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Aug. 16, 2007

Col. Michael A. O'Halloran, Commanding Officer, MCAS Iwakuni

Pilots scrub aircraft, 'Shadowhawks' enjoy show

Top 10 'khaki' nominees subject to Prowler clean-up or pie in the face for unit's sake

by Pfc. Kyle T. Ramirez
Shimbun Staff

Sailors from Electronic Attack Squadron 141 "Shadowhawks" participated in a unit-wide plane wash Friday on the flight line here.

The plane wash, hosted by the VAQ-141 Morale, Welfare and Recreation committee, was held to raise funds for the Shadowhawks Cup, a unit-hosted sports competition that took place Saturday. The money earned was used to pay for things like food, drinks, and other necessities, said Lt. Vika M. Russell, VAQ-141 MWR officer and Oak Harbor, Wash., native.

Washing the plane were officers and chief petty officers selected by unit members through a vote held by the VAQ-141 MWR committee.

"Mostly, the vote was held for fundraising purposes," said Petty Officer 3rd Class Gregory Williams, VAQ-141 corpsman and Flagstaff, Ariz., native. It was 50 cents to vote for your 'favorite khaki,' meaning any officer or chief petty officer, and \$5.00 to come out here and talk trash."

The VAQ-141 MWR committee rose upward of \$400 from this event.

"I guess you could say that Cmdr. Clapperton 'won' the election with 215 out of 530 total votes," laughed Williams.

The event started at 4:30 p.m. and went on nearly three hours. Cmdr. Craig Clapperton, VAQ-141 commanding officer and Pittsburgh, native, along with other officers and chief petty officers in the unit, scrubbed the aircraft to unit



Pfc. Kyle T. Ramirez

▲ Sailors from Electronic Attack Squadron 141 wash the underside of an EA6B Prowler Friday during a unit-wide plane wash hosted by the unit's Morale, Welfare and Recreation committee.

standards.

"It was pretty funny telling the CO he missed a spot," said Williams. "It's not every day you get to do that, and it shows that he's out here for his unit."

There was a similar vote held earlier in the week.

The top 10 nominees had to get a pie in the face on Saturday instead of having to wash a plane on a Friday afternoon," said Russell.

Cleaning aircraft is a regular duty for the VAQ-141 junior-enlisted members. They make sure that the 30-year old aircraft is cleaned on a bi-weekly basis.

"You really never know how hard our juniors work until you actually come out here and do it yourself," said Russell. "It never looked easy but I still enjoy being here with the rest of my unit."

Lean Six Sigma: Class '*Leans*' toward less waste, better process

by Lance Cpl. Noah S. Leffler
Shimbun Staff



Lance Cpl. Noah S. Leffler

▲ Russel Boudreaux, senior business consultant for NOVACES, a business process improvement service providing Lean Six Sigma training, gives a LSS class to 14 Marines and sailors at Yujo Hall Aug. 9.

Marines and sailors from installations throughout Japan and Hawaii completed a four-week course covering Lean Six Sigma at Yujo Hall here Friday.

Lean Six Sigma, a structured approach to analyzing and identifying process improvement opportunities, is slowly being put to use by Marine and Naval aircraft crews in order to eliminate waste and defects in their everyday operations.

“As these gentlemen progress, they’re bringing with them ... a more analytical thought process to really look at what cause-and-effect relationships are,” said Jim Bailey, director of training and consulting services for NOVACES, a business process improvement service providing LSS training.

The data driven process allows service members to step back and objectively evaluate a situation, eliminating the “gut feeling” reaction, he added.

When LSS was established nearly 15 years ago, a martial arts-like belt system was implemented to designate levels of qualification. The main purpose of the course was to bring the 14 participants one step closer to attaining their black belt, qualifying them as full-time LSS expert practitioners.

**The data driven process
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Before their black belt title is earned, the service members must complete a project using the Define, Measure, Analyze, Improve, Control (DMAIC) process, which is essentially the backbone of LSS.

Black belt candidate Chief Warrant Officer Brian R. De Bree, Marine Aviation Logistics Squadron 12 quality assurance officer and Toms River, N.J., native, said he feels the knowledge gained during the course will be an asset not only to his project, but to the productivity of his shop as well.

(Story continued on page 3)

“I can see great things in the next five to 10 years ... we’ll really be able to start showing dollars saved and aircraft readiness improving.”

“Right now I think we’re the second or third generation of black belts within the Navy and Marine Corps being trained,” said De Bree. “We’re barely just scratching the surface, but we’re certainly starting to see improvements already.”

“I can see great things in the next five to 10 years where we’ll really be able to start showing dollars saved and aircraft readiness improving,” he added.

Petty Officer 2nd Class James E. Dillinger, Aircraft Intermediate Maintenance Detachment, Misawa aviation electronic technician, agrees with De Bree and says the biggest asset to LSS is opportunity for those involved with the aircraft to provide input for more efficient processes.

