resuscitative Surgical System, or FRSS.

Corpsmen and surgeons with Companies A and B, 4th Medical Battalion, 4th Marine Logistics Group, practiced setting up the FRSS, enabling them to work with equipment they use while deployed.

The training also enabled the corpsmen to share information about lifesaving techniques.

The mobile hospital provides a place for casualties to receive medical treatment close to the battlefield, explained Cmdr. Anita C. Bacher, the commanding officer of Co. A. They receive the casualties that the corpsmen on the battlefield have treated and take their medical treatment a

step further by performing a variety of medical procedures including sealing up broken blood vessels and bullet wounds.

After the casualties receive treatment, the corpsmen prepare them for transport to hospitals where more extensive work can occur, explained Bacher.

“The benefit of having this is to increase the chance for a casualty to survive, because the mobile hospital is not much more than a half-hour away as compared to a non-mobile hospital two hours away,” said Bacher. “Those 30 minutes have made a difference in saving lives.”

An FRSS consists of eight corpsmen with gear that the sailors can load onto trailers and humvees for quick mobility. Tents, generators and surgical equipment make up only a fraction of what is used in the mobile hospital.

The corpsmen learned how to set up and use the equipment that helps them stay mobile February 8 through Feb. 10.

“It’s been a great opportunity to learn how to set up a tents, generators, and other equipment we’ll use in the field,” said Petty Officer 2nd Class Kathy R. Canady, a corpsman with 4th Medical Bn. “Most of us work in the medical field when we are not active, so it provided us a chance to interact with and show us how to get the most out of the medical equipment we use.”

Each day, the corpsmen set up and broke down the tents and medical equipment they used to help them get acquainted with the equipment they might use.

Marines and sailors with 4th Medical Battalion Headquarters and Service Company also taught the corpsmen with Co. A and B, how to drive humvees, use communication equipment, and operate a generator.

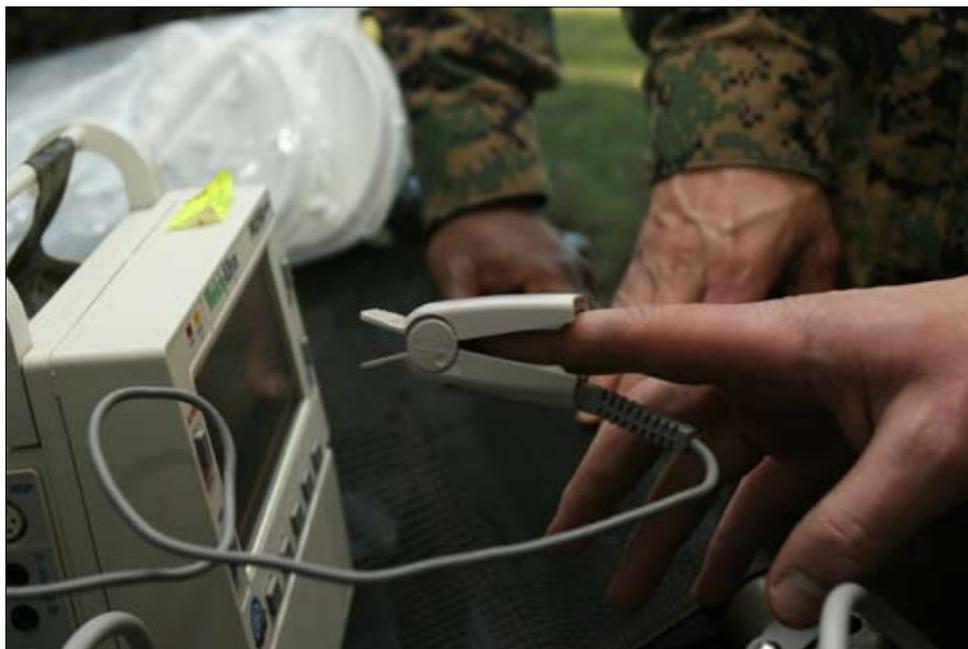
“It was a team effort for me and the other doctors in 1st Medical Battalion assigned to the project, shortly after the Gulf War, the Marine Corps Combat Development Command, (MCCDC) pushed the need for lighter surgical units,” said Navy Capt. Harold R. Bohman, chief of professional services for 1st Medical Bn., Combat Logistics Regiment 15, 1st Marine Logistics Group, and one of the founders of the system. “As the battlefield gets more spread out, the difference in distance between the combat zone and the hospital can be 350 miles.”

