

THE IWAKUNI APPROACH

Issue No. 5 Vol. 6 | Marine Corps Air Station Iwakuni, Japan



CLC-36 competes in world's first igloo building event | Pg. 6 & 7

LANCE CPL. BENJAMIN PRYER

Combat Logistics Company 36 Marines place the roof on their igloo during the First World Igloo Building Championship competition, which took place at the Osorakan Snow Park, located in the town of Akiota, Feb. 3, 2013. CLC-36 entered three teams into the event, two in the speed-building competition and one in the artistic competition.

Station squadrons perfect sortie producing capabilities during surge day training

LANCE CPL. JAMES R. SMITH
IWAKUNI APPROACH STAFF

The sound of jet engines roared throughout the day and into the night during a Marine All-Weather Fighter Attack Squadron 242 surge on Jan. 30, 2013.

VMFA(AW) 242, Marine Wing

Support Squadron 171, Strike Fighter Squadron 195 and Carrier Airborne Early Warning Squadron 115 both from Naval Air Facility Atsugi, continuously executed operational maintenance and upkeep while simultaneously performing sorties and pits during a 15-hour period.

A sortie is the time from when an aircraft takes off from a certain point to the time it returns to said point. A pit is when an aircraft is refueling and switching pilots while still turning on the flightline.

The success of a surge is dependent on the interoperability

of every level, from maintenance to operations.

One of the many goals of a squadron surge is to determine how well Marines can react in the event of an emergency situation and how fast they can deploy

SEE **SURGE** ON PAGE 3

MCAS Iwakuni units gear up for Cobra Gold

LANCE CPL. J. GAGE KARWICK
IWAKUNI APPROACH STAFF

Exercise Cobra Gold 2013 is slated to kick off Feb. 11, with units from the Royal Thai military and several branches of the United States armed forces.

From Marine Corps Air Station Iwakuni, Marine Aircraft Group 12, along with its supporting units, are scheduled to take part

in the exercise, with Marine All-Weather Fighter Attack Squadron 224 acting as the resident Marine fighter squadron in Thailand.

"Cobra Gold is the largest joint multinational exercise that Pacific Command puts on," said Maj. John Baseel, MAG-12 future operations officer. "It's also the largest multinational

SEE **COBRA** ON PAGE 3

February: a time to remember, a time to reflect

LANCE CPL. B. A. STEVENS
IWAKUNI APPROACH STAFF

For Americans, February is known as Black History Month. It is a time set aside to remember the struggles, past and present, faced by African Americans in achieving equality.

Europeans shipped approximately 12 million slaves from Africa to the Western

Hemisphere, according to Time Magazine.

Black History Month is a time to celebrate the achievements that have brought America closer to a land of perfect equality.

"I think the significance of it is to reflect on the contributions African Americans have given to society, but in my mind it's also

SEE **HISTORY** ON PAGE 3



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Editorial content is edited, prepared and provided by the Public Affairs Office of Marine Corps Air Station Iwakuni, Japan. All queries concerning news and editorial content should be directed to the Public Affairs Office, Building One, Room 216. Call 253-5551.

The Iwakuni Approach welcomes Letter to the Editor submissions. Letters must include a full name and unit, if applicable. Anonymous letters and comments will not be published. Letters are the opinion of the writer only. Submissions may be edited for clarity and space. Letters can be dropped off at the Public Affairs Office or sent via e-mail to iwakuni.pao@usmc.mil. Please submit all content at least two weeks in advance of projected publication date for review.

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CHAPLAIN'S CORNER

Courage, more than just a core value

LT. T. L. SKELTON
STATION CHAPLAIN

When I think of courage, it reminds me of our military core values of honor, courage and commitment. We as military members live out our core values daily without even giving it a second thought. However, in our personal lives and relationships, how often do we exhibit courage? Are we able to have the courage to walk away from toxic relationships and friendships? Do we have the courage to accept the person who God has created us to be? Are we willing to have the courage to further our education or achieve new goals?

Courage is defined by Webster's Dictionary as "mental or moral

strength to venture, persevere, and withstand danger, fear, or difficulty." It is amazing how we can rise to the challenge of protecting our country, but we often find ourselves without the mental and moral strength to succeed in our personal lives. The same commitment we have made to our core values, we can also have in our personal lives.

