



the KINTAI
shimbun

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From cammies to classrooms

by Lance Cpl. Noah S. Leffler

Team Iwakuni packs bags

*Western Pacific Regional Basketball
Tournament next stop*

by Lance Cpl. Chris Dobbs

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Sept. 7, 2007

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

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Iwakuni City rewards VAQ-141's volunteer work

by Lance Cpl. Cindy G. Alejandrez
Shimbun Staff

A group of 12 U.S. Navy Electronic Attack Squadron 141 sailors were recognized for their volunteer efforts while cleaning up the Nishiki riverbank after the 40th Annual Nishiki River Water Festival Friday.

The sailors received a letter of appreciation from an Iwakuni City official on behalf of the 40th Annual Nishiki River Festival executive committee chairwoman to thank them for clearing the riverbank of litter on Aug. 26.

"You took special interest in the significance and spirit underlying the festival," expressed the festival's committee, thanking the sailor's for their positive role in the community.

"It was good to help out because it keeps us motivated," said Petty Officer 1st Class Milton C. Ramos, VAQ-141 aviation machinist mate chief-select, volunteer and native of Providence, R.I. "It gives us a chance to show our colors and let the community know we care."

To participate in the city's clean-up the sailors made their way to the riverbed at 4:30 a.m. and teamed up with other volunteers to start the morning's work.

Petty Officer 3rd Class Russell L. Burke, VAQ-141 air frame technician and Dallas native, said the sailors filled bags with debris then separated combustible trash and noncombustible. Working together made the job go by much faster than expected.

Burke explained volunteering was rewarding because he looks forward to time stationed here and enjoys the area. Most sailors, including himself, didn't expect to receive any recognition.

"It brought members of the U.S. military and the locals together for a good cause," said Petty Officer 3rd Class Justin W. Tewell, VAQ-141 airframe technician and Cortez, Colo., native.

While the sailors' cleanup effort was awarded by the City of Iwakuni, volunteer cleanups are nothing new for VAQ-141 according to Senior Chief Petty Officer Alicia Koval, Expeditionary Logistics Unit leading chief petty officer and coordinator of the Nishiki River cleanup effort.

"Back at Whidbey Island Washington (where VAQ-141 is based out of) I've set up a few beach adoptions. I guess I'm a neat freak; I like to pick up trash," added Koval.



Lance Cpl. Cindy G. Alejandrez

▲ A member of the Iwakuni City council hands a letter of appreciation to Senior Chief Petty Officer Alicia Koval, Expeditionary Logistics Unit leading chief petty officer and coordinator of the Nishiki River cleanup effort, for VAQ-141's volunteer work on Aug. 26.

Summer Music Festival keeps good times, tunes rolling

by Lance Cpl. Noah S. Leffler
Shimbun Staff

More than 1,000 music lovers enjoyed an evening of smooth grooves on the ninth hole of the Torii Pines Golf Course Saturday during the Summer Music Festival.

Marine Corps Community Services Productions hosted the free event which included five live bands, a buffet-style dinner, drinks and a bounce house for the children.

"I heard some of the bands talking about (the festival) at the Marine Lounge, plus I could hear the music from my room so I decided to check it out," said Lance Cpl. Jason Romaniec, Headquarters and Headquarters Squadron aircraft rescue and firefighting technician and native of Littleton, Colo. "There's good music, a great atmosphere and everyone's having fun. It's a nice feel."

Musical appetites of all types were satisfied as bands played a variety of tunes ranging from jazz to rap. One younger resident got a lesson in headbanging as he and his friends enjoyed thrashing to Road Rage's heavy riffs.

"Rock and Roll is kinda me, I've grown up hearing it," said 6-year-old George K. Smedes III. After the show, the young rocker was brought onstage and presented a hat after he demonstrated his newfound knack for slam-dancing.

"This is special because it's a chance for me to be cool," Smedes added. "I'm always gonna wear this hat."

Another crowd favorite was the jazz stylings of Stanley Baird, whose smoking sax solos had a group of youths entranced at edge of the stage.

◀ Road Rage takes the stage and rocks the house during the Summer Music Festival at Torii Pines Golf Course Sept. 1.



Lance Cpl. Noah S. Leffler

◀ Mikie Watanabe, Road Rage bass player and native of Hiroshima, takes her turn at the mike during the Summer Music Festival at the Torii Pines Golf Course here Sept. 1. Marine Corps Community Services Productions hosted the free event which included five live bands, a buffet-style dinner, drinks and a bounce house for the children.