With help from the Naval Health Research Center, the team reviewed patient conditions they might see in a combat environment and medical equipment needed to treat those conditions. The team took into consideration the size, weight and the functionality of the equipment for its use in field.

“Operation Enduring Freedom and Operation Iraqi Freedom was the first time we could test the effectiveness of the system in a large combat operation,” said Bohman. “Out of around 3,000 Marines, sailors and Iraqi casualties we’ve had a 95 to 97 percent survival rate for the different FRSS’s in 1st Medical Bn., since the beginning of Operation Iraqi Freedom.”

As the corpsmen deploy this year to Africa or Iraq they can take this knowledge with them, explained Bacher. This training also helps the corpsmen when they support major training exercises.

This training means Marines and sailors can receive medical treatment, faster and more extensively when they receive injuries while deployed. The training helped the corpsmen practice the skills necessary to work as an expeditionary hospital for expeditionary Marines. □



Corpsmen with Company A and B, of 4th Medical Battalion, 4th Marine Logistics Group, practice using a portable Photoplethysmograph, or PPG, device during annual training at the Navy Marine Corps Reserve Center San Diego, Feb. 9. Corpsmen use the device to measure heart rate, blood pressure and breathing. The annual training helped the corpsmen learn how set up all the equipment they will need to use to save lives.

Lance Cpl. Christopher A. O’Quin

Marine continues on with one leg

LANCE CPL. KATIE MATHISON

II MARINE EXPEDITIONARY FORCE

MARINE CORPS BASE CAMP LEJEUNE, N.C. – He faded in and out of consciousness. He knew his legs were injured, but he did not know to what extent.

Capt. Ray Baronie, the executive officer for the Wounded Warrior Battalion-East, Wounded Warrior Regiment, Manpower and Reserve Affairs, has few clear memories of his hospital stays overseas. One of the things he remembers is watching the doctors cut off his boots, as they talked about amputation.

Baronie, at the time, a liaison officer between the Iraqi Security Forces and the Marines of II Marine Expeditionary Force (Forward), was on a U.S. Army convoy moving an Iraqi battalion from one side of Ramadi, Iraq, to the other, when his vehicle was struck by a 57 mm anti-tank rocket, Dec. 1, 2005.

“I got knocked out and when I came to, the vehicle had rolled for two blocks,” he said. “There were just two Marines on the convoy, Sergeant Delwin Davis and myself. Sergeant Davis pulled me out of the vehicle.”

Baronie was free from the vehicle, but far from safe.

“Very shortly after we got on the street, we started taking small arms fire,” he said. “It was a weird feeling. I didn’t know if I was going to make it. For the first time as a Marine, I felt helpless. It was pretty hectic. I had no control over the situation at that point, but I knew I was in good hands with Sergeant Davis.”

Baronie said he knew his legs were injured, but did not know the full extent of his injuries until he woke up in the Naval Hospital in Bethesda, Md. “My legs were crushed,” Baronie said. “I had 20 fractures in my left leg and 18 fractures in my right. I had close to 40 surgeries.”