Deuteronomy 31:6 NIV states: "Be strong and courageous. Do not be afraid or terrified because of them, for the Lord your God goes with you; he will never leave you nor forsake you." Even though this scripture text was referring to Joshua as he was to lead the Israelites into the land of promise, it can be applied to our lives today. The same God

who was with Joshua is also with us. When we open ourselves to have a personal relationship with God, there is no limit to the aid he will provide. We can be strong and courageous in every aspect of our lives because we are not alone. God is with us in all that we do. He will provide us with the ability to have the strength and courage to walk away from those relationships and friendships that are not beneficial. We will begin to see the beauty of ourselves and who we really are. Once we realize our greatest potential, we will not settle, but be open to God's very best for our lives. We have more than enough courage not to only be successful as military members, but in all we do. Remember, courage is more than just a core value; it is what God said we are to be.

Iwakuni Scholars list Jan. 2013

Sgt. Arthur Doers	University of Phoenix	AA - General Studies
Master Sgt. Shelly D. Bothwell	Park University	BS - Management
Gunnery Sgt. Abelardo Dominguez	Central Texas College	AA/AS - General Studies/Applied Technology
Master Sgt. Troy A. Hickman	Central Texas College	AA - General Studies
Sgt. Joshua D. Barron	American Military University	BS - Fire Science Management
Capt. Jack E. Free	University of Phoenix	MBA - Business Administration
Chantal McCourt	Ashford University	AA - Early Childhood Education
Sgt. Peter N. Hatfield	American Military University	AA - General Studies
Cpl. Robert D. Kent	University of Maryland University Col.	AA - General Studies
Cpl. Benjamin R. Leo	University of Maryland University Col.	AA - Business and Management
Staff Sgt. Miguel L. Garcia	American Military University	AA - General Studies
CWO3 Alen Zweifel	Embry Riddle Aeronautical University	BS - Aeronautics
Sgt. Isaac R. Cordeiro	Central Texas College	AA - General Studies
Cpl. Evan Vega	University of Maryland University Col.	AA - General Studies
HM2 Michael Vandeventer	University of Maryland University Col.	AA - General Studies
Staff Sgt. Robert Perales	University of Phoenix	BS - Information Technology

February Promotions

MWSS-171

Lance Cpl.

Alvarez, Joseph C.
Byrd, Meghan A.
Coutts, Kyle D.
Gilsdorf, Michael D.
Nesbitt, Mark S.
Orta, Felix Jr.
Rodriguez, Alexander J.
Santoyo, Henry V.
Smith, Jordan M.
Tomco, Jonathan R.

Cpl.

Blake, Zachary S.
Burney, Daven N.
Defalco, Nicholas D.
Lugososa, Oscar A.
Pike, Wade A.
Thompson, Nicholas C.

Sgt.

Dreibelbis, Brian S. II
Ratanakajana, Noparat C.
Stanley, Canaan M.
Velasquez, Joshua D.

VMFA(AW)-242

Lance Cpl.

Botellogarcia, Luis A.
Hagel, Dalton J.

Cpl.

Chrisholm, Kurt C.
Messina, Alexander A.
Yeom, Sunho

MACS-4 Det B

Cpl.

Moore, Casey J.

Sgt.

Coffel, Brad L.

Master Sgt.

Guthrie, Rodney P.

MAG-12

Lance Cpl.

McCall, Kenneth S.
Miller, Natori J.
Urban, Tyler R.

Cpl.

King, Christopher S.

MALS-12

Lance Cpl.

Airwyke, Steven J.
Boarman, Ryan A.
Cervera, Justin A.
Mayo, Brian R.

Cpl.

Bradley, John E. Jr.
Maple, Jannell S.
Matney, Jacob R.
Shlegel, Jared W.

Sgt.

Kohler, Carrie L.
Marceau, Pete O.

H&HS

Lance Cpl.

Bunch, Mark A.
Dexter, Catherine D.
Holtan, Bruce J.

Cpl.

Becker, Dennis C. Jr.
Price, Faith A.

Sgt.

Smith, Carmi G.

CLC-36

Lance Cpl.

Jorgensen, Collin P.
Steines, Dustin J.
Tabbott, Rafael A.
Yancey, Quinette L.

Cpl.

Blake, Timothy F. II
Vanderford, Zachery C.

COBRA FROM PAGE 1

exercise that the Marine Corps participates in. So for us, the goal is three-fold: one, to build goodwill amongst our Thai military host and the Thai populace in general; two, to build interoperability between ourselves and the Thai military; and last, but not least, to get some good unit-level training."

The purpose of Cobra Gold 2013 is to provide VMFA(AW)-224 ample opportunities to conduct various training exercises.

"VMFA 224 will be our F-18 squadron that is going to deploy to Cobra Gold," said Baseel. "Primarily, when they are there, they are going to be working on air-to-ground missions such as close-air support, forward air controller airborne and basic dive bombing. They will be dropping inert and live bombs at a variety of ranges. They will also be doing air-to-air training alongside the Thai Air Force."

With Marines, as well as other branches of the armed services, the main goal of training exercises is to be combat ready.

