

FLIGHT JACKET

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Marine Corps Air Station Miramar, Calif.

January 30, 2004

Unmanned planes: eyes in sky

Story by Sgt. Nathan K. LaForte

MCAS Miramar Combat Correspondent

YUMA PROVING GROUNDS, Ariz. – Forward observers are Marines who push ahead of military units to conduct reconnaissance for the main body of Marines coming behind them.

Their objective is to spot out possible enemy units, ambush sites, rough terrain or any other factors that could adversely affect the main unit following their trail.

The job is dangerous because these Marines forge ahead in small groups, trying to get the high ground for the best observation points and hoping to remain unseen by the enemy.

At Exercise Desert Talon, a two-week exercise designed to prepare Marines for another deployment to Iraq, Marines are employing remote-controlled airplanes from Marine Unmanned Aerial Vehicle Squadron 1 to aid the Marine Corps with the dangerous duties of conducting reconnaissance.

The squadron originated at Marine Air Ground Task Force Training Command, Twentynine Palms, Calif., in 1987 as the 1st Remotely Piloted Vehicle Company.

The 1st RPV Company proved its worth through over 300 combat missions between 1987 and 1994. In 1994, the 1st and 3rd RPV companies were merged to form the 1st Unmanned Aerial Vehicle Company.

After a few more changes in parent commands and one more change in name, Marine Unmanned Aerial Vehicle Squadron 1 was reassigned to Marine Air Control Group 38 at MAGTF-TC.

The squadron's purpose has evolved over the years to the six-part mission that it has today, said Cpl. Chris Walkotten, UAV internal operator, VMU-1.

"The six missions that VMU-1 performs are reconnaissance, surveillance, target acquisition, indirect fire adjustment, battlefield damage assessment and rear area security support," said the 23-year-old.

The method of mission accomplishment for VMU-1 is the RQ-2B Pioneer UAV, a 26-horsepower single-propeller, remote operated plane.

The plane only requires few people to operate it.

"To get the plane in the air, it takes an external operator, internal operator and a mission commander inside a portable control station," Walkotten said. "After the (aircraft) is in the air and all the checks are good, the ground control station takes over command."

The crew of the GCS is similar to the PCS except the external pilot is replaced with a payload operator who controls the camera on the plane.

To get the UAV in the air and keep it there, a crew of mechanics and technicians spend hours maintaining the plane after each flight, said Lance Cpl. Christopher L. Rodriguez, UAV airframe mechanic, VMU-1.

"A UAV is just like any other aircraft," the 20-year-old mechanic said. "Any nut, bolt or screw could cause something to go wrong. We make sure that doesn't happen by



Cpl. Michael L. Cochran, external operator, Unmanned Aerial Vehicle Squadron 1, watches his RQ-2B UAV while he makes a low pass with his plane to inspect it while it is in flight. The squadron was at Yuma Proving Grounds, Ariz., in support of Exercise Desert Talon. Photo by Sgt. Nathan K. LaForte

inspecting the plane, which keeps it going."

"We are responsible for making sure the plane is up before the flight, so it is ready when the operators are," he added.

Aside from operators and mechanics, the squadron has communication and intelligence personnel to analyze and communicate the data collected by the plane, Walkotten noted. There are also support personnel that allow the squadron to sustain itself while deployed, he added.

With all of the personnel, some people would argue that it could be easier to rely on forward observers or to have helicopters complete the missions that UAVs fly. However, Walkotten said this is not the case.

"UAVs are like forward observers in the sky without having a Marine up on a hill somewhere," Walkotten said. "It's an unmanned plane, so if it does get shot down, we're not losing any men. It's also a lot cheaper than losing a helicopter."

He added that the plane has no viable heat signature, so missiles can't lock on to the plane.

If the plane is shot down, it is irrelevant because the damage is already done, said Rodriguez.

"If they blow it out of the sky, it's still too late," he ex-

plained. "If they've seen the plane then we have already seen them."

Rodriguez claims that in this way the plane assists the forward observer. He added that this was proven in Iraq.

"The UAVs helped spot out enemy artillery targets, which helped the infantry move as fast as they did," explained the Carson, Calif., native. "They could move fast because they weren't expecting artillery attacks from around each corner."

Walkotten explained that the UAV is an asset that has and will prove itself an invaluable tool to the Marine Corps.

"It is a constant intelligence tool," he described. "We can always use it to re-

port enemy locations to headquarters. In Iraq, we did this while flying in excess of 1,500-hours in seven months."

With this milestone, VMU-1 established two world records in 2003. The first was the record for total flight time in a single fiscal year at 1,523.1 hours. The next was the record for total combat flight hours at 1,414 hours. Both of these records, combined with many other accomplishments allowed VMU-1 to earn the James Maguire Award for ex-

'If they've seen the plane then we have already seen them.'

Lance Cpl. Christopher L. Rodriguez

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Inside

Weekend forecast from Miramar's weather station



68°/47°
Today



66°/44°
Saturday



67°/42°
Sunday

**Fair
showcases
employment
opportunities**



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**Petty Officer
awarded
Bronze Star**



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Miramar Mail

Can the Marine Corps lower the age requirement for the drivers improvement course?

Sgt. Jason Curry
Intelligence Chief
MWSG-37

The Department of Defense directs the Marine Corps to implement the Highway Safety Program Guide.

The objective of driver education is to improve operator skills and habits by modifying individual behavior and atti-

tudes, to reduce injury or death resulting from motor vehicle mishaps.

Military personnel under the age of 26 will complete a minimum of eight hours of classroom instruction in traffic safety designed to establish and reinforce a positive attitude towards driving.

Individual responsibility and correct response to routine and emergency driving situations will be stressed. Miramar uses either the American Automobile Association Driver Improvement Program or the eight-

hour National Safety Council Defensive Driving Course.

Classes are limited to a maximum of 25 students and a minimum of six students to encourage student participation and discussion. Classes begin at 7 a.m. in building 9442.

For more information visit the Station Safety Web site at www.miramar.usmc.mil/miramar/safety_courses.htm or call them at 577-4988.



Maj. Gen. Jon A. Gallinetti

New generation faces new kind of war, Cheney says

Story by Jim Garamone

American Forces Press Service

WASHINGTON - A new generation of American servicemembers has picked up the gauntlet thrown by terrorists and has accepted new responsibilities in the world, Vice President Dick Cheney said at Aviano Air Base, Italy, Jan. 27.

"Today's generation of our military has been called to fight in the first war of the 21st century - a war that began on September 11th, 2001, when enemies struck the United States and murdered thousands of our fellow citizens," Cheney said to assembled airmen, their families and their Italian allies.

Cheney said that Sept. 11 changed everything, and in that day of violence and grief, America got a glimpse of the even greater harm terrorists want to inflict on America.

"The terrorists hate our country and everything we stand for in the world," Cheney said. "They seek even deadlier weapons, and they would use them against us. In the face of this danger, we have only one option, and that's to take the fight to the enemy."