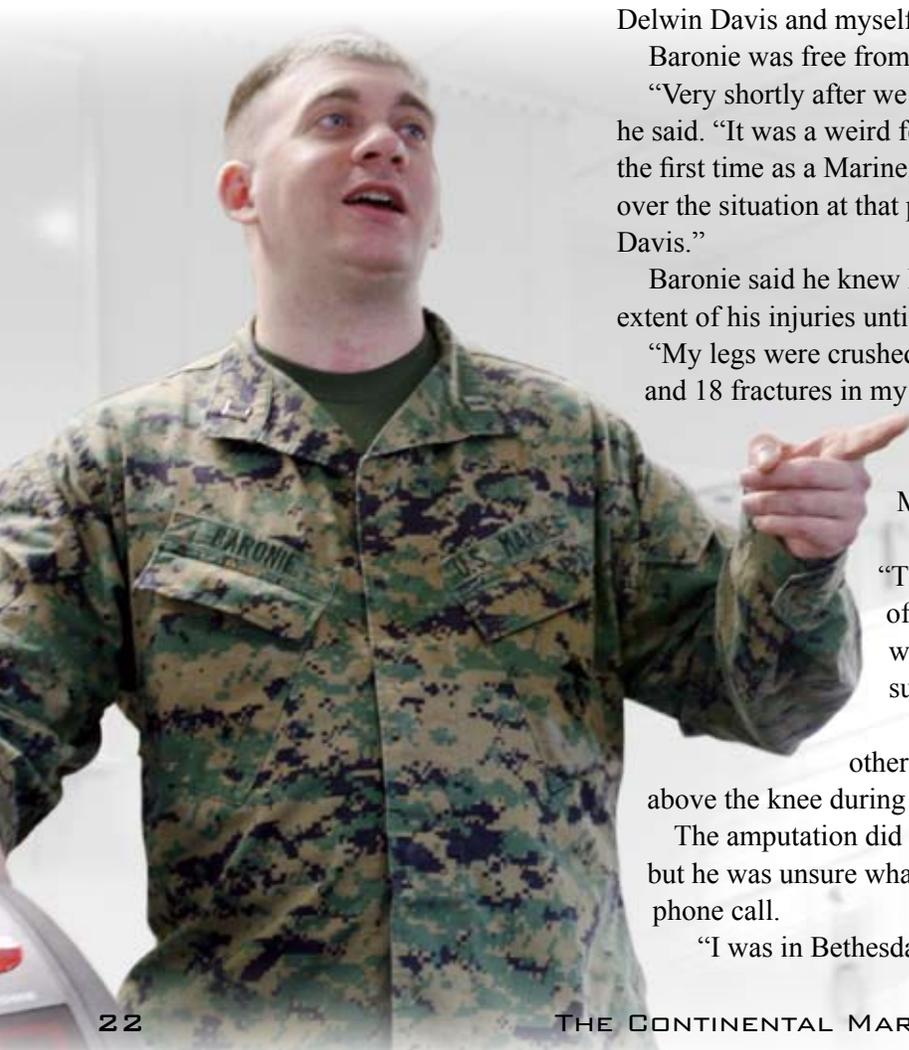
Baronie found the strength to overcome his injury through the support of his family and the Marine Corps.

“My father and my fiancée were with me,” he said. “The Marine Corps did an excellent job of taking care of me. They took care of my girlfriend even though we weren’t married. The Marine Corps knew I needed her support and that was very important.”

The support he received helped him make the otherwise hard decision to have his right leg amputated above the knee during January 2006, after a year of trying to save it.

The amputation did not stop him from wanting to continue his career, but he was unsure what path he would take until he received a fateful phone call.

“I was in Bethesda when Lt. Col. Thomas Siebenthal gave me a phone



call,” he said. “He needed a battalion executive officer, and I thought, ‘I need to take this position.’”

Being the executive officer of a battalion is hard enough, let alone a brand new battalion still trying to find its place, according to Master Sgt. Kenneth Barnes, the operations chief for the battalion.

“He came here and had to drink from the fire hose just like everyone else,” Barnes said. “He was wounded, so he knew about half of it. That makes it a little bit easier for him.”

His injuries also allow him to sympathize with the Marines in the battalion, giving him insight someone without injuries might not have.

“He’s great at his job,” Barnes said. “His heart is really

in it. A Marine can come in with his sob story, and all he has to do is stand up and show them they can get through it. It also makes it harder for someone to pull the wool over his eyes.”

The job goes both ways for Baronie. Being able to help Marines with their injuries is also therapeutic.

“Everyone has their own way of dealing with their injuries,” he explained. “Sometimes they need a little guidance in the right direction, tough love or to talk one-on-one. My injury gives me credibility with the Marines. It’s given me the ability to deal with their individual needs. Working with the Marines and being back to work has greatly helped me. Being in this position has made me forget the fact I am hurt.” □

Spotlight on a sniper

CPL. FRANS E. LABRANCHE
MARINE FORCES RESERVE

GARDEN CITY, N.Y. – A Marine scout sniper is considered by many to be the epitome of a war-fighting machine, demonstrating efficiency and the ability to move undetected in some of the most dangerous places on the planet.

Reserve Marine Lance Cpl. Peter Palma, who graduated Marine Corps Scout Sniper School in Stone Bay, Camp Lejeune, N.C., recently says it was the hardest thing he has ever done, but he learned invaluable skills.

Going to sniper school came as a surprise to Palma, a 27 year-old plumber from Valley Forge, Penn.