"My boy is at the stage and he doesn't want to leave," said Misa Kinjo, MCCS administrative assistant and Okinawa native. "The band is so good - it's good music for nighttime."

As the evening's final act, In Heat, wrapped up their set and families began to make their way home, one could gauge the festival's success by the smiles on concertgoers' faces.

"I think it's a great way to end the summer and a great way for MCCS to give back to everyone here," said Steve Howard, MCCS marketing officer and Plains, Ga., native. "Everyone was able to just kick back, relax and enjoy the Labor Day weekend."



Lance Cpl. Noah S. Leffler

Mu Juk Marines, sailors ‘stay in the fight’ with MCMAP course

by Pfc. Kyle T. Ramirez
Shimbun Staff

When they’re not driving 7-ton vehicles or maintaining electrical equipment, they’re slamming each other to the deck and swinging weapons of opportunity.

Iwakuni-based Marines from Marine Wing Support Squadron 171 are advancing to their next level in the Marine Corps Martial Arts Program during the after hours of Exercise Ulchi Focus Lens 2007 at the outdoor martial arts area in Camp Mu Juk, South Korea, here.

Training began for the Marines nearly four weeks ago shortly after the squadron arrived here. Marines in the group are training for each belt level except black and one sailor is training for his tan belt, the lowest grade belt in the MCMAP, said Staff Sgt. Israel Perez, MCMAP black belt instructor and native of Avenal, Calif.

The group of 15 Marines trains in the morning before work and in the afternoon to fit the curriculum in the compressed time frame.

“In order to get their new belts, they cannot miss one class,” said Perez. “The higher-ranking color they are trying to achieve, the more sustaining exercises they’ll have to participate in.”

Marines involved in the class can expect to graduate to the next level Saturday, returning to Iwakuni with a new belt.

“This training really gives us all something to look forward to at the end of the day,” said Lance Cpl. Quan V. Lao, MWSS-171 motor transportation operator and Atlanta native. “I would much rather be trained out here than in the rear. For some reason I’m extra focused when I’m deployed.”

Perez has a theory that explains the “extra focused” mentality that Lao mentioned.

“Marines get out here to Mu Juk and they quickly decide they want to go back to the rear,” said Perez. “Giving this class makes them set their goal-oriented minds on something more productive. It makes them want to stay here until their training is complete and it gives them a sense of camaraderie.”

One student, Petty Officer 3rd Class Franco L. Ahumada, a hospital corpsman and native of Orlando, Fla., is the only sailor in the class.

“I’ve been trying to better myself and I heard about this course through word-of-mouth,” said Ahumada. “When I do something right, they let me know and vice versa. I know that the Marines learned this curriculum in their basic training and I’m just trying to catch up.”



Pfc. Kyle T. Ramirez

▲ Staff Sgt. Israel Perez, Marine Corps Martial Arts Program black belt instructor and native of Avenal, Calif., manipulates a student’s wrist “by the numbers” for instructional purposes only in front of his students during a MCMAP class at the outdoor martial arts area here.

“They are still treating me as one of their own,” Ahumada added.

Although Ahumada has the least amount of curriculum to practice, he has the most amount of training to become proficient. Due to the size of the class, Perez can work with each student to make sure they are mastering the techniques.

“I’ve taught numerous courses in the past,” said Perez. “Deployment is my favorite time to instruct because it keeps everyone in the combat mindset and away from things that will make them homesick.”

Marines train in Hachigamine Park's obstacle course



Lance Cpl. Cindy G. Alejandrez

by Lance Cpl. Cindy G. Alejandrez
Shimbun Staff

More than 35 Marine Aviation Logistics Squadron 12 Marines ran through an obstacle course at Hachigamine Park in Otake City Aug. 30.

The Marines ran up the hill packed with obstacles behind the leadership of Sgt. Maj. James C. Kirkland, MALS-12's senior enlisted and native of Des Moines, Iowa, who explained the physical training was to challenge the Marines to keep them in a warrior mindset.

◀ Marine Aviation Logistics Squadron 12 Marines try to keep balance on an obstacle in Hachigamine Park at Otake City Aug. 30.