The coalition against terrorism is breaking up cells and disrupting plots. America and its allies are tracking al Qaeda opera-

tives around the world, Cheney said. "Many skilled and determined military personnel are on a manhunt," he noted, "and one by one, we will bring the terrorists to justice."

And the United States is prepared to hold liable rogue regimes that support terrorists, provide them havens and provide them with weapons of mass destruction.

"That's why we went into Afghanistan, and took down the regime, and shut down the al Qaeda camps," he said.

Afghanistan today is a land embarked on a democratic trail. The country has written a new constitution and the Loya Jirga has accepted it. Afghanistan has a long way to go - Taliban and al Qaeda remnants are still battling coalition servicemembers - but it will never again house the terrorists, Cheney said.

"In Iraq, where a dictator cultivated ties to terror and sought to arm himself with deadly weapons, America led a mission to make the world safer, and liberate the Iraqi people," the vice president said. "Saddam Hussein defied the demands of the civilized world and he has experienced the consequences."

At the start of 2003, Saddam controlled the lives of 25 million people. "Now at the

beginning of 2004, he's in jail," Cheney said. "He will never again brutalize his people, never again threaten the United States of America."

The vice president said recent combat operations in Afghanistan and Iraq showed the great power and precision of America's modern military. U.S. military units were able to strike at military targets and spare civilian resources, he said.

"We will invest in these and other capabilities in the years ahead," Cheney noted.

"To carry out any mission that may come, you deserve the very best, in terms of weapons, equipment, and training and support.

And you will have them."

Cheney said operations continue in Iraq and Afghanistan. U.S. military personnel are working with coalition partners from around the world to "establish free and stable societies in a troubled region of the world."

That effort still has enemies, he said, and those enemies have adopted terror tactics to confront the United States.

"They hope to intimidate us, but they won't succeed," Cheney declared. "We will confront and defeat them at the heart and the center of their power, so we do not have to face them on the streets of our own cities."

Deploying? Park your vehicles legally while space is available

Story by Sgt. J.L. Zimmer III

MCAS Miramar Combat Correspondent

For the more than 4,000 Marines and Sailors preparing to deploy to the Central Command area of responsibility, storing personal property and vehicles can be a potential and costly problem.

The traffic management office and provost marshal's office here have teamed up to keep this potential for hazard to a minimum by opening a privately owned vehicle storage lot at Camp Elliott.

"(PMO) is responsible for illegally parked or abandoned vehicles," said Staff Sgt. David S. Suder, traffic chief, Headquarters and Headquarters Squadron PMO. "If the Marine or Sailor is deployed, we try and work with their unit to have the vehicle properly stored to avoid fines or fees."

According to TMO, the only thing that limits storage space is the number of personnel deploying.

"The amount of space available at the

lot depends on the number of Marines or Sailors deploying," said Sgt. Edward Serna, passenger noncommissioned officer-in-charge, H&HS TMO. "They can store their vehicles for the duration of their deployment, no matter how long they are gone."

Suder said that one of the largest problems is when Marines leave their vehicles in the barracks parking lot until they return from their deployment.

"When we get a call about an illegally parked vehicle, we put an impound tag on it," said the 33-year-old Centerville, Penn., native. "This tag informs the owner they have 72 hours to move their vehicle."

"During this 72-hour-period, we perform a search to find the registered owner," he continued. "We will contact the owner and if the vehicle is not moved within that 72 hour timeframe, we will tow and impound the vehicle."

For more information on the Traffic Management Office vehicle storage lot, call 577-1303.

Coalition Applauds U.N. Initiative in Iraq

Story by Donna Miles

American Forces Press Service

WASHINGTON - Coalition officials in Baghdad expressed strong support Tuesday for a United Nations plan to send a team to evaluate the feasibility of holding direct elections before June 30.

Dan Senor, senior coalition spokesman, told reporters in Baghdad that he welcomes U.N. Secretary General Kofi Annan's announcement that he will dispatch a security team to Iraq. The team will assess the security situation on the ground to determine the feasibility of sending an electoral team.

Annan announced the plan today in Paris, where he is meeting with French President Jacques Chirac. His decision marks the most significant expansion of the United Nations' role in Iraq since most staffers left the country in late October due to security concerns.

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FLIGHT JACKET

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Miramar's new garbage cans are good trash

Story by Cpl. Jeff Zaccaro

MCAS Miramar Combat Correspondent

The Air Station recently spent \$34,000 on 150 new trash receptacles to place around the base.

With the new trashcans in place and 100 more on the way, the Headquarters and Headquarters Squadron buildings and grounds section is hoping that litter aboard the Air Station will cease to exist.

However, according to Cpl. Davidson Done, buildings and grounds noncommissioned officer-in-charge, before the trashcans prove effective, servicemembers aboard the Air Station must do their part in the upkeep of the Air Station.

"It only takes a few seconds to look around and find a trashcan, but people are still throwing their garbage on the ground," said Done.

Since litter is still a big problem for the base, the undermanned buildings and grounds department is overwhelmed with policing the

Air Station.

"We drive routes around the base to pick up the loose trash," said Lance Cpl. Stephen Ruley, buildings and grounds Marine. "The route takes us all day to drive and we usually end up with about seven to ten 50 gallon bags full of loose trash at the end of the day."

According to Ruley, the most commonly found trash items are plastic grocery bags, cans, bottles, cigarette packs and fast food wrappers.

Although Ruley said these products are the most common, Done noted that there is a different kind of trash that is quickly becoming a problem.

"Since we put up the cans by the flightline, individual work sections are bringing their shop's trash and just setting it by the cans," said Done. "They still need to utilize the dumpsters around the flightline for this."

Because of this problem, Done

said the area around the flightline gate is one of the worst problem areas around the Air Station, as well as the commissary and the physical fitness test "red course."

Done also added that litter is not fair to the servicemembers who work at Miramar, especially the ones in his shop.

"Our job is not an actual (military occupational specialty). We have three permanent Marines, and we get a few different Marines every month from the Wing and the brig," he said. "This is a tough job, but someone has to do it."

In order to lighten the load of garbage around the Air Station, Done said the easiest way for servicemembers to help is to use the new trashcans.

"Everyone just needs to be aware of their surroundings. There are trash cans everywhere now," he said. "We did our jobs by putting the cans out there, now it is everyone's turn to do their part in using them."



A Marine carelessly drops a finished drink not aware of the recently installed trashcans aboard the Air Station. Litter is a problem aboard the Air Station and a burden for the buildings and grounds department. Photo by Cpl. Jeff Zaccaro

Flying Leathernecks donate check to Toys for Tots

Story by Lance Cpl. John Sayas

MCAS Miramar Combat Correspondent

The Flying Leatherneck Historical Foundation made the 2nd Annual Toys for Tots Golf Tournament results official by handing over donated funds collected during the tournament to the Marine Corps Reserve's Toys for Tots Program here Jan. 20.

The tournament, which took place at the Miramar Memorial Golf Course Dec. 10, accumulated almost \$1,400 in donations for the program along with a handful of new, unwrapped toys, according to Jay Bibler, vice president, Flying Leatherneck Historical Foundation. The foundation, a non-profit organization that supports the Flying Leatherneck Aviation Museum here, also benefited from the tournament as it received a check for the same amount to help with museum costs and future projects.