“I drilled with the sniper platoon twice and had only been able to check-in when they called and said that I was going to scout sniper school,” said Palma.

While many would be agitated by the short notice, Palma stayed cool and tried to prepare himself the best he could.

“I crammed knowledge for those two weeks,” said Palma. “On top of that, I had to keep working to pay the bills and do physical training to ready myself.”

After hearing that the first two weeks of the class were a prep course for the school and would allow him to catch up, Palma was sure he would be able to succeed.

“On the first day, we ran a physical fitness test, and I mentioned I was glad for the prep course,” said Palma. “Someone then informed me that there was no such course and that I had just finished day one of the scout sniper program.”

From that point on, Palma’s training proceeded with a month of known-distance firing followed by a month of

observation and unknown-distance firing.

“After months one and two,” said Palma, “it all came together in the last month of training, which had Hell Week and the field exercise as your final test.”

During Hell Week, students are subjected to sleep deprivation, constant patrolling and night stalking.

After Hell Week, the students are given a reprieve with one week of slower paced training and some relaxation before their final test begins.

“The culmination of everything you learn is during the field exercise,” said Palma. “Everything from night land-navigation and testing your communication equipment to fulfilling a complete wartime scenario is included in the final test.”

While the skills can be hard to learn, the sniper program can be taxing on the human body.

“The hardest part for me was just the physical ability that is required,” Palma said. “But I really liked stalking and was able to get within 20 yards of the instructors before being sighted.”

Reserve Marines interested in becoming snipers should be wary if they aren’t completely sure that it’s what they want to do.

“The school is definitely something that you want to be sure of,” says Palma. “One bad day could be unrecoverable if you aren’t motivated, and it could take weeks to come back as far as grades are concerned.”

Only 12 of the 34 students who started the course successfully graduated in December.

With sniper training complete, Palma says he will return to his unit and his job as a plumber but is looking forward to deploying mid to late September. □

... He taught me that adversity,
no matter what form it comes
in, does not have to stop or
even slow us down.

Gunnery Sgt. William C. House,
Dontay Burton's Marine Corps sponsor

A boy's wish made real

CAPT. PAUL L. GREENBERG

MARINE FORCES RESERVE

BROOKPARK, Ohio – A warrior named Dontay Burton was laid to rest at the First Missionary Baptist Church in Cleveland, Ohio, Jan. 12. He was eight years old.

Reserve Marines from Headquarters and Service Company, 3rd Battalion, 25th Marine Regiment, 4th Marine Division, Marine Forces Reserve, attended the funeral to pay their respects.

“All he ever wanted to be was a Marine,” said Lt. Col. Minter B. Ralston, the battalion inspector-instructor, who attended the service with Sgt. Maj. Carl L. Chapman, the battalion sergeant major.

Burton, diagnosed with acute lymphoblastic Leukemia in November 2006, was inspired to be a Marine by his grandfather, retired Marine 1st Sgt. Freddie Crawford, according to Ralston.

The Make-A-Wish Foundation coordinated with the U.S. Marine Corps to make Burton's dream come true during his short lifetime.

On May 2, 2007, with his cancer in full remission, Burton set off from his home in Maple Hills, Ohio for Camp Lejeune, N.C., where he met up with his sponsor, Gunnery Sgt. William C. House.

House, who was an intelligence chief for 8th Marine Regiment, 2nd Marine Division at the time, told a Marine Corps reporter, “Dontay is an inspiration to me and all the Marines that got to meet him during his visit to Camp Lejeune. His fighting spirit to not only live but to succeed will stay with me for the rest of my life.”

During his stay in North Carolina, Burton toured Marine Corps Air Stations New River and Cherry Point, Camp Gieger, as well as Camp Lejeune. His experiences included a ride in an M1A1 Main Battle Tank, shooting at an indoor marksmanship trainer, and “flying” in an F/A-18D Hornet Simulator.

“We may grant the wishes, but we also appreciate the tremendous generosity and assistance of the Marines in giving the wish kids such a terrific experience. Everyone really goes all-out for the kids when they visit,” said Brent Goodrich, the media relations manager for Make-A-Wish Foundation of America, based in Phoenix, Ariz.

Although he fought his cancer into remission for about two years, Burton passed away on Jan. 6, 2008 in a Cleveland, Ohio hospital from complications resulting from

a bacterial infection.