"The most important aspect is the ability to take our forces, deploy them to a foreign country and complete all of our core missions," said Lt. Col. Peter L. McArdle, VMFA(AW)-224 commanding officer. "These Marines get the opportunity to go to new places and experience new things, as well as gain the experience of being in an environment which most of them are not used to."

The Thai and U.S. militaries have been allies since the 1800s, making them one of the oldest allies of the U.S. in the Pacific theater.

"We look to build on our partnership with Thailand, as well as our interoperability, and then, as always, theater engagement and theater security cooperation," said McArdle.

With peace and stability in mind, as well as further cooperation



LANCE CPL. ANDREW KUPPERS

U.S. Marines with III Marine Expeditionary Force, stationed in Okinawa, Japan, disembark a KC-130J assigned to Marine Aerial Refueler Transport Squadron 152, based out of Marine Corps Air Station Futenma, Jan. 18, after arriving at Utaphao Royal Air Station, Kingdom of Thailand for Exercise Cobra Gold 2013 (CG 13). Cobra Gold 13 forces conduct engineering and medical civic assistance projects, cooperative health engagement, and other civil-military activities in the Kingdom of Thailand in order to promote the security interests of the Kingdom of Thailand, U.S. and partner nations, enhance component operational readiness skills and training objectives and increase interoperability with partner nations.

between Thailand and the United States, Cobra Gold 2013 is sure to further maintain and

enhance the peace-keeping and operational capabilities of both nations' militaries.

Station stays operationally ready through intense surge training

SURGE FROM PAGE 1

aircraft in a safe and timely manner along with discovering any improvements which can be made.

"The Marines have exceeded their planned maintenance requirements by proactively and aggressively pursuing these requirements," said Capt.

Michael J. Souza, VMFA(AW)-242 airframes division officer-in-charge. "There is always room for improvement, especially as younger Marines step up, gain qualifications and experience to take on more challenging roles."

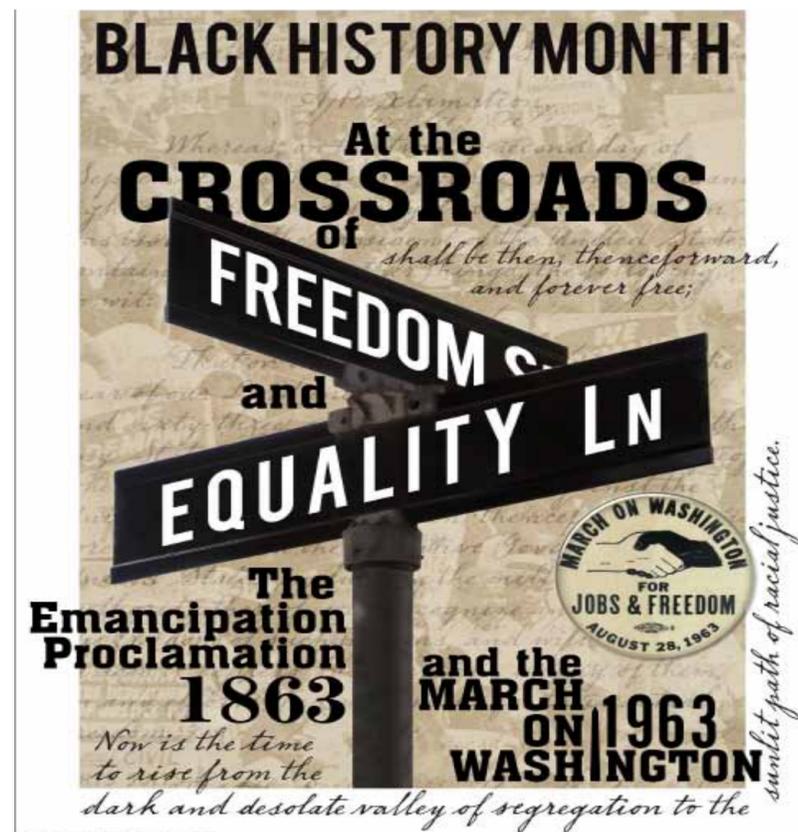
Each individual shop plays an important role in the surge, as all their combined efforts make the aircraft safe and fast as possible.

"What I do is, I go out and troubleshoot if they have certain problems," said Sgt. Brandon Gruenhagen, VMFA(AW)-242 airframe mechanic supervisor. "On launches, we do a series of checks and if they have any problems, the frame or hydraulics, they'll call one of us to try and fix the problem."

At the end of it all, the message

is clear. The squadron surge tests how efficient the servicemembers training in VMFA(AW)-242 really is, how fast they can respond in certain situations and to find out what they need to improve.