Bibler said several tournament sponsors including station units and local businesses donated up to \$300, which contributed to the success of the tournament. It included 142 players and guest player R. Lee Ermey, star of the movie "Full Metal Jacket" and host of the History Channel's "Mail Call."

The toys, donated by players as part of

their entry into the tournament, were handed over to Marine reservists of 4th Tank Battalion, 4th Marine Division, at the conclusion of the tournament. The donated money was split in half and given to the foundation and Toys for Tots program, according to Bibler. The foundation collected and donated a total of 1,884 toys to the program last year.

"It was an extremely successful tournament," Bibler said. "We had a number of sponsors out here that supported us."

Chief Warrant Officer Wendy Willis, Peacetime/Wartime Support Team officer-in-charge, 4th Tank Bn., 4th MarDiv., said after receiving the check from retired Marine and foundation chairman, Maj. Gen. Bob Butcher, the donations are very helpful to the program as it gives program organizers enough donations to begin serving next year's requests.

"These funds that come in after we are done with the program this year are really important because they help us to start next year's distribution," said Willis, a San Diego native.

The site has already about 4,300 toys stored to start next year's program because donations do not always match the age and gender of the children registered by the organizations who distribute the toys, and some

donations are received after the distribution period ends, according to Willis.

"When we kick off next year, we are all ready to give out toys to organizations. Since we have 350 plus organizations, we have to be ready to go," she added.

The San Diego community donated more than \$127,000 and 78,478 toys during last year's toy drive, according to Willis. The distribution site purchased over 11,000 toys, which cost more than \$153,000, to supplement donations from the community.

The total number of toys received this year was 91,480, with only 87,180 toys being distributed to 260 local non-profit organizations throughout San Diego County, she said. These organizations distributed the toys to 41,318 children who each received about two age-appropriate toys each.

"As the toys come in, they get sorted and packaged then shipped right back out," she said. "It's one of the things as a community you can use to build hope in children which

makes them feel better about life."

The Marine Corps Reserve Toys for Tots Program collects new, unwrapped toys between October and December each year and distributes them as Christmas gifts to thousands of needy children in communities across the country. Willis said the program collects nearly 100,000 toys every year in the San Diego area.

Toys for Tots activities include collection and distribution of toys in the communities in which a Marine Corps Reserve unit is located. In the communities without a reserve unit, a Marine Corps League Detachment or veteran Marines, authorized by Marine Toys for Tots Foundation, conduct a local Toys for Tots campaign.

Local campaign coordinators conduct an array of activities throughout the year, which include golf tournaments, foot races, bicycle races and other voluntary events designed to increase interest in the program, and generate toy and monetary donations.

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Acknowledging that it is impossible to protect the United Nations team "everywhere, all the time," Senor said the Coalition Provision Authority will provide "all necessary measures to ensure the success and safety of the team" and will "cooperate fully as they move forward on this process."

Ironically, Senor's assurance was delivered during a briefing that was delayed for more than an hour after a bomb was discovered nearby. Details of the incident were not available at press time, and officials said the incident was still under investigation.

Army Brig. Gen. Mark Kimmitt, deputy director of operations for Combined Joint Task Force 7, said the number of attacks - but unfortunately not the number of casualties - against coalition troops "has consistently and continuously gone down since about mid-November."

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Career Fair opens doors of opportunity

Story by Lance Cpl. John Sayas

MCAS Miramar Combat Correspondent

A portion of what the job market has to offer for departing servicemembers was put on display during Career Fair '04 at the Miramar Officers' Club here Jan. 21.

Approximately 70 companies were represented at the event ready to hire the right person for the job, according to Bob Leeds, Family Member Employment Assistance Program Manager, Marine Corps Community Services. Servicemembers, spouses and retirees were given the opportunity to talk with representatives from different companies and provide resumes that might land the job that works for them.

"Within those companies, they probably have thousands of job opportunities," Leeds explained. "We try and target everybody. You will see a little bit of everything here."

The reason to attend a job fair should not just be about giving a resume, but to have the opportunity to talk to company representatives with the possibility of being hired on the spot, Leeds said. He suggested that job seekers talk to them first, find what they are looking for, and express the kind skills and experiences they have that would fit within their company.

"Hopefully in the process of the conversation you will actually give

them your resume," he explained. "You have somebody who is either a recruiter for the company, somebody who works out of the human resources office, or somebody who is the actual hiring supervisor. They will literally do a mini-interview and hire you on-the-spot."

Cpl. Sam Lopez, early warning control operator, Marine Air Control Squadron 1, has intentions of leaving the Marine Corps within the next four months, and he attended the fair with hope of having an idea where he might be working next.

"There is a lot of good information available here. There is a lot of stuff people can take advantage of such as Express Personnel Services, who actually find jobs for you," said the 21-year-old Visalia, Calif., native. "No matter what, you can always get something here."

There are plenty of opportunities for people to attend the fair as it is conducted three times a year, according to Leeds. He said several companies are represented every year while others are rotated out with other companies looking for employees to work for them.

"The career fairs here are always excellent," said Bonnie Apple, Express Personnel Services recruiter and spouse of a retired Marine colonel. "Our company supports what you all do here. We have a real heart to get servicemembers as they are leaving the service because that transi-



San Diego County Deputy Sheriff Laura Coyne talks with a Marine about the career opportunities offered by the sheriff's department during Career Fair '04 at the Officers' Club here Jan. 21. The event included 70 companies with job opportunities in a variety of career fields such as administration, health care, retail, sales and federal employment. Photo by Lance Cpl. John Sayas

tion can be very difficult. That's where our heart is - to really help these people."

In addition to the career fair, the Career Resource Center here offers information and assistance to aid military servicemembers, retirees, veterans, DoD civilian employees and their family members in their career planning and job search, according to Leeds.

The two primary programs at the center are Transition Assistance and Family Member Employment Assistance. The center includes representatives from Disabled American Veterans, Veteran's Affairs, and California EDD. Leeds said it provides a variety of resources such as employment workshops, computer programs, Internet access, a reference library and job

listings that are updated daily, as well as a friendly and helpful staff to assist and answer any questions.

For more information on the Career Fair or for a listing of attendees and their Web site, stop by the Career Resource Center located in building 5305 or visit their Web site at www.mccsmiramar.com/careerresource.html.

Marines pass computer network and systems to civilians

Story by Cpl. Kristen Tull

MCAS Miramar Combat Correspondent

In the past, Marines themselves have taken care of their computer support and network infrastructure throughout the Marine Corps through computer network and systems operations.

A plan was created and is now being implemented to switch that control from Marines to civilians.

"This means during this transition, customer service is changing and the customers, for the most part, are uninformed as to

what's going on," said Cpl. Justin Schreiter, of Miramar's Operations Office. "(Headquarters Marine Corps) says the outside company can do the same job the Marines are doing, only cheaper and more efficiently."