House, who stated that he saw Burton “as one of my kids,” drove to Ohio from his current duty assignment at Marine Forces Command in Norfolk, Va., to help comfort the family in their grief. He was not able to stay for the funeral, but dressed Burton in a small Marine Corps camouflage uniform for the burial.

Although their time together was short, it was clear that the impact made by Dontay Burton and the Make-A-Wish experience will be long lasting.

“He showed the young Marines at 8th Marine Regiment that no matter what the obstacle, it will be O.K.” explained House. “Dontay never complained. He was a grown man at heart. He taught me that adversity, no matter what form it comes in, does not have to stop or even slow us down.” □



Sgt. Salju K. Thomas

Dontay Burton and Gunnery Sgt. William C. House watch Marines in a battalion formation run at Camp Lejeune in May 2007. During a Make-A-Wish Foundation visit in North Carolina, Burton toured Marine Corps Air Stations New River and Cherry Point, Camp Gieger, as well as Camp Lejeune.

Dustin Clark, Greyhound Corporate Communications, presents a \$5,000 check to Maj. Amy Raines, Dallas/Fort Worth Toys for Tots, for the Marine Corps Reserve Toys for Tots Program Dec. 3 in Arlington, Texas.



Sgt. Beth Zimmerman

MAG-41 Marines collect toys from DFW area

SGT. BETH ZIMMERMAN
MARINE FORCES RESERVE

ARLINGTON, Texas – As the sun dipped below the line of commuter vehicles settling into rush hour traffic in Arlington, Texas, a pick-up truck towing a large trailer pulled up to a row of boxes guarded by Marines in dress blues.

To the Marines' surprise, the driver and his family hopped out of the truck and started unloading an entire trailer of new bicycles.

The entire load of bicycles was just one family's contribution to the Marine Corps Reserve Toys for Tots Program.

Leathernecks with Fort Worth, Texas-based Marine Aircraft Group 41 spent the day collecting toys in Arlington, Texas, as part of an overall effort currently in full swing to support the Toys for Tots program throughout Dallas and Fort Worth.

The Toys for Tots program collects new, unwrapped toys which are then distributed during Christmas to needy children. According to the Toys for Tots Foundation Web site, the program uses the toys to deliver "a message of hope to needy youngsters that will motivate them to grow into responsible, productive, patriotic citizens and community leaders."

The program, which is in its 60th year, relies

on the support of the local community, according to the Web site. The Marines of MAG-41 who collected toys were impressed with the generosity those from their community displayed in just one day.

"I didn't realize people actually gave that many toys," said Gunnery Sgt. Jose Arteaga, the Electronic Key Management Systems manager for MAG-41.

"As many toys as we packed up, we were only there 10 hours," Arteaga said. "People were just showing up donating hundreds of dollars of toys. It's amazing."

The toy collection kicked off a week-long local media focus on the program, with Fox News reporting each day from collection points in Dallas and Fort Worth. A Fox television team broadcast as Greyhound presented \$5,000 to Toys for Tots; later, the same channel broadcast the large bicycle donation in Arlington.

"When that man brought the bikes, it was an inspiration to others to get involved with the program and help out their community," said Sgt. Justin Parks, an aviation operations noncommissioned officer with MAG-41.

The Marines filled an entire Greyhound bus and a large trailer with the toys collected that day, Arteaga said. □

Iraq veteran ‘Savannah Marines’ practice amphibious support

CPL. JASON D. MILLS

26TH MARINE EXPEDITIONARY UNIT

MARINE BASE CAMP LEJEUNE N.C. – Nearly 20 landing support Marines from the 2nd Beach and Terminal Operations Company (Reinforced), more commonly referred to as the Savannah Marines, deployed to Onslow Beach Feb. 5, in support of the 26th Marine Expeditionary Unit’s participation in an operational evaluation of the USS San Antonio.

The San Antonio is a brand-new vessel with state-of-the-art facilities for supporting amphibious operations. It boasts many improvements over older versions of the amphibious transport dock, including an improved tactical lift, amphibious support and vehicle stowage capabilities as well as generally improved living conditions for the crew and embarked Marines. These improvements will enhance the MEU’s ability to quickly and efficiently project power ashore.

“The primary mission for our Marines is to augment (Combat Logistics Battalion - 26) in support of the 26th MEU operational evaluation of the USS San Antonio,” said Maj. John Sattely, the Savannah Marine’s inspector instructor.