The opportunity to perform in such training exercises can possibly ensure, when the moment does arrive, servicemembers are ready to heed the call.



HISTORY FROM PAGE 1

to reflect not only on blacks, but all individuals who have made America a great country to live in," said Dr. André Boyer, University of Phoenix full-time faculty member.

One example of the struggles faced by African Americans was the Supreme Court's ruling on racial segregation famously known as Brown v. Board of Education.

The case began in 1950 when a school four blocks away from her home denied Linda Brown, a 7-year-old from Topeka, Kansas, because of her skin color. Linda's father took the dispute to court. On May 17, 1954, the United States Supreme Court ruled racial segregation in public schools violated the Constitution.

Although, the struggle for equality lasted for more than 300 years, February was not federally recognized as Black History Month until 1976.

The remembrance started in 1926 when founder of The Association for the Study of African American Life and History, Carter G. Woodson, announced the second week of February would acknowledge black history. In 1976, the federal government recognized the move by the Black United Students in 1969 to delegate February as Black History Month. The first Black History Month took place in 1970 at Kent State University.

The meaning expanded for some people after 42 years of February recognizing the struggle for equality.

"What black history month represents to me is the struggle, not just of blacks or even minorities, but of America," said Gunnery Sgt. Alvin Cruz, Marine Corps Air Station Iwakuni, equal opportunity advisor.

Cruz said that some people may refer to slavery as America's black eye, but the country took action to end it.

The air station has a luncheon planned in honor of Black History Month at the Landing Zone Dining Room Feb. 21, 2013. The grand buffet is scheduled to host a special guest speaker and a musical performance.

Buy This, Not That

LANCE CPL. JAMES R. SMITH
IWAKUNI APPROACH STAFF

Eating healthy can be difficult for people who have never attempted a diet before, given the amount of planning and will power that goes into such a decision.

Marine Corps Community Services' Health Promotions offer suggestions on what to select when shopping at the Commissary with the "Buy This Not That" program held on the third Thursday of every month.

Andrea Aguirre, MCCS Health Promotions assistant director, said the main goal of the program is getting people familiar with the healthier available options at the Commissary.

"This is the first step in living a healthy lifestyle," said Aguirre. "Where do people get their food? The grocery store. That's the number one place that you go even if you're going to start cooking healthy or reading nutrition labels. All the stuff you need to start with is at the grocery store."

While the program focuses on the Commissary, knowledge gained from this experience can help station residents eat healthier at Crossroads Mall or when returning to the United States where they have several different grocery stores from which to choose.

One topic of the program relates to shopping around the perimeter of the store.

"That's going to have your dairy, meats, fruits and vegetables, plus the bread aisle which makes up your whole grains" said Aguirre. "People say that fruits and vegetables have free calories. They are not free calories because everything has a certain number of calories associated with them."

Aguirre also said fruits and vegetables provide vitamins and minerals needed for a healthy diet, compared to chips, cookies and candy, which all have empty calories. It's fine to have these types of food, but not in mass quantities.

While it's evident the tour shows what to buy when eating healthier, choosing the correct portions is key to eating healthy.

What started off as the well-known Food Pyramid has become MyPlate, introduced by first lady Michelle Obama in June 2011. According to the United States Department of Agriculture's website, ChooseMyPlate.gov, MyPlate illustrates the five food groups that are the building blocks for a healthy diet by using a familiar image—a place setting for a meal.

"By learning about what to include on your plate, you can then translate that at the Commissary or Crossroads," said Aguirre.

As servicemembers, the difference between eating healthy and not isn't just a few extra pounds, it can mean falling out of weight regulations, or even failing physical fitness standards, mistakes which can end a good Marines career.



PHOTO ILLUSTRATION BY LANCE CPL. JAMES SMITH

The "Buy This Not That" program can be a step in the right direction. As servicemembers, it is imperative to eat healthy and be physically active in order to stay within the weight standards and have a successful career.



PHOTO ILLUSTRATION BY LANCE CPL. JAMES SMITH

The United States Department of Agriculture created MyPlate with advice from first lady Michelle Obama's anti-obesity team and federal health officials.



CPL. KENNETH K. TROTTER JR.

Staff Sgt. Brian A. Smith, Marine Aircraft Group 12 Marine Water Survival Training Program chief, demonstrates the proper placement of equipment in preparation for undergoing the intermediate portion of the water survival course at the IronWorks Gym swimming pool here Jan. 31. The intermediate level swim qualification involved a 50-meter swim with full gear, a dive from the tower followed by a 250-meter swim, flotation techniques and shedding gear in the deep end of the pool.

Birds gotta fly, Marines gotta swim

CPL. KENNETH K. TROTTER JR.
IWAKUNI APPROACH STAFF

"Mare" is Latin for sea. So it would stand to reason Marines consider themselves the modern-day forerunners of amphibious assaults.