“We’re about a year into implementing this type of process improvement,” Dillinger said. “The biggest thing that I see is (LSS) puts continuous improvement in the hands of the workers. They’re the ones that have the ideas and see what the problems are.”

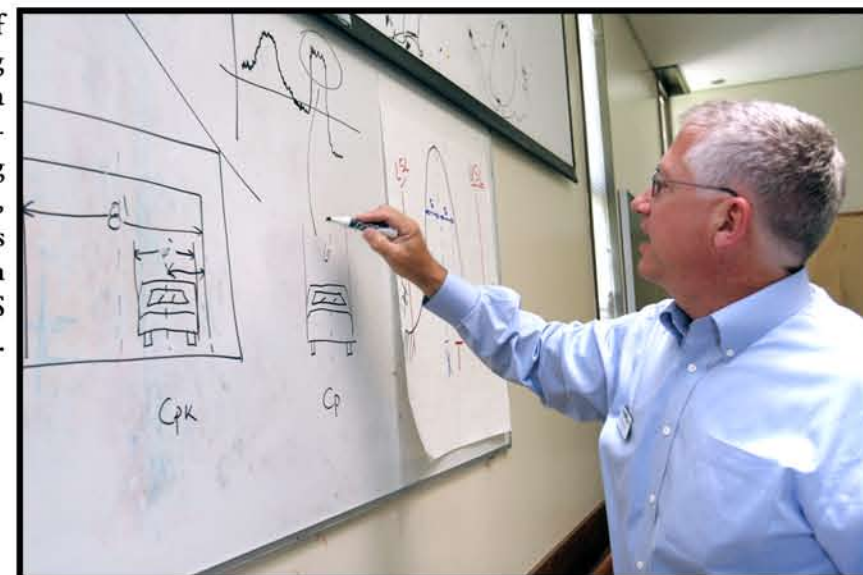
“It gives me the training to facilitate these kinds of changes, and it gives the workers the tools that they need to ‘lean’ the processes,” he added.



Lance Cpl. Noah S. Leffler

◀ Jim Bailey, director of training and consulting services for NOVACES, a business process improvement service providing Lean Six Sigma training, enlists the aid of flow charts and graphs while train Marines and sailors in LSS at Yujo Hall Aug. 9.

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Lance Cpl. Noah S. Leffler

Not Just Small Talk

Conversational English Class is two-way street for American, Japanese Participants

by Lance Cpl. Noah S. Leffler
Shimbun Staff

Nihongo dore kudai wakari maska?

Just as many Americans would be puzzled by this question, Japanese can find conversational English similarly difficult. Simple things such as slang or figures of speech can act as language barriers preventing either party from effectively getting its point across.

Some service members here are giving a small piece of their weekend to help Japanese speakers better understand English's sometimes confusing lingo.

Although it began as a way for a group of Hiroshima resi-

dents to improve their English speaking skills, many Marines here have found the weekly class to be a catalyst for communication and a foundation for friendship.

The classes began with the 1955 establishment of the Hiroshima Systematized Goodwill Guide Club, a part of the Japan National Tourist Association. The club gives volunteer Japanese tour guides a chance to share the city's history and hidden gems with English speaking visitors.

"(The program) is good because (tourists) can ask about what they have heard about the city's history or scenic spots," said Noda "Victor" Katsatoshi, SGG member and native of Hiroshima. "I want them to know more about Hiroshima. It is a beautiful place, a historical place."

But to show the beauty of his home city, he must be able to effectively communicate with Americans, Europeans and Australians in his tours. The two-hour Saturday classes provide Katsatoshi and his classmates valuable face time with an American audience willing to talk.

(Story continued on page 5)

► Staff Sgt. William A. Young, Marine Aircraft Group 12 embark chief and native of Union City, Tenn., talks with Hiroshima Systematized Goodwill Guides at a weekly conversational English class in Hiroshima Aug. 11.

► Noda Katsatoshi, Hiroshima Systematized Goodwill Guide and Hiroshima resident, and Cpl. Adam M. Guringo, Marine Aircraft Group 12 supply administration and operations clerk and native of Harrisburg, Pa., compare the differences between American and Japanese drivers licenses during a weekly conversational English class in Hiroshima Aug. 11.



Lance Cpl. Noah S. Leffler



Lance Cpl. Noah S. Leffler

“I have been taking the class for two years,” Katsatoshi said. “I learned from the teachers how to speak normal conversational English. Sometimes if I don’t understand a word or expression, they explain to me what it means.”

Banter throughout the class can range in topic from the weather to personal or professional history. As many have found, two hours fly by when engrossed in a cultural exchange.

“Most of the time everybody is very talkative because they want to practice their English,” said Staff Sgt. William A. Young, American coordinator for the class and Marine Aircraft Group 12 embark chief. “You’ll ask one question and it will go around the table for 20 minutes.”