Larry L. Norris, Miramar's Site Transition officer-in-charge says the Department of the Navy developed a concept for the Navy and Marine Corps Information Technology to incorporate enhanced technology, increase information assurance and ensure connectivity between the Navy and Marine Corps.

"We're using Texas-based Electronic Data Systems Corporation (EDS), as our contractors," said Norris.

The reason for the change is the Marine Corps no longer has the funds needed to keep up with today's technology.

"With this system, we'll all be under one umbrella, with all fees being paid up front," said Norris. "Everything is at a set price, no matter how much it goes up in price on the market."

With this contract, the Marines will receive a new computer every three years to ensure they are getting the most up-to-date technology.

The other change users will see is that they will no longer be able to call their helpdesk if they encounter a problem.

"They will have to call a regional toll-free help line, that may be located in Pensacola, to get assistance," said Norris.

Moving locations, adding an additional component, or changing something on your computer, called a move, add, or change (MAC) could take up to 30 days.

"A MAC goes through several databases to approve or disapprove funds before it gets to the contractor that implements it," said Norris. "The initial cost of the computer system is paid through Headquarters Marine Corps, any changes, such as a flat screen or a wireless keyboard, will come out of the base operating funds."

If you call the helpdesk for a problem, they are required to call you back within

20 minutes to start fixing your problem, then 24 working hours to repair your computer.

"They have to speak with you personally, and will take over your computer in order to fix the problem," said Norris.

The Marine Corps is ensuring control by having a service level agreement in the contract.

"They have to stay at the height of support, or the Marine Corps won't pay," said Norris.

The entire process began about two years ago, and contractors have been on station evaluating the Marine Corps' needs since October of 2003.

"They're surveying things such as the number of users, the number of fiber optic cables needed, and testing different software," said Norris. "The official change over date is April 1st of this year."

Working on an event driven concept, the entire process is supposed to take six to eight months to complete.

"Most Marines currently working at G-6 will be sent back out to the fleet, very few will ever work on a base or a station," said Norris. "Deployed units will be able to take their computer out for the duration of the deployment. Upon returning, NMCI will take back over."

There will be a lot of changes, but it's the most cost effective way for the Marine Corps to keep up with today's technology.

Marines fight to be on the Feud

Story by Cpl. Jeff Zaccaro

MCAS Miramar Combat Correspondent

Miramar's quick-witted Marines gathered at the Great Escape Jan. 22, to try to earn a spot on upcoming episodes of "Family Feud."

"Family Feud" is a televised game show that first aired in 1977. In the show, two families compete against each other to be the first to guess the most popular answers to questions that were asked to 100 people.

Although traditionally a family show, instead of families, the Feud will be featuring teams of hand selected Marines, soldiers, Sailors and airmen representing their respective services in a series of five upcoming shows.

According to Sara Dansby, "Family Feud" contestant producer, the episodes will air "in celebration and appreciation of the military."

To earn one of the five coveted spots on the show, Marines from the Air Station had to fill out a survey, introduce

themselves and play a mock game of the Feud.

During the game and the introduction, the casting crew were looking for a few qualities in the Marines to aid in the cast selection.

"We were looking to get to know the person and make sure they could produce the right answers and that they had the ability to speak in front of a crowd without being nervous," said Dansby. "If they are nervous now they won't be able to handle it in front of the cameras and audience."

After the interviews were complete, the casting crew took the applications and notes back to Hollywood to review before making their final selections.

Dansby explained that after their selections were made, the five would be called to inform them they were chosen.

"We will call them, and bring them down to Hollywood, put them in a hotel for a night, and film the show on the 31st," she said.

Although only five Marines will be lucky enough to participate in all of this, the tryouts alone were enough for some

of them.

"I came to try out because I thought it would be fun," said Cpl. Akash Bhajan, Marine Tactical Air Control Squadron 38 technical operator. "You never know though, you might just get on and hopefully win."

According to Dansby, this might not be the only chance for Marines to appear on the show.

"We are trying to set up a Marine week in the future where we will feature no one besides Marines," said Dansby, whose appreciation for the Corps comes from having a Marine father. "It will give the Marines a chance to come and represent their own shop or unit."

The show that is to be taped Jan. 31 is scheduled to air in May.

Drive safely today so that you may return tomorrow

myPay offers more than W-2 access

Story by Cpl. Jeff Zaccaro

MCAS Miramar Combat Correspondent

With the Marine Corps no longer issuing W-2 forms, its servicemembers have to turn to the Defense Financial Accounting Service myPay Web site to obtain them.

However, after obtaining their personal identification number and first logging in, Marines may not realize that myPay can provide much more than just their W-2 form.

According to Eric Berger, finance operations officer, myPay can provide nearly all services the financial office can, from any computer with Internet access.

"From myPay, servicemembers can access leave and earning statements up to three months old, start, stop or change their allotments or direct deposit account and change their W-4 form," said Berger.

In addition to these features, servicemembers can view their latest pay information to know exactly when they got paid and for how much, and change personal information such as home of record information and correspondence addresses.

According to Berger, myPay's electronic services are very time efficient compared to traditional "hard copy" methods.

"On myPay, LES's are available by the fifth of the month, when before it would become available around the 15th. That is up

to a two week jump when accessing online," he said.

Berger also added that myPay is a secure Web site, meaning servicemembers do not have to worry about having information being intercepted by a third-party since the Web site's data is encrypted.

Since myPay's information is secure, servicemembers are required to obtain a PIN prior to accessing the site. Although PINs can be issued directly from DFAS, Berger explained that the easiest way to gain access is through the Air Station's Finance Office, located in building 6022.

"If a PIN is requested from the myPay Web site, it can take up to three to four weeks," said Berger. "We can issue temporary PINs that are active within 72 hours. Any active duty or reserve servicemember in enlisted or officer status can get a PIN. All they need to do is come to our office with their identification card."

According to Berger, the best thing about myPay is its accessibility.

"myPay can be accessed by any computer with Internet access. With people being deployed overseas, they will no longer have to wait three months to get their LESs," he said.

For more information on myPay, please visit their Web site at <https://mypay.dfas.mil>, or call the finance office at 577-1372.

O'club hosts crab night, hundreds feast

Story by Sgt. J.L. Zimmer III

MCAS Miramar Combat Correspondent

And what would you like with your crab, sir?

This question was asked to nearly 200 patrons at the Officers' Club Jan. 23 as they hosted their monthly crab fest buffet dinner.

Bob Bendas, executive chef, Officers' Club, coordinated the preparation and serving of more than 200 pounds of crab and more than \$2,000 in other entrees.

"We only serve on a reservation basis because of the price of the food," he said. "We have been having this crab night every month for about the past three years and it has been a success."

This month's crab fest hosted a vari-

ety of entrees and side dishes, to include fried shrimp, steaks, salad, coleslaw and a line of desserts.

Bendas said that crab night has been the biggest success of all the food themes they have tried in the past.

"We tried to have a lobster night, but that is too expensive and you need to have a large lobster to make a good sized meal," he said. "Crab night has been successful, so we keep it around."

Bendas added that crab is not the only reason the people come to this once a month event.