Servicemembers from Marine Corps Air Station Iwakuni, took part in a two-day swim qualification course at the IronWorks Gym swimming pool here Jan. 31, 2013.

Swim qualification ensures servicemembers are able to continue their mission in the event of an unexpected incident and also improve their comfort in the water.

The Marine water survival basic qualification is required for Marines and servicemembers assigned to Marine detachments or units.

Qualifications changed somewhat in the last two years from what many Marines have experienced.

"Yesterday, we conducted water safety basic, which is the basic qualification for standardized comfort ability and survivability on the water," said Staff Sgt. Brian A. Smith, Marine Aircraft Group 12 Marine Water Survival Training Program chief.

There are a total of three levels of the course, with the highest being advanced.

The basic course involved employing flotation gear, swimming 45 meters with a pack, treading water for four minutes and shedding gear within 10 seconds. The intermediate level consisted of employing flotation gear, swimming with full gear and a pack for 50 meters, a self

rescue after jumping off a diving tower and swimming 250 meters. Once that is complete, servicemembers must employ flotation techniques for 10 minutes and shed their gear in the deep end of the pool.

The advanced course is a week long and may require the use of the outdoor swimming pool throughout that time. The advance course is slated for May.

"As of right now, we only have one indoor pool," said Smith. "We literally have to shut down the pool all day. The reason why we're trying for the summertime is the amount of outside pools we have."

The goal is to eventually have the course at least once a month from May to September, depending on when the outdoor pools close.

Currently, there is a limit to how many students may participate in the advance class.

Smith said he will only be able to allow 10 students per class, which will consist of five students per instructor as the MCIWS instructors rotate out to new duty stations.

A total of 76 servicemembers participated in the basic course. The day after, 25 took part in the intermediate course.

The need to have a basic understanding of water survival is essential as Marines may receive assignment to Marine Expeditionary Units and U.S. Naval fleets across the world. Though the basic qualification is mandatory, Marines should strive for the highest level possible. Ultimately, it could be a technique learned during these classes that saves their lives in the water.



CPL. KENNETH K. TROTTER JR.

Servicemembers swim 250 meters during the intermediate portion of the swim course at the IronWorks Gym here Jan. 31, 2013. The intermediate portion of this is used to bolster survivability and comfortability standards compared to the basic portion of the swim qualification.

CLC-36 Marines compete in First World Igloo Building Championship

LANCE CPL. BENJAMIN PRYER
IWAKUNI APPROACH STAFF

The First World Igloo Building Championship in Hiroshima took place in the Osorakan Snow Park, located in the town of Akiota, Feb. 3, 2013. Along with everyone in attendance, Marines from Combat Logistics Company 36 entered three teams into the event.

Maj. Andrés H. Cáceres-Solari, CLC-36 commanding officer, came out to support his Marines, saying he encourages his platoons to venture out in Japan during the winter months in pursuit of experiences such as this.

"You get so much more work out of a Marine if you work him four days out of the week and then give them a day break, even if they come back sore, than if you make them work through the weekend, just because they're happy. Happy Marines will take care of you. If you take care of them, they'll look out for you, if you run them into the ground, they'll run you into the ground."

Eight different countries comprised the 43 teams participated in the world-wide competition.

"This is one of the best means to communicate with each other," said Hiroshi Yamane, igloo building championship volunteer. "You

came here from Iwakuni, this is a very, very good thing. This means you have the will and the mind to exchange cultures. This is the best thing I got out of this event."

The competition was split into two categories, speed building and artistic. While the first team to complete the speed building took about 45 minutes, the artistic challenge lasted approximately six hours.

While CLC-36 didn't win any of the events, everyone who participated still walked away with the experience of being a part of a world-first event.