Kiyoshi Tai, the Japanese coordinator who has attended the linguistic exchange for more than 15 years, credits its success with the relaxed dialogue.

“Sometimes the teachers bring books or brochures or teaching materials, but usually it’s just free conversation,” said the Hiroshima native.

“The conversations are very helpful,” he added. “They talk about their families and their normal lives in their home

The conversations are
very helpful ...we get the
real information about
American life.



country, and we get the real information about American life.”

The tour guides aren’t the only ones benefiting from the class. As a gesture of appreciation, the Japanese usually take their American guests to a coffee shop or restaurant afterwards.

“The teachers also get very useful information from us,” said Tai. “The teachers get to see Hiroshima’s good restaurants and facilities by the SGG members.”

When Cpl. Adam M. Guringo, MAG-12 supply administration and operations clerk, first joined the class as a last minute replacement for a friend, he had no idea about the lasting relationships he was about to make. Six months later, he is still regularly interacting with the class as both a teacher and a friend.

“I was expecting an actual classroom setting, but it’s not at all,” said Guringo, a native of Harrisburg, Pa.

“They’re just a really nice group. ... You’re getting something from them just as they’re getting something from you,” he added. “Not only are you like a teacher, but you come away with a new friend.”

Those interested in getting involved with the class needn’t sweat academic degrees or experience in front of a chalkboard.

“People always ask me if they have to teach this or that, and I say, ‘No, can you sit down and talk for two hours?’” said Young, a Union City, Tenn., native. “That’s really all it is. Don’t be intimidated, go in with an open mind and they’ll definitely make you feel welcome.”

For more information on the class, contact Young at 253-3189.

Calibrations consolidation, a continued success

by Lance Cpl. Cindy G. Alejandre
Shimbun Staff



Lance Cpl. Cindy G. Alejandre

▲ Cpl. Jesus Anchondo, Marine Logistics Aviation Squadron 12 calibrations technician and native of El Paso, Texas, works inside the new calibration center Aug. 8

Marine Aviation Logistics Squadron 12's Mobile Calibration Complex 1 and the 670 calibration laboratory work sections which recently consolidated their locations next to the Navy Calibration Lab, the first union of its kind in the Marine Corps, have met their goal to reduce customer return time by more than half.

The calibration work sections, which maintain avionics equipment, moved in May to streamline the process and make it faster for squadrons to have their gear calibrated.

Since the move in May, calibration work services on station have become more efficient mostly because there is one gear receiving point. Although the shops have similar missions they deal with different levels of maintenance. Now a Marine is accountable to pick up the gear for the two labs versus the squadrons dealing with two places.

"In the short time since co-locating, these Marines here have cut down the time it takes them to get a piece of gear back to the customer by more than half," said Capt. Andrew R. Strauss MALS-12 avionics officer-in-charge and native of Manitowoc, Wis. "A lot of it has to do with the team work between the Marines. It gives the Marines a different look at different levels of maintenance."

“In the short time since co-locating, these Marines here have cut down the time it takes them to get a piece of gear back to the customer by more than half.”

Calibration technicians who come to work in Iwakuni, including those who are currently based here under the Unit Deployment Program, benefit from working with the gear here, said Strauss.

Although the work sections are together they do not share the gear. There's a sign separating the two work areas which reads 'Standards do not pass this point.'

"The gear doesn't move, it's just the knowledge that is passed around here," said Gunnery Sgt. Alen J. Zwiefel, laboratory supervisor and New Glarus, Wis., native.

Zwiefel explained the Marines work with gear they may have never touched before and have received different types of training that would not be available if the calibration units weren't co-located. *(Story continued on page 7)*



Lance Cpl. Cindy G. Alejandre

▲ Lance Cpl. Cory R. Williams Marine Aviation Logistics Squadron 12 calibrations technician and native of Indianapolis, Ind., reads a repair publication Aug. 8.

“I pick up the gear and make sure nothing is overdue,” said Sgt. Jeremiah Cahill, issue and receive noncommissioned officer-in-charge and native of Harrisburg, Pa. “I track materials in the lab, to ensure they are processed correctly and in a timely manner.”

Cahill, who used to work as a production supervisor, now has experience working with administrative work and customer service. He also explained, by making sure gear is not over-due the labs can try to prevent having a large amount of equipment turned in for work at one time.

To further improve their operations the calibration lab also plans to deliver gear to customers in the near future, said Strauss.

Another way to continue improvement would be to introduce technicians from the Navy Calibrations Lab, said Maj. Kenrick G. Fowler, 1st Marine Aircraft Wing avionics officer and native of New York City.