"The patrons come to eat and talk," he said. "When someone goes out to dinner, it is not (just) fast food. They want to relax and enjoy (each other's company)."

See **Crabs**, page 11

'Service' to God, Corps, country

Navy petty officer awarded Bronze Star with Combat V

Story by Sgt. A.C. Strong

MCAS Miramar Combat Correspondent

"For heroic achievement in connection with combat operations against the enemy as Religious Program Specialist, I Marine Expeditionary Force ... in support of Operations Enduring and Iraqi Freedom."

January 2003, thousands of I Marine Expeditionary Force Marines and Sailors deployed in support of Operation Enduring Freedom and Operation Iraqi Freedom. First Battalion, 11th Marines out of Marine Corps Base Camp Pendleton, Calif., were among them.

From "grunt" to "admin" clerk, every element of the air ground task force was represented - and they had their "doc" to patch them up, and their chaplain to get them through ...

"On 25 March 2003, as a part of a religious ministry team providing Chaplain support to 1st Battalion, 11th Marines in the vicinity of An Nasariya, Iraq, the Battalion came under small arms and machine gun fire ... on the western side ..."

And the religious programs specialist made sure the chaplain, who can't carry a weapon, made it through.

"With total disregard for his personal safety, Petty Officer 1st Class Robert Page provided protection to the Chaplain by plac-

ing himself between the Chaplain and the incoming rounds."

"When I met RP1 he said 'I'm going to be your RP and I'm going to take care of you,'" said Cmdr. Irving A. Elson, Jewish Chaplain, MCAS Miramar.

A last minute replacement for the 1/11 Chaplain, Elson, whose father was a Marine during the Korean War, and Page, a former Marine staff sergeant, felt it was necessary to stay where they could have the most impact on Marines in those crucial times. So they stayed with regimental combat team one, placing themselves in harms way.

"When the battalion began taking fire from the right flank position, he immediately took action to ensure the Chaplain's safety by standing over him and using his person as protective cover."

"There are two people a battalion can't do without - the Skipper (Commanding Officer) and the Chaplain," said Page, who is the lead petty officer for the I MEF Chaplain's office. "That's my job - take care of the Chaplain. You don't think about it. You just do it."

March 25, in Northern California, Lori Page woke from a "dead sleep," with her heart racing and terrified for her husband.

"In my mind, in my heart, I knew that I just needed to pray," she said. "It wasn't until after he returned home that I found out the



"He who saves a life is as if he has saved the universe." Talmud

Petty Officer 1st Class Robert Page, lead petty officer, 1st Marine Expeditionary Force Chaplain's Office, is presented with the bronze star by Cmdr. Irving Elson, Jewish Chaplain, MCAS Miramar, at the Officers' Club here Jan. 23. Photo by Lance Cpl. John Sayas

situation they were in. He said to me 'Lori, I didn't think we were going to make it,' but it's in his blood. He was a Marine when I met him, and he did just what he was trained to do."

"When the Battalion received heavy fire, he immediately moved the Chaplain from the vehicle (in which they were traveling), dug in, and covered the Chaplain with his body. Simultaneously, he returned fire and directed other Marines around him to provide the covering fire in order to ensure the Chaplain's safety."

The Rabbi joked, "I used to say that they had to send me with the biggest RP. Well, when we were under fire, he just picked me up and threw me out of the vehicle.

"By his zealous initiative, courageous actions, and exceptional dedication to duty, Petty Officer First Class Page reflected great credit upon himself and upheld the highest traditions of United States Naval Service."

January 23, Petty Officer 1st Class Page was awarded the Bronze Star with Combat V for valor in a special ceremony during a luncheon commemorating the 25th Anniversary of the religious programs specialist rating.

As the citation was read in the packed

Hornet room of the MCAS Miramar Officers' Club, two families stood together. Francine Elson, wife of Rabbi Elson, and Lori Page, each with a toddler at hand, shared their tears, listening to the detailed account.

"It was the first time I heard some of the details," said Francine Elson, who has been married to the Rabbi and fellow Philadelphia native, for more than 18 years. "It was hard to listen to."

Had it not been for his military career, Lori Page may not have met her husband whose hometown is across the country in Columbus, Ga. They met when he was a reservist in the Marine infantry.

Page left active duty in 1986. After completing college, he felt the pull of the Corps and joined the Marine Corps Reserves. Throughout the next 20 years, Page was activated for operations such as High Roller, Capstone and Weed Eater in Grenada. He said his prior operational experience assisted him in Iraqi Freedom.

When his faith led him to leave the Marine Corps and join the Navy Reserve, truly serving God and country, Lori was by his side.

See **Bronze**, page 11

RPs celebrate 25 years of service

Story by Lance Cpl. John Sayas

MCAS Miramar Combat Correspondent

Navy religious program specialists were recognized for their continued service as partners in ministry of religion during a luncheon at the Miramar Officers' Club here Jan. 23 celebrating the 25th anniversary of when the rating was first established.

"The dedication and service you provide as an RP cannot be measured adequately to quantify the positive impact the RP rating has provided the sea services for the past 25 years," said Rear Adm. Louis V. Iasiello, Chief of Navy Chaplains, in a Naval message released Jan. 14.

The history of RPs dates back to 1942 when the Specialist Welfare rating was established to assist Navy chaplains for the duration of World War II. In 1948, the spe-

cialist rating was merged into the new personnelman rating.

From 1945-1979, the Yeoman rating furnished personnel in the Chaplain clerk's specialty to aid and support Navy chaplains. They, however, did not provide the expected support needed by chaplains over the years.

Initially 160 men and women were selected to provide support to Navy chaplains after the RP rating was finally established Jan. 15, 1979. Hundreds more have assumed the duties as RPs during times of peace, conflict, war and terror, providing assistance to Navy chaplains, while helping to ensure that the religious rights and spiritual needs of all service personnel and their families are being met.

"RPs are just invaluable to chaplains,"

See **Chaplain**, page 11

Mature Marines find purpose in Corps

Story by Sgt. Nathan K. LaForte

MCAS Miramar Combat Correspondent

MARINE CORPS AIR STATION YUMA, Ariz. – Surf's up dude! Riding waves all day long could seem like the perfect life.

Once upon a time in Hawaii, it was the perfect life for a young surfer by the name of Jeff Cerezo.

Until one day, Cerezo realized that all semblance of anything out of the ordinary from his life was gone like wax on a board after a hard day of surfing. All that was left was simply normal.

In 1993, Cerezo, a 17-year-old high school dropout, landed himself a body-board sponsor. He was living on the big island of Hawaii, and according to him, loving every minute.

"I was back home surfing, just living it up," he said. "I was making pretty good money, and life was pretty good for a single guy."

Then something happened. One day Cerezo woke up, he was 25, and life was the same as it had been for the last eight years.

"It just started getting boring and extremely repetitive," he said. "I lacked the discipline to set myself in the right direction."

Finally, after years had passed during his wayward life, four planes flown by terrorists changed his life, along with the world, forever.