During their 20-day stint here, the landing support Marines, also known as Red Patches, will assist in the offload and backload of all equipment that lands ashore via Landing Craft Air Cushioned and Landing Craft Utility as well as direct various waves of assault forces once they land on the beach.

“Once the crafts are ‘feet dry,’ (the Marines) have to track the amount of cargo and vehicles that come off,” Sattely said. “Any issues stemming from this process, i.e. maintenance of equipment, supply support, et cetera, then they will communicate back to the ship and coordinate the support.”

The Savannah Marines’ ultimate goal is to ensure the MEU has a successful exercise as well as gain some real world amphibious operational experience, Sattely said.

“The MEU will one day be deploying with this ship

and working through some of the ‘friction points’ of amphibious operations and specifically, ship-to-shore operations,” Sattely explained. “While my Marines will be there to support and augment as well as learn, I hope that our assistance will be there to also reduce the amount of friction and provide the MEU with more options for logistic solutions.”

When working and training with the Marine Corps Reserves, it’s all about finding training opportunities, Sattely said. The prospect of so many valuable lessons led all the Marines who came from Savannah to volunteer for the task.

“I volunteered to come out here because it was an excellent training opportunity,” said Lance Cpl. Candice Carroll, a landing support specialist for the Savannah Marines. “I think this operation is vital basic training because we get a lot of different types of training, but we don’t get many opportunities to come out on the beach (where we conduct most of our missions.)”

The reservists are eager to train and deploy and jumped at the chance to participate here, Sattely said.

“To support an active duty Marine Corps unit as well as to work with the U.S. Navy’s newest premier amphibious ship is a unique training opportunity for this unit,” said Sgt. Brandon Dillard, the Savannah Marine’s training chief. His unit greatly benefited from this opportunity to train, Dillard said.

Even though half of the visiting Savannah Marines are Operation Iraqi Freedom veterans and possess a wealth of experience running a variety of platforms, none have any experience in conducting beach operations in support of amphibious operations.

“We are here to learn and gain some great experience from CLB-26 as well as, hopefully, lay a seed in future considerations for augmented support for the other MEUs down the road,” Sattely said.

While commenting on some of the newest creature comforts the San Antonio boasts, Dillard said that, so far, the feedback is very positive. “I have not met an upset Marine who has come off this ship yet.” □

Commandant, Lockheed Martin unveil F35-B Lightning II

SGT. BETH ZIMMERMAN

MARINE FORCES RESERVE

FORT WORTH, Texas – A new generation of Marine air is here.

The F-35B Lightning II, the first fighter aircraft of its kind, debuted at a rollout ceremony in Lockheed Martin's Fort Worth assembly plant that included the Commandant of the Marine Corps and commanders of the 1st, 2nd, 3rd and 4th Marine Aircraft Wings. The Corps' deputy commandant for Aviation, assistant deputy commandant for Programs and Resources, and the commander of Marine Forces Reserve were also on hand for the debut of the aircraft that, according to its developer Lockheed Martin, "will redefine tactical air concepts."

According to a Lockheed Martin release, the F-35B is one of three variants of the Lightning II. Referred to as the "STOVL variant," the aircraft is the first fighter to combine stealth with short takeoff/vertical landing (STOVL) capability and supersonic speed. Lockheed Martin designed it to replace Marine AV-8B Harriers and F/A-18 Hornets.

"Think F/A-18 speed and maneuverability, AV-8B forward deployment, F-22 stealth, and astonishing avionics," said Dan Crowley, Lockheed Martin executive vice president and F-35 program general manager.

"Flexibility – that is the beauty of this aircraft," said Commandant Gen. James Conway. "The flexibility that the STOVL variant of the F-35 will add to the contemporary Marine Air Ground Task Force is amazing," Conway said.

"Our service must have two-fisted capability," said Conway. The F-35B's ability to operate from amphibious ships, runways or unimproved surfaces combined with its speed and stealth will deliver that capability in Iraq, Conway said.

The F-35B is part of Lockheed Martin's Joint Strike



Photo courtesy of Lockheed Martin

The F-35B is one of three variants of the F-35 Lightning II. Referred to as the "STOVL variant," the aircraft is the first fighter to combine stealth with short takeoff/vertical landing (STOVL) capability and supersonic speed.