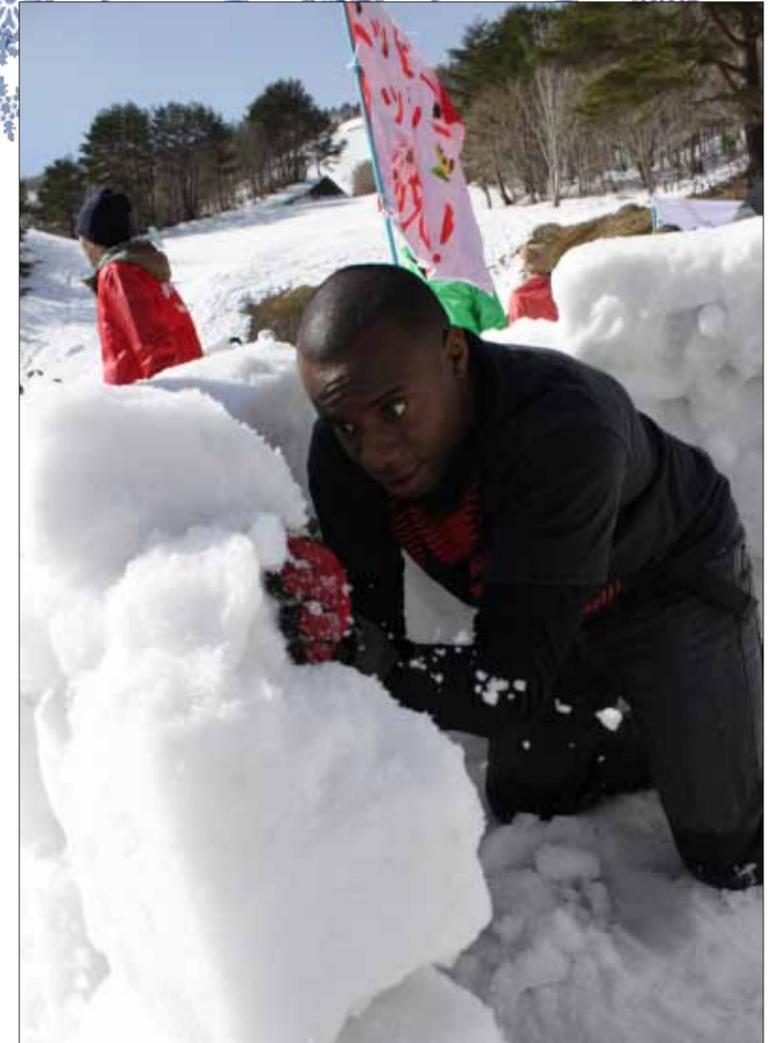
"It was fun to go as a unit and get to know everyone better," said Petty Officer 1st Class Joshua A. White, igloo competition participant. "Being a corpsman, it helps me get to know my Marines better. Events like this improve working relationships and boost morale through the roof."

The event also gave the Marines an opportunity to build ties with the Japanese in attendance.

"It was fun getting to go hang out with the Japanese," said White. "Anything we can do to improve our relationships with the Japanese is something of an advantage. It shows them.. we actually care about their culture and we want to be involved."



Combat Logistics Company 36 Marines place the roof on their igloo during the First World Igloo Building Championship competition, which took place at the Osorakan Snow Park, located in the town of Akiota, Feb. 3, 2013. Teams were limited to a maximum of six participants.



LANCE CPL. BENJAMIN PRYER
Lance Cpl. Markeith Allencampbell, First World Igloo Building Championship competitor, works on his team's igloo during the event, which took place at the Osorakan Snow Park, located in the town of Akiota, Feb. 3, 2013. Forty three teams, comprised of participants from eight different countries, competed in the igloo building.



LANCE CPL. BENJAMIN PRYER
2nd Lt. Zully Pasindo-Rubio, First World Igloo Building Championship competitor, works on her team's igloo during the event, which took place at the Osorakan Snow Park, located in the town of Akiota, Feb. 3, 2013. Combat Logistics Company 36 entered three teams into the competition, two for the speed-building portion and one for the artistic portion.



LANCE CPL. BENJAMIN PRYER
Pfc. Alexander Uribe, First World Igloo Building Championship competitor, works on his team's igloo during the event, which took place at the Osorakan Snow Park, located in the town of Akiota, Feb. 3, 2013. Japanese media could be heard over the loud speakers interviewing participants throughout the competition.



LANCE CPL. BENJAMIN PRYER
Lance Cpl. Francisco Ortiz, First World Igloo Building Championship competitor, works on his team's igloo during the event, which took place at the Osorakan Snow Park, located in the town of Akiota, Feb. 3, 2013. Shovels and saws were provided to the teams, but competitors could bring their own tools as well.

INFOTAINMENT

Chapel Services

Roman Catholic

Saturday
4:30-5:15 p.m. Confession
5:30 p.m. Mass

Sunday
8:30 a.m. Mass
9:45 a.m. Religious Education

Mon. — Thurs.
11:30 a.m. Weekday Mass

Protestant

Sunday
10:30 a.m. Protestant Service
10:30 a.m. Children's Church
10:30 a.m. Church of Christ Meeting
1 p.m. Contemporary
5:30 p.m. FLOW (Youth Group)

Monday
7 p.m. Men's Bible Study

Tuesday
9 a.m. Ladies' Bible Study
5 p.m. Working Women Bible Study

Wednesday
10:30 a.m. Ladies' Tea
5:45 p.m. AWANA (Bldg. 1104)

2nd Saturday
7:30 a.m. Men's Discipleship

Bahai

Sunday
11 a.m. Bahai Meeting

For information regarding divine services, religious education or any other command religious program or chapel activity, call the Marine Memorial Chapel at 253-3371.