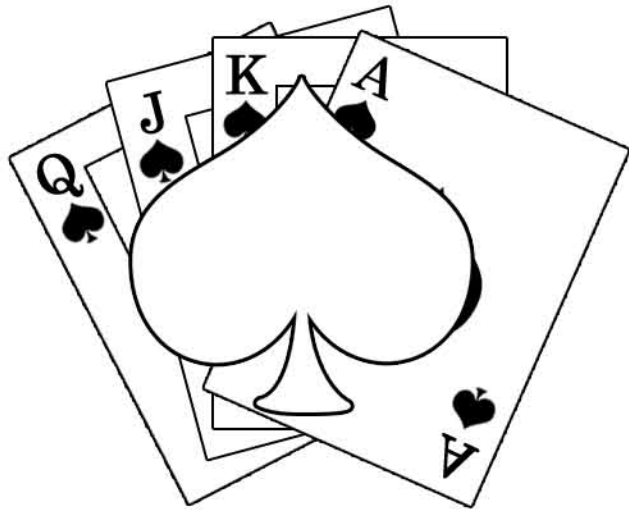
“What we would like do is utilize (Navy Calibration Lab) artisans to assist the Marines, to help train them and then the Marines could also assist them,” said Fowler. “It would be a mutually beneficial relationship. The person who would benefit most is the fleet because that’s who we’re here to serve.”



Lance Cpl. Cindy G. Alejandre

▲ Cpl. Jesus Anchondo, Marine Logistics Aviation Squadron 12 calibrations technician and native of El Paso, Texas, works inside the new calibration work center Aug. 8

“The person who would benefit most is the fleet because that’s who we’re here to serve.”



Twelve Marines and sailors competed in a Single Marine Program spades tournament at the Hornet's Nest Saturday.

Petty Officer 3rd Class Antwan G. Clay, Headquarters and Headquarters Squadron electrician mate and native of Albany, Ga., and Lance Cpl. Patrick B. Palmer, H&HS air freight clerk and native of Autaugaville, Ala., took top honors at the tournament, each of them earning a \$50 gift certificate redeemable at the exchange here.

The objective of spades is to gain the most points which are accrued by winning at the lowest number bid in each hand. To advance in the single elimination tournament partners earned 300 points during a round and 500 points in the final round.

Single Marine Program 'Deals' Spades Tournament

by Lance Cpl. Cindy G. Alejandrez
Shimbun Staff

Spades is also commonly played by Marines, mostly during deployments because cards require no electricity and can be carried along.

"Me and my buddy played together for two and a half months in Australia and were only beat like two times there, so we figured we have a good chance," said Lance Cpl. Christopher D. Gibbs, Marine Aviation Logistics Squadron 12 forward looking infrared technician and native of Louisville, Ky.

Gibbs and his partner, Lance Cpl. Ben J. Yount, MALS-12 forward looking infrared technician and St. Louis, native, did have a good chance. They advanced to the final round of the tournament.

On the other hand, their opponents didn't have the same amount of time playing together and were playing mainly for fun, which proved to be an advantage because they were relaxed and joked around during the games.

"I play spades once every blue moon," said Clay. "That's why I always enjoy it when I do play."



Lance Cpl. Cindy G. Alejandrez

▲ Service members compete during the last round of the Single Marine Program spades tournament at the Hornet's Nest Saturday.

Clay and Palmer in the end, with luck or skill, came through and beat Gibbs and Yount in the final game 505 to 393.

"They fought and it was a good game but we were up the whole time," explained Palmer, flashing his gift certificate. "I'd play in another tournament as long as it's spades."

For the tournament coordinator, the event was successful because it provided the service members a chance to meet new people and test their skills.

"I think it's good to have this because we have Marines from all different units here," said Sgt. James V. Phillips, MALS-12 air frames mechanic, SMP recreation attendant and native of Upper Marlboro, Md. "(The tournament) gave the Marines something constructive to do on their off-duty time."

80,000 flock to fishes during annual Yanai festival

by Lance Cpl. Noah S. Leffler
Shimbun Staff

The normally docile streets of downtown Yanai came alive in a spectacle of sight and sound as the city hosted an estimated 80,000 visitors during its annual Yanai Goldfish Lantern Festival Monday.

The festival, which began in 1992 in attempt to boost local commerce, draws its name from the colorful kingyo chochin, or goldfish lanterns, that adorn homes, streets and storefronts during the summer. Made from red and white paper stretched around a bamboo frame, the lanterns have been a beloved Yanai ornamentation for more than 150 years.

"The lanterns were so pretty," said Amaya B. Sanchez, first-time festivalgoer and station resident. "I enjoyed seeing all these historical displays of Japan."

The festival's theme was also represented by goldfish-shaped fireworks, live goldfish on sale for youngsters to catch and take home, and the crowd-favorite goldfish floats, which seemed to swim through the packed streets of wide-eyed onlookers.

"I am so happy," said Rie Kaneoka, an 8-year-old

Fukuoka resident. "My favorite part is catching a goldfish. (The festival) is full of fun and I have such a good time every year."