Fighter program and will also be used by the United Kingdom's Royal Navy and Air Force and the Italian Air Force and Navy, according to a Lockheed Martin release. A new, automatic flight control system transitions the aircraft to and from STOVL mode, when the aircraft can hover, land vertically, take off in a few hundred feet fully loaded, or take off vertically with a light load.

"When the aircraft transitions from jet-borne to conventional wing-borne flight, the doors close and the pilot can then accelerate to supersonic speeds," the release said.

According to Lockheed Martin spokesman John R. Kent, the F-35B's first flight is scheduled for the middle of 2008. The plant plans on producing one F-35B per day once production is in full swing, and the Marine Corps is slated to receive its first delivery of the aircraft in 2011. The Corps ultimately plans to procure 420 jets, Kent said. □



Cpl. Johnathan D. Herring

1st Sgt. William A. Lynch, Inspector and Instructor first sergeant, 4th Assault Amphibian Battalion, prepares a joint color guard for the marching of the colors. Three Army soldiers, two Marines, a sailor and an airman made up the color guard to support the christening ceremony at the Northrop Grumman Avondale Shipyard here March 1.

Gulfport Marines support USS New York christening

CPL. JOHNATHAN D. HERRING
MARINE FORCES RESERVE

AVONDALE SHIPYARD, New Orleans – Marines with Detachment, Company A, 4th Assault Amphibian Battalion, supervised and participated in a joint color guard for the christening of USS New York (LPD-21) here March 1.

Guest speakers included deputy secretary of Defense Mr. Gordon R. England, accompanied by his wife, Dotty England (the sponsor of the ship), Chief of Naval Operations Adm. Michael G. Mullen, and Assistant Commandant of the Marine Corps, Gen. Robert Magnus.

The USS New York is the fifth ship in the San Antonio-class amphibious transport dock and the sixth ship in the Navy to bear the name New York. It has the capability of

carrying a battalion of Marines and their equipment. It also has a platform capable of landing the Expeditionary Fighting Vehicle (EFV), landing craft, air cushioned and the MV-22 Osprey.

The real significance of this ship, however, is that the bow stem is forged from seven-and-a-half tons of twisted steel from the World Trade Center, given to Northrop Grumman by the state of New York after the attacks of Sept. 11, 2001.

“I feel very proud to be a part of this ceremony,” said Sgt. Jonathan Boné, an Amphibious Assault Vehicle crewman with Det., Co. A., 4th AA Bn., from Manhattan, N.Y. “It’s an honor for me to be here. We usually have to support events that aren’t really that significant to us, but this one is a part of history.” □

MAN ON THE STREET

What's your biggest complaint about NMCI?

“When you have a problem, it takes so much work to fix the computer.”

*Lance Cpl. Israel Garcia
Chicago, Ill.*



“Customer service over the phone is fine, but getting someone down when your computer needs to be fixed takes too much time.”

*Master Gunnery Sgt. Charles V. Webb
Jonesboro, Ga.*



“There should be an alternate way to log in without you're your CAC card, in case you forget it. Even to check your email without your CAC card, that would be nice.”

*Sgt. Steven T. Kern
Loveland, Ohio*



What do you do to get ready for the upcoming hurricane season?

“I make sure my government travel card is turned on in case we have to evacuate, know my evacuation and escape routes, and make sure I know where I'm going and how to get there.”

*Cpl. David Sowell
Lufkin, Texas*



“Attend the hurricane briefs and inventory my things in the barracks. My section made a folder of directions on how to get to our evacuation site and made sure all the Marines had transportation there.”

*Lance Cpl. Corina C. Quesada
Corona, CA*



“Get food, lots of water, and candles.”

*Staff Sgt. Julia Edwards
New Haven, Conn.*



Marine pilot donates Medal of Honor

CPL. FRANS E. LABRANCHE
MARINE FORCES RESERVE

NEW ORLEANS – A World War II Marine Corps fighter pilot was honored for his heroic service to his country and his donation to the National World War II Museum in a ceremony here Jan. 31.

Col. Jefferson Deblanc, a Medal of Honor recipient and fighter pilot in the South Pacific during World War II, donated his medal to the museum in November, but did not live to see it presented in the museum’s gallery.

Honoring their father, Deblanc’s children were present to speak of his patriotism and humility toward serving his country.