OUT AND ABOUT: Japan

ST. VALENTINE AT NAGATO YUMOTO HOT SPRINGS

Nagato Yumoto Hot Springs has the Otozure River, also known as Otozuregawa, which derives its name from an old love story. Today, couples visit here and write their thoughts about each other on paper, which they then loose into the river. This place is known as "Lovers' Sanctuary" in Japan.

On Feb. 9, 2013, heart shaped fireworks will be on display for couples who visit. Love messages will be read out loud and a mini-concert as well as food stalls will be held.

THE 3RD TOY FESTIVAL

The festival, which lasts from Feb. 8-11, between 10 a.m. and 4 p.m., takes place at the Yunogo Local Exchange Center, Mimasaka City. During the four-day event, various programs will be available for children as well as adults such as a juggling performance and a 3,000 wooden blocks playing event. Onsen has been known for its hot springs and now Toys Town.

The shuttle bus will provide transportation. Free parking is also available.

For more information on upcoming events visit our website at <http://www.mcsiwakuni.marines.mil/News/LocalEventInformation.aspx> or visit Information Tours and Travel located in the Crossroads Mall or call 253-4377.

SAKURA THEATER

Friday, February 8, 2013
7 p.m. The Guilt Trip (PG-13)
10 p.m. Killing Them Softly (R)

Saturday, February 9, 2013
4 p.m. Monsters, Inc. (G)
7 p.m. This is 40 (R)

Sunday, February 10, 2013
4 p.m. Parental Guidance (PG)
7 p.m. Gangster Squad (R)

Monday, February 11, 2013
7 p.m. This is 40 (R)

Tuesday, February 12, 2013
Theater closed

Wednesday, February 13, 2013
Theater closed

Thursday, February 14, 2013
7 p.m. Playing for Keeps (PG-13)

The movie schedule is subject to change. Please check www.mccsiwakuni.com/sakura often for updates, or call the Sakura Theater at 253-5291 for the latest schedule.

General Admission: Ages 12+ are \$3/ Ages 6-11 are \$1.50/ Children ages 5 and under admitted free. For more information, visit www.mccsiwakuni.com or call 253-5291.

THE IWAKUNI APPROACH CULTURAL LESSONS



Onsen, a term used for hot springs in the Japanese language, is often used to describe bathing facilities and inns around the hot spring. Onsens vary in type, depending on the minerals dissolved in the water. These unique minerals provide their own health benefits; however, all hot springs are supposed to have a relaxing effect on one's body and mind. They are also different in the fact some may be indoors and/or outdoors, gender separated and mixed, and developed or undeveloped. Most onsens belong to a ryokan, or a traditional Japanese-style inn, while others are public bath houses. Many tourism websites recommend the experience

of an overnight stay at a hot spring ryokan to any visitor of Japan. At an onsen, guests are expected to wash their bodies and rinse themselves before entering the hot water. Bathing stations provide stools, faucets, wooden buckets, and toiletries such as soap and shampoo. Entering the onsen while still dirty or with traces of soap on the body is unacceptable. Wearing swimsuits in an onsen is not common, however, some modern onsen with more of a waterpark atmosphere require guests to wear a swimming suit in their mixed baths. Many onsens prohibit tattoos, which are synonymous with being part of a Yakuza, or criminal organizations, in Japan, .



Cpl. Michael Diaz, a Marine Aircraft Group 12 Intramural Basketball team member, prepares to make a shot Jan. 31, 2013, here at the IronWorks sports courts. Headquarters and Headquarters Squadron Air Traffic Controllers team wore yellow jerseys, were the pre-season champs and won the night's game.

Intramural basketball kicks off aboard station



A Headquarters and Headquarters Squadron Air Traffic Controller Intramural Basketball team member attempts a lay-up Jan. 31, 2013, at the IronWorks sports courts here. The H&S ATC team went on to win the night's game with a score of 48-25.

LANCE CPL. J. GAGE KARWICK
IWAKUNI APPROACH STAFF

Once again, the season for intramural basketball has arrived with teams springing up across the station to compete in games at the IronWorks Gym here, Monday through Friday.

Teams do not need to consist of any particular unit or shop to participate.

Vincent Barnett, a player on the Marine Aircraft Group 12 team, said that teams could be comprised of Marines from multiple units.

"You can have anyone you want to on your team and we just call ourselves the MAG-12 team," said Barnett.