Hungry visitors had the opportunity to sample and purchase food from local vendors including shaved ice, noodles and a wide variety of meats on a stick.

"They had baby octopus, which I didn't eat but found interesting," Sanchez said. "I did try a giant hot dog on a stick. It was surprisingly really good just dipped in ketchup without the bread."

Although Monday's crowds rivaled the attendance of many professional sporting events or rock concerts, the atmosphere was surprisingly family-friendly, according to Sanchez.

"With all the families, it felt a lot safer than I think it would in the states," the Bonham, Texas, native said. "Even with however many thousands of people, I could walk down the sidewalk with my baby and not have to worry about being pushed. Everyone was so polite."

Yanai resident Higeki Kondo, who has welcomed the crowds since the festival's inception, said for him the best part is seeing the



Lance Cpl. Noah S. Leffler

excitement and wonder in young attendees' eyes.

"I am happy to host so many people in my hometown," Kondo said. "But my grandson enjoys the festival the most, which makes it so great for me."

Fun in the Sun: VAQ-141 sailors compete for 'Shadowhawk Cup'

by Lance Cpl. Chris Dobbs
Shimbun Staff

Sailors from Naval Electronic Attack Squadron (VAQ) 141 competed in sports competitions and other activities during the unit's first "Shadowhawk Cup Event" at the north side track and field area here Saturday.

Approximately 200 sailors participated in the event, which was organized by the squadron's First Class Petty Officer Association to promote troop morale.

To kick off the event, many sailors climbed atop a large inflated waterslide, which was set up for the event. The service members laughed and hollered as they slid down toward the pool of water awaiting their landing.

"It was a lot of fun," said Navy Airman Asif Azeez, aviation boatswain's mate and native of Philadelphia. "It was already pretty warm outside so it was nice to cool off."

After soaking themselves on the waterslide, the sports events commenced. The sailors matched up against each other in dodgeball, football, basketball and volleyball competitions.

"Dodgeball's always fun," said Azeez, whose team, the "Rats," claimed first place in the competition.

Others took to the basketball courts to compete against fellow squadron members in a half-court three-on-three tournament. Many sailors enjoyed the opportunity to compete against their superiors.

"We were out there having a good time, but we still wanted to compete," said Azeez. "I think most of us enjoyed the chance to match up against the officers."

After the first few games were "in the books," a full-course meal including steak and chicken fajitas, barbecue ribs, corn-on-the-cob and potato salad was served.

"There was an incredible amount of food," said Petty Officer 3rd Class Eric Matuszewic, aviation electronics technician and native of Rochester, Minn. "It was all delicious." After lunch, the service members took a brief break from the sports competitions to witness a much-anticipated event.

After lunch, the service members took a brief break from the sports competitions to witness a much-anticipated event.

Prior to the cup event, the sailors voted for the sailors they would most like to see get hit with a pie. A handful of service members were selected to be the recipients of the dessert-filled fun.

"That was hilarious," said Navy Airman Otis Clements, aviation machinist mate and native of Moody, Ala. "They were a complete mess. The pie was all over their face and in their hair."

As the sailors wiped down their whipped cream and chocolate syrup-covered faces, the service members reclaimed their positions on the courts and fields. This time, a couple



Lance Cpl. Chris Dobbs
▲ Petty Officer 1st Class Ram Alaffa, Naval Electronic Warfare Squadron 141 aviation structural mechanic and native of Baytown, Texas, reacts after getting hit in the face with a pie during his squadron's first "Shadowhawk Cup Event" here Aug. 11.

of six-man teams headed to the sand volleyball court.

"It was grueling competition," said Azeez, whose team also took first place in the volleyball tournament. "We had been looking forward to it most of the morning, so when we finally got out there, we wanted to make the most of it."

After a few more hours of competition and activities, the final baskets were scored, volleyballs spiked and dodge ball players eliminated. Whether they were relaxing in one of the inflatable pools, enjoying the food or watching the tournament's championship games unfold, most sailors agreed the cup event was exciting and enjoyable.

"It was a blast," said Matuszewic. "I'm looking forward to the next time we get together to do something like this."

Master Batters eat up Choco Tacos in softball season opener

By Lance Cpl. Chris Dobbs
Shimbun Staff

The Master Batters pounded the Choco Tacos 17-0 during the fall intramural softball season opener at the main field here Monday.

The Batters, representing airfield operations, smashed the Marine Aircraft Group 12 Tacos in the opening inning, scoring seven runs and establishing a lead they would not relinquish.

For the Batters and newly formed Tacos, the game was a chance to test their skills after a monthlong break from competition and little or no practice.

"It felt pretty good to be on the field again," said Batters' left center fielder David Gibson. "It was nice to get our bats going, which was something we struggled with last season."

While the Batters consistently hammered shots to the outfield, the Tacos hit bobbling grounders and weak fly balls which were easily fielded by the Batters' defense.