“He bragged to his friends about his senior Olympic medals which were hung proudly on the wall,” said Barbara Deblanc Romero, Deblanc’s daughter. “But he kept his Medal of Honor put away and would only bring it out when he was asked.”

Along with Deblanc’s Medal of Honor, his family donated the original citation, a picture of President Truman shaking Deblanc’s hand, and a tribal spear Deblanc acquired while held captive in the South Pacific.

Deblanc’s plane was one of several to provide security for a bombing mission to the Solomon Islands, which were so far away that external fuel tanks were mounted to his aircraft, explained Martin Morgan, an historian at the museum.

Once in the air Deblanc realized that his fuel tanks were leaking and he would not have enough fuel to return to the base. Instead of turning back, Deblanc stayed with the pack and registered confirmed kills when Japanese fighters, including two Zeros, attempted to stop them.

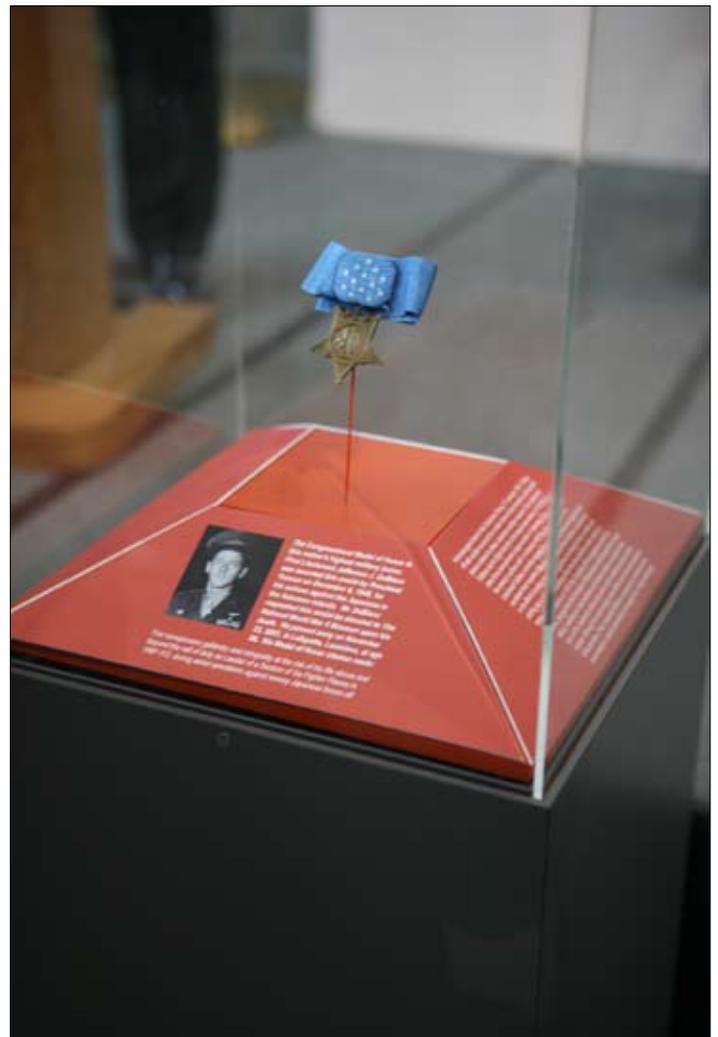
“Undaunted, he opened fire and blasted both Zeros from the sky in short, bitterly fought action which resulted in such hopeless damage to his plane that he was forced to bail out at a perilously low altitude atop the trees on enemy-held Kolombangara,” the citation for his medal states.

In exchange for a ten pound sack of rice, the Kolombangara tribesmen gave Deblanc to a friendly group of natives. Once in their possession, Deblanc traveled by night in a stolen Japanese uniform until he was able to

make contact with the Navy and secure his rescue.

Deblanc went on to fight in the battle of Guadalcanal and several other campaigns of World War II.

His medal and memorabilia will be on display at the National World War II museum here indefinitely. □



Cpl. Frans E. Labranche

A Marine pilot’s spear, acquired while held captive in the South Pacific accompanies his Medal of Honor and other memorabilia at the National World War II Museum. Col. Jefferson Deblanc, a Medal of Honor recipient and fighter pilot in the South Pacific during World War II, donated his medal to the museum in November but did not live to see it presented in the museum’s gallery here Jan. 31.



BLOGGER

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