"Today I ran through one of the (most fun) obstacle courses I have ever done," said Cpl. Jack E. Keovongsa, MALS-12 solder technician and native of San Pablo, Calif. "At first, going up was kind of simple but as it progressed the obstacles got kind of crazy."

In groups of seven, the Marines worked their way through netting, walked across balance beams and climbed and crawled through several wooden obstacles before running up to the next challenge.

The variety of obstacles tested the Marines' physical abilities and teamwork. Teams had to figure out how to safely complete each challenge.

"First you have to examine (the obstacles) then figure out how you're going to get through; you just don't rush into it," explained Keovongsa.

Lance Cpl. Donald A. Garcia, MALS-12 tool control program coordinator and native of

▶ Cpl. Steve R. Williams, Marine Aviation Logistics Squadron 12 safety manager and native of Baton Rouge, La., crawls through an obstacle during physical training at Hachigamine Park in Otake City Aug. 30. More than 35 Marines ran through the obstacle course.

Miami, said his favorite challenge was running around a wide wooden pit, shaped like a funnel, then running back to the top.

Running up and down the pit was tiring because the Marines had to counter the momentum used when running down to make it back up.

Garcia explained running uphill to complete almost 30 obstacles was a welcomed change in the way they train.

"It was just fun and a lot better than the (obstacle) course on base," added Garcia.

Once at the end of the course Marines caught their breath and made their way back down to the base of the mountain via a large slide which runs along the course.

"They love the challenge," said Kirkland. "They've got a smile from ear to ear when they're drenched in sweat because that's why they joined the Marine Corps."



Lance Cpl. Cindy G. Alejandrez

Casualty exercise prepares station response teams for Target Island mishap

by Lance Cpl. Chris Dobbs
Shimbun Staff

Boom! An explosion leaves one Marine laid out and unresponsive in the sand and another covered with wounds and in shock.

“Help me! I’m hurt!” screams the wounded Marine, running around wildly.

As one Marine attempts to calm him, another urgently radios for medical help.

This was the scene of a casualty evacuation exercise at Target Island here Aug. 31, which tested station emergency personnel’s ability to handle such an incident.

The exercise was important because station Explosive Ordnance Disposal Marines regularly use the tiny dirt island, which is located a half mile from the station port facility, to dispose of live ordnance.

“We train out here at least once a month and this type of incident is absolutely possible,” said Gunnery Sgt. Michael D. Nutting, EOD detachment staff noncommissioned officer-in-charge and native of West Palm Beach, Fla.

Because of the inherent danger of working with explosives, a corpsman is always on hand when EOD Marines are working on the island. If a mishap were to occur, EOD would simply call for help and assist the corpsman on the scene until emergency personnel arrived, according to Nutting.

“Training wise for us, this is just verifying our (medical evacuation) procedures,” Nutting said. “It’s more of a training evolution for the fire department and the corpsman.”

During the exercise, firefighters, corpsmen and military police rushed to the station port facility while the corpsman on duty attended to the victims on the island.

“We make sure the scene is safe first,” said Seaman Jessie Larot, corpsman and native of Virginia Beach, Va., who was on the island at the time of the incident. “Then we determine whether the victims are responsive or unresponsive and attempt to stabilize their condition.”

The “victim” of the exercise was unconscious and Larot applied a cervical-spine brace to his neck to immobilize the patient and prevent further injury. He also applied pressure to his wounds to control the bleeding.

“We make sure he’s breathing and his vitals are in the normal level,” said Larot, supporting the patient’s neck.



▲ Station firefighters attend to a “victim” during a casualty evacuation exercise at Target Island here Aug. 30.

Lance Cpl. Chris Dobbs

Meanwhile an engine company of firefighters made their way to the island by way of a mechanized landing craft. Upon landing on the island’s shore, the firefighters charged to where the unconscious victim lay.

See Casualty on page 7



Lance Cpl. Chris Dobbs

▲ Station firefighters attend to a "victim" during a casualty evacuation exercise at Target Island here Aug. 30.

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"We're here to transport the patient from land to a water-borne asset and get him back to the base clinic for medical evaluation," said Devin A. Johnston-Lee, station fire chief. "Obviously, the faster we can do this the better."

The firefighters carefully lifted the victim to a stretcher before carrying him to the vessel and heading back to the port. During the ride back, the corpsman monitored the patients' conditions.

"How are you doing? You're going to be alright," said Larot, reassuring the wounded victim.