"I remember waking up and my uncle said, 'we're under attack!'" he stated. "I thought he was joking until I saw it on TV. I never really thought about the military until then."

Cerezo reflected on his relatives' experiences at that moment and saw almost every service represented by them. Every service, that is, except one.

"I always wanted a challenge," he declared. "If I represent something, I want it to be the best of the best. So I joined the Marine Corps."

A year and a half later, Lance Cpl. Jeff Cerezo, CH-46E crew chief, flies the deadly skies with his new family in Marine

Medium Helicopter Squadron 161, Marine Aircraft Group 16.

At 25 years old, he was the honor man and iron man of his company in recruit training. He was also the guide at his military occupational school.

Cerezo claims to have needed discipline in his pre-Marine Corps years, but even without discipline, his experience became a useful tool.

"I was always the guide, everywhere I went," he noted. "I think it was the maturity. I was older than most of my drill instructors. People notice maturity."

About four years after Cerezo dropped out of high school to start surfing in tropical paradise, another average guy was fighting his way through civilian life in Bountiful, Utah.

Ronnie Matthews, a 25-year-old man with a wife and child, had an epiphany. He had nothing to show for his life but a string of dead-end jobs and an unfinished life-

long goal of a college degree.

He needed a way out and the answer slapped him in the face every day in the form of the adventurous commercials depicting the United States Armed Forces.

"You hear about the excitement all the time and I always wanted to join the military," Matthews explained. "I just didn't know when it was going to happen."

Matthews decided in the summer of 1997 to join the Marine Corps. His reason for choosing the Corps was not so different than Cerezo's. He simply said they were the toughest and the best.

The transition was hard to make, mostly because of his age, Matthews explained, but he found a purpose to pull him through.

"Being older, I felt a responsibility to pass on things I knew about life in general," he said. "I've always had this (urge) to teach things I've already been through."

Seven years later, 31-year-old, Sgt. Ronnie Matthews, CH-46E crew chief, is still teaching life lessons to his younger counterparts in HMM-161, MAG-16.

It was at MAG-16 where he noticed a Marine named Cerezo, who like Matthews, was just a little older than the rest of the Marines.

Cerezo said the younger Marines need their older counterparts for their maturity, regardless of rank.

"They need a role model, someone to look up to, someone who is able to control their emotions and get the job done," said Cerezo.

Cerezo said the older Marines possess a strength that comes from life lessons gained from the "school of hard knocks."

"We've been through the hard times of trying to find ourselves," he explained. "I know who I am and I know what I want. I think this sets us apart."

He said he has a tip for the younger Marines.

"With age comes maturity," he said.

"You get a different perspective on life. Sometimes people talk when they should listen. That's one of the keys to life ... learning."

Matthews noted that it takes a mature man to

realize his own need for discipline.

"This life is a lot more structured than civilian life," he said. "Some people need that."

Cerezo said he sees a lot of maturity in Matthews as well, which is something older Marines like he and Matthews seem to share, he added.

"Even though we're from different places, we have a lot of stuff in common," Cerezo revealed. "Things like our love for the Corps and country. It kind of bonds us together and gives us mutual respect."

As for his life since becoming a Marine, Cerezo claims it's anything but boring or repetitive.

"I have a wife that I love and we're about to have a kid," he exclaimed. "I'm so stoked about that. That's my motivation. It's a beautiful thing."

For Matthews, he says his life is just as good, since he made the choice to become one of the few and the proud.

"I think my life is going in a good direction," he said. "I'm maintaining my goal of getting a degree. The Marine Corps has made everything more attainable."

Matthews and his wife now live happily with their three children, he said. The Marine Corps family has welcomed him and he found the excitement he was looking for, he added.

"I love being a part of the Marine Corps," Matthews concluded. "There is camaraderie and brotherhood. The relationships you build here last forever."

Right: Sgt. Ronnie Matthews and Lance Cpl. Jeff Cerezo, both CH-46E Sea Knight crew chiefs with Marine Medium Helicopter Squadron 161, Marine Aircraft Group 16, pose for a photograph in front of a CH-46E helicopter. Photo by Sgt. Nathan K. LaForte



'With age comes maturity. You get a different perspective on life. Sometimes people talk when they should listen. That's one of the keys to life ... learning.'
Lance Cpl. Jeff Cerezo

I am an NCO! *Feelin' like a Marine again and feelin' good*

Commentary by Cpl. James S. McGregor

MCAS Miramar Combat Correspondent

Some of you might think it's weird for a Marine to go to Corporals Course when he has been a corporal for almost two years, is getting out of the Marine Corps in six months, and doesn't want to go to the course at all. You might think so, but that would make you very wrong.

I thought that way less than four weeks ago when I was spending my paycheck preparing for a course that I figured was a waste of my time. But let me tell you, even if this latest accomplishment doesn't motivate me to re-enlist, it has certainly been a rewarding experience and will stand out above my other Marine Corps memories when I am chillin' back in the civilian sector.

It started in December. I was told I was going to Marine Corp Base Camp Pendleton's Corporals Course. This was not something I had been begging for, so I did my screening sheet and accepted my orders ... reluctantly. When I pulled into the barracks parking lot Jan. 4 to check-in to the course, I wasn't looking forward to a good time.

Well, something happened that changed that attitude. I

can't say it was one thing, but a million little things. The staff was firm, but incredibly squared away and motivating. I spent three weeks learning and doing Marine stuff that I hadn't seen in any way except maybe for boot camp – from uniforms, to leadership classes, to close order drill. So much class time, practical application and evaluation. It made me feel like a real Marine again – a feeling I haven't had for a long, long time. Then on top of all that, I was a platoon sergeant throughout the course – something that was a very special treat for me since corporals in my line of work are bottom of the barrel and don't get any kind of leadership experience. Not that I was ever dying to lead people, but it was an interesting new experience for me.

Another thing that was fun and new for me was the close order drill portion. First thing's first – all my lifetime drill experience can be compiled from my time as a recruit. Oh, and I've never touched an NCO Sword ... ever. So you can probably guess that I was a little freaked out when I knew I had three weeks to be able to master sword manual and three drill cards. Fortunately, I was able to practice for about 40 trillion hours and I passed the drill evaluation easily with 95 points out of a

possible 100.

Now, it may look like this course was all fun and games. It was not. It was three weeks of hard work, intense studying, hours of classes, high demands of absolute perfection and grueling PT (I shouldn't say grueling, but they ran me to death in comparison to what I'm used to).

Fortunately, all the hard work paid off. As I told you, I breezed through drill. My whole platoon breezed through drill. They also won four of the ten graded events, and took second on a couple more. Another fact I am very proud of is that my platoon was the only platoon of the class that had no failures in any graded event. I was so motivated toward the end that I purchased our platoon photo and had every Marine in my platoon sign it ... wow. OK, on a more serious note, the course not only changed my mind about what I thought it would be like, but it also re-established the idea that being a Marine and being a Marine corporal is a good thing. I like that. Even if it doesn't make me stay Marine, I will always remember the experience, the great Marines I came in contact with and the motivation to be the best Marine noncommissioned officer I can be. I am an NCO!