The sports courts of the IronWorks Gym play host to many games at once. The center court hosted a game between Headquarters and Headquarters Squadron Air Traffic Controllers and the MAG-12 team, Jan. 31, 2013, with ATC emerging victorious.

"We were ahead for the entire game," said Xavier Wethington a player on Team ATC. "Our guys are in great shape so we definitely hustled. Even if we are not making shots, we are getting rebounds and playing good defense."

When playing sports, having a good time is always at the top of the 'to do' list, but so is winning.

"It feels great to win one, but it doesn't really count for us till the playoffs. I feel our chances are

good, especially since we were the pre-season champs," said Wethington. "During the regular season we just play to have fun, try to figure out everyone's strengths and weaknesses. So, from the beginning, we wanted to get everyone some playing time and see what combinations work the best."

Part of being a good team is having the ability to work together as one cohesive unit.

"The other team was good," said Wethington. "But it didn't seem like they had played together that long, or at least as long as we have, we all know each other really well so we have great chemistry and you can see it on the court."

The ATC team won the pre-season tournament, giving them high hopes for the regular season and the upcoming playoffs, and though the MAG-12 team did not emerge victorious this game, it did not diminish their hopes toward a winning season.

"We just got into the regular season," said Barnett. "I think our team played really well, we get better and better each game. We started off not working together very well and so far we are really getting to know every one's strengths and weaknesses. It's really fun whether we lose or win. We are still having a good time."

With games scheduled Monday through Friday, each team plays approximately two games per week.

The Iwakuni Time Machine

In the Feb. 11, 1994, issue of the Torii Teller, Marines reported on approximately 230 Marines and sailors scheduled to deploy to Zagreb, Croatia, during March and April in support of the United Nations' Peace-keeping Force and the Headquarters Marine Corps Enlisted Assignment Branch scheduled to conduct an enlisted assignment/retention command visit in Iwakuni Feb. 28.

Culture

Sento.... a relaxing glimpse into life in Japan

By Sgt. Timothy D. Flack

For this week's culture page, I'm going to take you to a place few "Gaijins" have ever dared to go, a place so unique, that it's incomparable to anything in the states.

I'll be taking you inside a "Sento", a traditional style Japanese bath house.

The Sento has been around in Japan for more than 400 years, after the first one opened in Tokyo in 1591. At that time, the sento wasn't just a place to bathe, it was like a community center.

People gathered to eat, drink, play cards and socialize. During that time period, there were female attendants who scrubbed customer's backs, and provided other services, for a fee.

But don't expect to find anything like that in today's bath houses. These aren't solely red-district area massage parlors.

In search of relief from my sore, aching muscles, I recently decided to give a local sento a try.

Upon entering the bath house, I paid the fee to the worker sitting

at an elevated desk. From this vantage point, the worker has a clear view of both the men's and women's dressing and bathing rooms, so if you're shy, the sento might not be the place for you.

By shy, I'm talking about the kind of person who used to shower with his shorts on during gym class in junior high school. Not only does the mama-san at the desk have a clear view of everything, but everyone in the bathing room is going on natural.

Oh, did I forget to mention that the men's and women's baths are separated. See, it's not too bad.

After you pay your fee, around 250-300 yen, you can disrobe and put all of your clothing in a locker, provided for free. The locker has a little key on an elastic band that you wear around your middle or wrist.

Soap, shampoo and other toiletries can be bought at the front desk, but I'd recommend bringing your own travel bag. And more importantly, unless you're used to drying off with a shimpo, see through wash cloth, bring a towel.

Now for some bath house

etiquette. When you enter the bathing room, the first thing you do is wash and rinse yourself off using the little showers around the wall.

Just take a seat on the little bench, lather up, and make sure to rinse off thoroughly. Don't get right in and climb into the jacuzzi tub, that would be uncouth.

While taking your shower, you'll notice the different tubs around the room. Before you go leaping from a tub, check it out. Each pool is different, so take your time and be cautious.

Some pools are hot, really, really hot. I don't just mean hot, I'm talking real like a lobster hot. Then, chances are pretty good the next pool will be cold. Really, really cold. I'm talking about the kind of cold that stops your heart.

After scalding my left foot, the numbing my right foot, I settled on a little tub of water in the corner. Right after I got in, I noticed a strange sensation. The water seemed to be tingling.

I leaned back against the wall and with a quirk leep out of the tub, found the source of the tingling. It was electricity. The

little box on side of the tub was giving out a little bit of electricity, which I'm sure is for a good reason. And even though I'll never climb in the "Electric Koi Tub" again, don't let that stop you.

Some sentos are fancier than others, but I'd recommend giving a little hole-in-the-wall place a shot first. It's cheap, and extremely soothing to aching muscles, and it'll give you a relaxing glimpse into life in Japan. R



A local "Sento"