"We were a little rusty," said Tacos' third baseman Michael Sweeney.

After the Batters jumped out to a 7-0 lead in the first, both teams went on a multiple-inning scoring drought. But the Batters' bats didn't stay

cool for long.

Batters' third baseman Travis Bouten and outfielder Steven Klein's home runs contributed to a 10-run offensive surge which crushed the Tacos' comeback hopes and sealed the game's outcome.

The Batters' dominating 17-0 win was as much a testament to their fielding abilities as it was their batting prowess. Throughout the game, their quickness and strong throws kept the Tacos off the board and revealed that their game was solid even after they dropped their bats.

"Strong outfielders are the key," said Batters' coach Nicole Ohmes. "We've got good outfielders and a good second baseman and shortstop. Those are the most important positions because that's where most of the balls get hit."

Though the Tacos lost badly, they walked off the field relatively unfazed.

"We're not going to stop because of one minor defeat," said coach and outfielder Adrian Sena. "We will continue to work together as a team and improve."

During this year's summer season, the Batters struggled, winning less than half of their games.



Lance Cpl. Chris Dobbs

▲ Master Batters pitcher Micah Martini releases a pitch during the intramural fall softball season opener against the Choco Tacos at the main field here Aug. 13. The Batters pounded the Tacos 17-0.

"We have a lot of the same people (as last season), but this season they're going to be able to show up on a more consistent basis," said Ohmes, who added that during the summer season many players were unable to make games because of deployments. "Because of that, I think we'll have a better season."

In the season's upcoming games, the Batters are looking forward to an inter-squadron rivalry against the Marine Wing Support Squadron 171 engineers, said Ohmes.

"We compete in pretty much everything we do, and we're going to bring our rivalry to the softball said Ohmes. "We want to win every game against them."

While winning is bonus, unit camaraderie is what makes the season special, said Ohmes.

"It's like a shop function," said Ohmes. "We all get together and have a good time."

The intramural fall softball season runs through Oct. 10, culminating in a championship tournament and chili cookoff.



Col. Mark R. Wise, Marine Aircraft Group 12 executive officer and Seattle native, is pinned on the rank of colonel by his wife, Terri, and daughter, Heather (left), Thursday after being selected for the rank late 2006. Wise, an F/A-18 Hornet pilot with 3,500 flight hours, recently graduated from the U.S. Naval War College and is slated to be the next commanding officer of MAG-12 in 2008.

"I am humbled by this great opportunity that has been put in front of me and excited to lead my Marines by commanding MAG-12," said Wise.

AROUND THE CORPS

NEAR KARMAH, Iraq



Photo courtesy of 3rd Battalion, 1st Marines.

▲ Corporal Sean A. Stokes, killed July 30 in Al Anbar province, is a legend. Not because his body now lay still, rather because he lived a life of selfless devotion and valor that those who hear his story will never forget.

Young legend killed in Al Anbar province

by Sgt. Andy Hurt
13th Marine Expeditionary Unit

Corporal Sean A. Stokes, killed July 30 in Al Anbar province, is a legend. Not because his body now lay still, rather because he lived a life of selfless devotion and valor that those who hear his story will never forget.

The warriors who know of Sean Stokes – the young private who took point in Fallujah, or the compassionate selfless Marine who put nothing before the safety of his brothers – will tell his story for ages to come. Those who have not yet heard of Sean Stokes needn't look far. True accounts of his actions in Fallujah saturate the internet, and Stokes' name peppers mainstream non-fiction war stories. His name is synonymous with heroism and passion, and the more we can tell his story, the more we honor his life and the hundreds of warriors like him who have gone before us and continue to fill our ranks.

Life and Death of a Warrior

Sean Stokes enlisted in the Marine Corps shortly after the Sept. 11, 2001 terrorist attacks. He joined 3rd Battalion, 1st Marines Regiment in 2004 after running into trouble with his previous command. As punishment, he was busted down to the rank of private, and transferred to 3/1 – the next unit scheduled to deploy. A twist of fate perhaps, as Sean would make history in the coming months. Under normal circumstances, he would have been discharged.

"Sean wasn't upset about it at all. He considered it an opportunity to prove himself and make new friends," said 1st Lt. Jeffrey Sommers, Stokes' platoon commander at the time.

Sommers' description of Sean echoes that of Auburn, Calif., citizens who knew him. A high school guidance counselor described Sean as a young man who wanted to "develop

into a real strong, ethical, moral human being."

During Operation Phantom Fury, the reserved Marine would prove himself a Spartan in the streets. Sommers said he witnessed Stokes commit maniacal acts of bravery, to the point where the platoon commander questioned his sanity.

"I would see Marines do things and think to myself 'Hey, glad everything turned out the way it did, but what the hell was going through your head?'"