Physical therapy helps servicemembers ease the pain

Story by Sgt. J.L. Zimmer III

MCAS Miramar Combat Correspondent

For more than 4 million Americans nonfatal injuries were the leading cause of work-loss in 2002, according to the Bureau of Labor statistics Web site. Included in these numbers are members of the Armed Forces.

Even though some of the injuries are permanent, there is a possible solution to those injuries that are not permanent.

The physical therapy department at the Miramar Branch Medical Clinic has its fair share of these cases.

Petty Officer second class Judy Grimes, physical therapy technician, MBMC, has been treating injured servicemembers for nearly half her career in the Navy.

"The most common injury we see are back and shoulder injuries," said the 29-year-old Long Island, N.Y., native. "These injuries have a lot to do with a servicemember's job or after work activities, but there are ways to prevent them from happening."

Grimes also said that some benefits of therapy are a strengthening regiment to help prevent further injury and a program to educate injured servicemembers on proper

care of their body.

"For those that are injured and seek or need surgery, the servicemember runs the risk of having a medical evaluation to be processed out of the military, depending on the extent of their injuries," she said. "If you feel that you have an injury or are hurt, come to medical and get it checked out before the problem gets worse."

Grimes added that not all injuries require surgery or cause a medical separation from the military.

Grimes said that although most injuries are work related, in most cases, these injuries can be avoided. "The majority of the people injured are 20-30 years old with injuries from everyday things," she said. "There is almost no sign of trauma, just improper stretching, lifting and overhead working."

"We also see a few pilots come in with neck and back problems because of the force of flying planes."

One Marine, Sgt. Paul A. Rock, collateral duty and quality assurance representative, Marine Fighter Attack Squadron 225, injured his shoulder from improper weight lifting.

"If I would have done more concentrated exercising, I would not have had this injury," said the 32-year-old Crane, Mo.,

native. "Proper education on weight training should be administered to Marines before lifting weights or participating in any physical training."

According to Grimes, physical therapy is not something you only do in a session with a therapist.

"Sessions should not stop at the clinic," she said. "They should be applied at home, at work or anywhere someone might go for their job."

According to Grimes, the most painful injuries she has seen are recoveries from back injuries.

"Once your back is injured, it is almost impossible to (fully) recover," she said. "It can get to the point where an injured person will not be able to walk and if they can, it will be very painful."

Grimes has advice for injured personnel that should be adhered to because of the extent and long term pain of injuries.

"Do not wait until the pain or the injury takes over your life to get the problem taken care of."

If you have a medical condition and need to seek professional help, check in to sick call at the BMC. The corpsman and doctors are there to help you recover. If you have any questions, call the physical therapy department at 577-9948.



Lance Cpl. Jillian E. Smith, air traffic controller, Headquarters and Headquarters Squadron, performs a core strengthening and balancing drill to increase abdominal strength. Smith injured her back and has been participating in physical therapy to help her regain strength in her lower back. Photo by Sgt. J.L. Zimmer III

Make your last move with us.

www.MarineForLife.com

Youth Center lists 2004 sports sign-ups

Story by Lance Cpl. John Sayas

MCAS Miramar Combat Correspondent

Parents looking to see their child get their first hit in baseball, or first goal in soccer, or even coach their own team of youngsters can visit the Youth Center to sign-up for one of many sporting activities being offered to Miramar youngsters.

The Youth Sports program offers numerous activities throughout the year including basketball, soccer, baseball, flag football, golf, surfing and tennis, according to Ron Hymas, Miramar youth sports director. He said all sports activities are open to family members ages 3-18 years old of active duty military, reservists, retirees and Department of Defense employed civilians.

The Youth Sports program provides many opportunities for recreational enjoyment and physical development, said Hymas. It also allows them to be in contact with other youths, coaches and youth activity staff.

Hymas emphasized that all activities within the program focus on the development of individual skills and team effort rather than winning or losing. He said children should be enthusiastic about participating, which can help in building a foundation for life-long interests in personal fitness and good health.

"We don't want them to be focused on winning or losing," said Hymas. "Our program here is set up so the children are in a learning environment. We want the children to learn good sportsmanship and practice it. We want them to be able to interact socially with other children involved."

An experienced coach and youth director for the past 14 years, Hymas mentioned that parents have a huge impact on the success of their child as they participate in youth sports. Not only do parents have to be supportive of their child as they watch on the sidelines, but allow them to have fun and enjoy playing the game.

"It's satisfying to see when the kids come off the field smiling and having a good time, telling their mom and dad, 'hey look at what I did,'" Hymas said. "Our leagues are not competitive. If a child is really good in a sport and wants to be competitive, there are other programs available out in town.

"We would rather (the children) have fun and learn. Children don't really need to be in competitive sports until they are at least the age of 10," he said.

Hymas added that volunteer coaches are always needed and it is a great way to get involved and provide a service to the community. However, coaching youngsters can be a challenge for many who are servicemembers.

"Having been a Marine myself, it was a change for me because I grew up in an era of sports where that's all it was, win or lose, and if you weren't good then you sat on the bench. If you didn't win, the coaches were all over you," he said with a smile. "It is kind of interesting to see a Marine turn into a youth sports coach. Some of them really embrace it, and become really good coaches."

He said much has changed over the years as activities such as running laps or doing push-ups as a punishment for making a mistake are no longer tolerated. Those who are

interested in becoming a coach must be certified through the National Youth Sports Coaches Association, which teaches potential coaches the philosophy of coaching children, injury prevention, first aid, training and conditioning, child and adolescent development and the technique of coaching sports.

See **Sign-ups**, page 11

Right: Youth Sports offers numerous activities including basketball, soccer, baseball, flag football, golf, surfing and tennis. Photo courtesy of the Youth Center



Chapel weekly schedule of events

Holy Family Catholic Community

- ◆ Mass: 11 a.m. Sunday, 11:30 a.m. weekdays.
- ◆ Rosary: 10:30 a.m. Sunday.
- ◆ Confession: 10:15 a.m. Sunday or for appointments call Father Berchmanz at 577-1333.
- ◆ Religious classes for children for first communion, confirmation: 9:30-10:45 a.m. Sunday.
- ◆ Youth gathering and planning following mass Sunday.
- ◆ Baptism: Normally the first Sunday of the month. Call chaplain's office for details.
- ◆ Marriage: Call chaplain for details at least six months before wedding.
- ◆ Instruction in the Catholic faith (RCIA). Call chaplain's office for details.
- ◆ Scripture Class: 7 p.m. Wednesday in Chapel classroom.
- ◆ Choir Practice: 6 p.m. Wednesday in Main Chapel.

Liturgical Christian

- ◆ Sunday: Choir rehearsal at 9 a.m.
Liturgical worship at 9:30 a.m.
Adult/Youth/Children Bible study at 10:45 a.m.
- ◆ Tuesday: Morning prayer group (Room 4) at 6 a.m.
Contemporary Gospel Service at 7:30 p.m.
- ◆ Wednesday: Crafts and conversation at 9 a.m. Free childcare provided.
Women's bible study at 10:45 a.m.
Baptist service at 7 p.m.
- ◆ Thursday: Liturgical choir rehearsal at 7:30 p.m.
- ◆ Friday: Baptist bible study at 7 p.m.