Once back to the port, a second company of firefighters transported the victims to an ambulance, signaling the completion of the exercise.

The exercise went as planned, according to Johnston-Lee, as it gave EOD Marines, firefighters, corpsman and military police a chance to practice and coordinate their response to a specific type of accident. Station medical personnel also gained vital training in handling stressful situations, according to Larot.

"I learned how important it is to stay focused on what I need to do," said Larot. "If I'm not calm, I'm not going to be able to respond to the patient the way I need to."

Emergency personnel are scheduled to conduct casualty evacuation training regularly and will soon be getting a new, faster boat that will allow them to respond more quickly to calls, said Johnston-Lee.



Lance Cpl. Chris Dobbs

▲ Station firefighters transport a "victim" onto a mechanized landing craft during a casualty evacuation exercise at Target Island here Aug. 30.



Lance Cpl. Chris Dobbs

▲ Station firefighters transport a "victim" onto a mechanized landing craft during a casualty evacuation exercise at Target Island here Aug. 30.

From cammies to classrooms: Retired CWO's journey begins, ends in Iwakuni

by Lance Cpl. Noah S. Leffler
Shimbun Staff

Andre L. Boyer has been called many things throughout the course of his life: son, brother, husband, father, even sir. When referred to by one name, however, a certain proud smile creeps across his face.

Just call him Dr. Boyer. The title is a testament of the 44-year-old's hard work taking him from the projects of northern Ohio to the beaches of San Diego, a journey that interestingly enough began here in Iwakuni.

Boyer grew up the youngest of 10 children and raised by a single mom in then racially divided Cleveland. By the time he was a teenager, schools were in the process of intermixing students from opposite sides of town.

"In the city we lived in the blacks lived on one side of the neighborhood and the whites lived on the other side, so the public school system decided (to) desegregate the schools," Boyer said. "So they bussed some of the black kids to the west side and the white kids over to the east side. When I got to high school that was a big thing going on, and I didn't want to have to go to the other side of town to go to school."

In those days, the advent of the space age and aircraft mechanics held endless opportunities, so Boyer opted to attend a technical school and study aviation technology hoping to learn a trade and pave the way for his future.

"I saw this as an opportunity for me to do something with my life and contribute to society," said Boyer. "For those next three years I was an aircraft mechanic."

Knowing military experience in aviation could be parlayed into a lucrative civilian career, Boyer decided to enlist in the Air Force. Fate had a different path for the well-spoken Ohioan, however, and it all began when he met a sharp-dressed Marine Corps recruiter.

"One day I was in the (Air Force) recruiter's office to talk to the guy. He wasn't in the office, but there was a Marine recruiter there in his dress blues," Boyer said, laughing at the circumstances spurning the careers of so many Marines. "I must say, he looked very good and I was impressed ... I thought, 'Hey, let me give this a try.'"

In 1982 Boyer found himself stationed in Iwakuni working in aviation logistics. Some of his earliest experiences in the Marine Corps shaped the goals that molded the man into what he is today.

The senior leaders were all technical experts in their job fields who demanded the same level of excellence from their Marines, Boyer said.

"I had one chief warrant officer who taught me that yes, he could give me the answer, but it's better if you find out the answer yourself," he added. "That really impressed me about learning."

For the next several years Boyer's education would take a backseat to his family and professional life. A married father of two by age 22, he was balancing work, deployments and raising a family in Cherry Point, S.C. It was while stationed in Okinawa in 1989 he one day had what some would call an epiphany.

"One morning I literally kind of woke up and said, 'You know what? I can't be a Marine forever,'" Boyer said. "I need to do something else to position myself for the future. I've got a wife and two kids, so what am I going to do?"

These questions along with the support of his colleagues and command led Boyer to night classes through the University of Maryland. Balancing work, school and home life wasn't always an easy task, but the young scholar's mind was set on earning a degree as well as joining the ranks of his early Marine Corps influences.

See Boyer on page 9



Lance Cpl. Chris Dobbs

▲ Dr. Andre L. Boyer, University of Phoenix full-time faculty management and native of Cleveland, sits in during the university's Master of Business Administration course at Building 411 here Sept. 4.

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"After the impact warrant officers had in my career, I wanted to be that technical expert in the (aviation logistics) field," said Boyer. "Becoming a warrant officer was very important to me."