One example comes from Nov. 10, when Stokes, who served as the front-walking "point man", and his team were ambushed by enemy forces with grenades and automatic weapons fire. Stokes sustained shrapnel wounds in his lower legs and refused to be evacuated while he provided suppressive fire, allowing an adjacent unit to destroy the enemy.

Stokes walked point each day of the battle. He was the first Marine down every street, in every house and every room – hundreds of rooms. He was the first Marine to be attacked by the enemy and the first to report the situation to his squad leader. Bullets, grenades, rockets and roadside bombs were around every corner.

When asked to describe Stokes' motives for taking the lead into so much danger, Sommers explained: "You don't do it because of courage, and you don't do it because you want to. Stokes probably did it because he knew there was more to the battle than the few seconds involved in opening a door."

(Story continued on page 14)

AROUND THE CORPS

NEAR KARMAH, Iraq

He continued: "That kind of compassion ... I won't really ever understand. Human factors in those situations take a grip of you long before honor, courage and commitment."

Bing West, author of *No True Glory*, met Stokes during the battle of Fallujah and fondly recalled Stokes as "A grunt with (Lima Company) 3/1 with a great smile."

"He was then living on the third deck of a shot-out factory that I was sure would collapse around us," said West. "Sean just laughed when I told him I was going to sleep outdoors. He had seen three weeks of non-stop action."

According to a citation for a pending award, during the non-stop action Stokes saw the face of the death constantly and was wounded several times. What kept him going?

"At each house, I said a prayer," Stokes later told a reporter. "Please God, get me out of this one. When I come out of a house, I thank Him, light up a cigarette and move on to the next one."

When the dust settled and blood was rinsed from the streets, names of men like Sean Stokes who braved Hell on Earth rose from the ruins. Some Marines claim to have witnessed Stokes dispatch as many as ten insurgents, others say it was more than twenty.

After the battle, Stokes remained with 3/1, ran through another work-up cycle and deployed again in Sept. 2005 to Haditha, Iraq. During this time, he solidified his bond with his peers and built upon his reputation as the quiet warrior. He began to recover from his earlier career glitches and picked up rank and billets of responsibility.

When the unit completed the deployment, Stokes was set to get out of the Marine Corps – but he didn't.

"Sean was working at the gym on Pendleton, and I would see him every now and then and we'd talk," said Sommers. When he told the battalion he was eager to extend his contract and deploy again with the 13th Marine Expeditionary Unit, the staff was less than shocked. Another hero of Fallujah, Sgt. Bradley Adams, had volunteered to join the battalion for the Western Pacific deployment. The bond between Stokes and Adams gave each Marine no choice but to stand by his brother.

"Basically, each Marine said 'I'm not going without him and he's not going anywhere without me,'" claims Maj. Shannon Neller, Battalion Landing Team 3/1 Operations Officer.

Together, Stokes and Adams were assigned to the battalion commander's Personal Security Detachment. On the battlefield, this meant constant convoy operations down bomb-ridden highways and snap tactical decisions in the interest of keeping the movement as safe as possible. Stokes and Adams, said Neller, initially conducted operations in separate vehicles but eventually made their way to the lead vehicle. Stokes was on point again.

"The (battalion) sergeant major called him 'The Pathfinder' out there," said Neller. Stokes' last day on Earth went something like this:

Elements from Battalion Landing Team 3/1 were conducting Operation PEGASUS BRIDGE, a counter-insurgency effort in the Eastern Al Anbar province. Lima, India and Weapons companies were scattered across the area of operations, sweeping for weapons caches, roadside bombs and



Photo courtesy of 3rd Battalion, 1st Marines.

▲ Sergeant Bradley Adams (left) and Cpl. Sean Stokes joke during a patrol break near Karmah, Iraq. The two volunteered to extend enlistment contracts for the deployment with 3rd Battalion, 1st Marines, and were nearly inseparable as 'brothers in arms' while serving on the battalion Personal Security Detachment. Stokes was killed July 30 in Al Anbar province here; Adams was severely wounded in the same blast.

rooting out anti-coalition insurgents. Stokes and Adams, along with the commander's Personal Security Detachment, were darting back and forth from company positions when the convoy stopped to sweep for IEDs near an existing crater.

(Story continued on page 15)

AROUND THE CORPS

NEAR KARMAH, Iraq

The Marines formed a “V” and stepped carefully along the roadside when a blast rocked the area. When the chaos subsided, two Marines were down – Stokes and Adams.

“As soon as they passed over the (radio) net PSD had taken two casualties, I knew it was those two,” Sommers said. “I knew if anything ever happened to PSD it would be those guys.” Sommers added he was almost certain Stokes walked point on the sweep. He had.

Celebrating the Death of a Warrior in Battle

There are many, many ways to cope with a loss. Combat Marines have a great deal of experience with the situation, and it is all too easy sometimes to say a quick prayer and hold back tears until a memorial service is held. Marines are not heartless; like Stokes, they share a sense of duty and know their mission must continue. By pressing on, we show the Marine is still with us, and we are respecting his conviction by standing by ours. Stokes’ steadfast dedication to his fellow Marines is one of legendary proportion.