Jewish

- ◆ First Friday of the month at MCRD San Diego at 7 p.m.
- ◆ Last Friday of the month in Edson Range Chapel Camp Pendleton at 7:30 p.m.

Free warfare symposium

The U.S. Naval Institute and Armed Forces Communications and Electronics Association will host the largest state-of-the-art warfare and technology exposition and symposium on the West Coast at the San Diego Convention Center Feb. 3-5.

The event will feature discussions by leading military experts and exhibits from more than 350 technology leaders.

It offers a rare opportunity for Marines and Sailors to enhance their professional

knowledge and to hear discussions on current National Defense issues by senior leadership in a panel format including discussions on the use of Marine Corps Expeditionary Strike Groups and lessons learned from Operations Enduring Freedom and Iraqi Freedom. The theme of this year's exhibition is "Born Joint?"

The kickoff address, panel discussions and entrance to the exhibit hall are free of charge. There is a charge to eat at meal events, but visitors may listen without eating at no cost.

For registration and complete program schedule please visit www.west2004.org.

Miramar Station Theater closed for renovations

On Jan. 12 the Miramar Station Auditorium/Movie Theater was closed for renovations for a minimum of 90 days. During this time, the theater is closed for all training and movie program opportunities.

Renovations include new carpeting, tile and seating, as well as installation of an air conditioning and heating system, a fire safety system and a new roof.

Commissary scholarships

The Scholarships for Military Children Program was created to recognize the contributions by military families to the readiness of the fighting force and celebrate the role of the commissary in the military community.

Unmarried children (under the age of 23) of active duty, reserve/guard and retired military personnel may apply for a Scholarship for Military Children. They must have a minimum cumulative grade point average of 3.0.

For more information please visit www.militaryscholar.org.

Battle of Bands

Battle of the Bands will be at the Enlisted Club here Saturday from 8 p.m. to 2 a.m.

The winner will receive: A custom-made Web site by Illionaire Records, a custom-made compact disc design with 100 compact discs, 5,000 flyers for CD drop, featured artist spot on www.illreco.com and two songs on the upcoming compilation album entitled "Red, White and Black."

Call 693-1524 for more information.

Semper Fit briefs

◆ Mens Varsity Softball tryouts will begin Monday and continue through May. The season will culminate the end of July at Marine Corps Air Ground Combat Center Twentynine Palms for the Marine Corps West Coast Regional Softball Championships. Miramar is looking to defend their title as West Coast Champions this year. For information contact Gunnery Sgt. Evans at evansjd@3maw.usmc.mil.

◆ Mens Soccer tryouts will be held at Field 2 Tuesday and Wednesday at 5 p.m., and Thursday at 11 a.m. Bring a soccer ball if possible. For information call the Sports Office at 577-1202.

◆ Miramar Surf Team Tryouts will be Feb. 7 at 9 a.m. at Churches Surf Spot on Marine Corps Base Camp Pendleton. Call the Semper Fit Sports Office at 577-1202 for more information.

◆ The Intramural 6-on-6 Soccer League starts Feb. 19. A coaches meeting will be held Feb. 12 at 11:30 a.m. in the Semper Fit Center conference room. Game times will be 11:15 a.m. to 12:15 p.m. on Tuesdays and Thursdays. Registration is required. Registration forms are available at the Sports Office. For information call 577-1202.

VMU,
continued from page 1

ceptional achievement in Marine Corps Aviation. The Marine Corps Aviation Association presented the award to the squadron in 2003.

Walkotten noted that VMU-1 is training harder than ever to get ready for the upcoming deployment.

"In Iraq, we could arrive at a launch site and have a plane in the air in about 3 hours," he said. "We were extremely mobile. Here at Desert Talon, we are training like that," he concluded. "We are training as hard as we can so that when we go back to Iraq, we'll be ready."

Crabs,
continued from page 5

"We allow about an hour and a half between seatings so the patrons can enjoy what they are there for."

For the amount of food prepared and the number of people who show up at the Officers' Club, there is not much that goes into making the food according to Bendas.

"These are professional people working in a professional kitchen," he said. "We have catered for more than 6,000 people at some of the events we have. It only takes three (cooks and chefs) to prepare all the food for

any size party."

With all the different types of food they have tried to serve, they did not know how much to serve in the beginning.

"At first we just guessed how much to serve per person," he said. "We guessed about one pound per person, and it worked out fine."

Bendas added that crab is packed in what are called snow crab clusters. A cluster consists of two sets of crab legs and the two clusters equal about one pound.

"We enjoy doing this and are professionals, but we work on a reservation system so we know what and how much food to order," he said. "For this event we were given 80 more reservations at the last minute, but we accommodated them because we enjoy it."

For more information on the crab fest or other events at the Officers' Club, call the front desk at 577-4808 or visit the Marine Corps Community Services Web site at www.mccsmiramar.com.

Bronze,
continued from page 6

"Am I surprised at what he did to protect (Rabbi Elson)? No," she said. "But I am so proud of him. It is humbling."

When it was pointed out that Page, who is gearing up to redeploy, might be the first Religious Programs Specialist to receive the Bronze Star with Combat V for valor, Page just shrugged said, "I made a commitment to his family, to him, and to God."

Chaplain,
continued from page 6

said Navy Lt. Vernon V. Vergara, staff chaplain, Airmen Memorial Chapel, and Kauai, Hawaii native. "I truly take my hat off and thank them for everything they have done to allow me to do ministry to the fullest of my abilities."

Vergara credits his RPs for allowing him the time to work closely with Navy and Marine personnel he has served with while on ship prior to his arrival here four months ago. Not only do they provide him with time, but the confidence and faith that someone will be watching over him as he assists others in need.

"It's good to know that if I am in the field and in that kind of situation that there will be someone with a clear head and clear conscious that can defend me," he said. "They are like a fire and forget missile. You point them to what needs to be done and step back and next thing you know everything is on target."

Throughout their history, RPs have proven their worth by providing direct support to chaplains administratively and more importantly have provided protection during times of battle where Geneva Convention laws prevent chaplains from carrying weapons.

"Once you leave the office and get out to the field, you become the chaplain's guard," said Chief Petty Officer Marcus A. Taylor, Headquarters and Headquarters Squadron Chaplain's Office and Brooklyn, N. Y., native. "Geneva Convention laws state that chaplains can't carry weapons. We don't fall under those rules. We are full combatants like any other Marine or Sailor out there. We make sure they are at the right place at the right time."

Sign-ups,
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"We don't use physical conditioning as punishment because if (the children) see it as a punishment, then they are not going to want to run or play," Hymas explained. "The mentality in the Marine Corps is to win. We have been doing that for 227 years and its kind of hard to get out of that mind set."

For more information on Youth Sports or a listing of upcoming sign-ups, stop by the Youth Center in building 2247 or contact Ron Hymas at 577-4121.