“Sean was in his element here,” Sommers said, “this is where his heart was. A lot of people do this as a job, but he did it because he loved it. He paid the ultimate sacrifice to protect his brothers and keep them out of danger. He wasn’t fighting for the American people or the Marine Corps, he was here for Adams and the guys in his platoon.”

Sommers stressed the idea that Stokes’ selflessness was far beyond that of average young men.

“Everyone talks about ‘service before self, it’s all about the guy next to you,’ y’know? And they’re taught that, but some people definitely don’t live it. Stokes lived it.”

Marines will weep as they celebrate his life and his actions. Is there any place more fitting for a warrior to rest than in the hearts of fellow men who braved a land of danger? Absolutely not.

Corporal Sean A. Stokes, the Fallujah Point Man, battalion Path Finder, is a legend.

This Generation of Heroes

In the midst of a modern “Me Generation,” young men like Sean Stokes are few and far between. Type his name into an internet search, however, and you’ll see the word “Hero” pop up everywhere.

Stokes’ actions are boasted on sites like “Marinemoms.com”, “Patriotguard.org” and countless internet blogs from random observers, parents, wives, brothers, friends, leaders and subordinates. Stokes’ name is already synonymous with heroism in the most sacred of places: the heart of America.

To speak of legends in the warrior culture has become a history lesson. Dan Daly, Smedley Butler, and perhaps the most famous, Lewis B. “Chesty” Puller, who was awarded five Navy Crosses during his service from 1918 to 1955.

What about the Jason Dunham’s, the Brad Kasal’s, and the Sean Stokes’?

“Marines like Stokes have many names. His name might not have been Leonidas but he would’ve filled the first ranks of ‘The 300.’ Marines like Stokes are the closest thing to legend we have,” said Maj. Kevin M. Gonzalez, BLT 3/1 executive officer.

The birth of a legend can be overlooked, and the life of a legend is something special. Fortunately for Sean Stokes, a legend never dies.

(Rest in peace, warrior.)

Author’s Note:

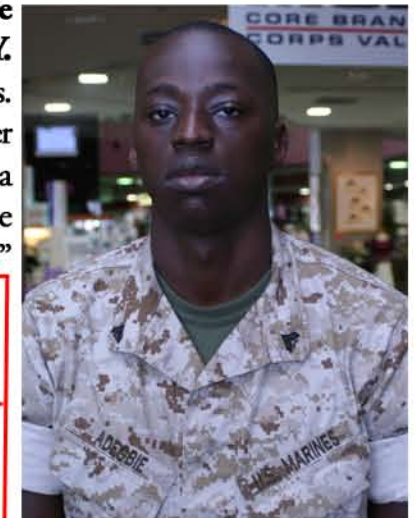
To tell the story of Cpl. Sean Stokes is an honor. This story is not meant to place an individual above his fellow Marines, but to highlight the warrior spirit of the United States Marine Corps and the thousands of young men like Sean Stokes who have shed blood on the battlefield in Iraq. Please pass this tale on to those in need of inspiration, guidance and spirit.

‘The 300’ comes from the Spartan Persian battle of Thermopylae in 480 B.C. There, a small force of Greek soldiers – led by only 300 Spartans – held back an overwhelming force of Persians.



Maj. Douglas P. Hale
Houston

"The shorts are too small. The new gear has got to be more up to date. By that I mean the shorts have to be a little longer. The shirt can't just be a T-shirt, it has to be a loose Under Armour-like material. It still has to be green. Just more of a modern 'today' look to it."



Cpl. Taj P. Adegbie
Bronx, N.Y.

"I think there should be a different suit for different seasons. During the winter, we should be wearing something like Under Armour, keeping the heat in. During the summer it should be a lot looser. Something that can keep us easily ventilated would be nice. The shorts right now are too short."

The Marine Corps is developing new a physical-training uniform slated for release in November. The commandant of the Marine Corps recently stated that Marines should be the ones who design the uniform. People should be able to immediately distinguish Marines running in formation from other services, he said. So we were wondering ...

Can you describe the new Marine PT gear if you could design it your way?



Petty Officer 1st Class Trevis F. Young
Eastover, S.C.

"The shorts have to at least come to the knees. The 'silky's' have to go! I think the T-shirt should stay the same. The entire uniform should be lightweight and long lasting. The shorts should offer some breathing room and maybe the T-shirt material could be a little thinner."



Lance Cpl. David C. Sisson
Cobleskill, N.Y.

"The uniform should remain exactly the same. We shouldn't change it. Isn't the Marine Corps all about keeping traditions? This should be no different. Maybe the shorts could be a little longer, but for the most part it's fine the way it is."



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