After attaining a bachelor's in sociology as a staff sergeant in 1994, Boyer returned to his first and favorite duty station to work at the family service center. His experiences helping others through his work, completing his master's in management, and his selection for warrant officer made his time here "one of the best tours I've ever had in the Marine Corps."

"I got trained in another area outside my MOS, and it really opened my eyes," he said. "It really changed me and my mentality as far as dealing with people, especially people from different cultures."

For several years, Boyer had also been teaching English to Japanese locals both on and off base. Throughout his career colleagues had encouraged him to pursue this interest, something he finally decided to do while stationed in Miramar.

"I started going to night school again for my doctorate in education," said Boyer. "I never neglected my responsibilities as a full-time Marine because that was my full-time job, but I had educational goals I wanted to accomplish."

These goals would prove to be the most difficult yet. Along with the heavy course load came added financial responsibilities due to his recent promotion to warrant officer.

"As an officer I had to think about what was going to pay for this doctorate," Boyer said. "Although it ended up being very expensive, it was worth it for me."

After 22 years of service in the Marine Corps, Boyer finally retired in 2003 and one year later completed his doctorate degree. With his excellent education and military credentials he secured a high-paying job for a San Diego company as a financial analyst. It would seem everything was working out perfectly in Boyer's life, but something was still missing.

"The money was great, but at that time I wasn't personally satisfied with the job I was doing, I wasn't happy," he said. "I actually walked away from a very good paying job because I really wanted to get back to my profession of teaching."

Returning to the classroom wasn't Boyer's only ambition – he also sorely missed the island he called home for so many years. One day while on vacation in Okinawa, Boyer walked into a University of Phoenix office and expressed his interest to teach in Japan. Shortly thereafter he was working at the University's Yokota Air Force Base Campus, and about five months ago transferred to Iwakuni to teach and recruit faculty members.

Boyer loves his life in Japan as much now as he did when first stationed here. He is remarried to a native of Hiroshima, and their proximity to her hometown as well as his infatuation with the local culture is most likely to keep him here for years to come.

"I literally jumped at the opportunity to come back ... Iwakuni is a model installation," he said. "I left here 10 years ago, and since I've come back the changes are dynamic."

Skeptics may hear Boyer's story and think his kind of success is unattainable, but any of his students will argue otherwise. Boyer helped organize the University of Phoenix Master of Business Administration course here, and class members are following his lead in paving the way toward their own futures.

"Dr. Boyer is great," said 2nd Lt. Eric D. Pierce, Marine Aviation Logistics Squadron 12 aircraft maintenance officer and Detroit native. "It's nice having him because he has the military experience to relate to us, but he also has the experience in the civilian world."

"I'd always wanted to get my master's, and I knew if I put it off it would take forever, so I started right up here" he added. "Like Dr. Boyer, I'd like to get my doctorate too."

Chief Warrant Officer Brian DeBree, Marine Aviation Logistics Squadron 12 quality assurance officer and Toms River, N.J., native, is finding himself on a similar path as Boyer.

'I never neglected my responsibilities as a full-time Marine because that was my full-time job, but I had educational goals I wanted to accomplish.'

- Andre L. Boyer

The newest faculty member at the University of Phoenix, DeBree shares Boyer's experience in the Marine Corps and love for teaching and plans on using these skills when he retires.

"(Boyer) has to be one of the best facilitators I've ever seen," said DeBree, who holds an MBA. "It's been great working with him through the university, and I really try to emulate him in the classroom."

Boyer will be the first to tell someone retiring as a chief warrant officer or earning a doctorate isn't something that will happen overnight, but it is something any service member here can aspire to.

"The Marine Corps provides great training and great structure, and off-duty education will only supplement that," said Boyer. "Take advantage of the opportunities given to you."

"Coming from Cleveland I could have done anything," he said with his proud grin. "All you have to do is take that first step."

CLC-36 Marine sets sail with 31st MEU

by Pfc. Kyle T. Ramirez
Shimbun Staff

The sharp sound of a zipper is heard and from the bright opening of the tent rushes Pfc. Sonny A. Montes, trying not to let too much heat in. Before he drops his pack to the deck, he wipes his sweat-covered brow after working under the merciless South-Korean sun. Sitting on his cot, the work day seems to have ended for the motor transportation operator, but his platoon sergeant has one last chore for him to complete.

"Pack your stuff Montes. You're going back to Iwakuni. You're going on the 31st (Marine Expeditionary Unit)," is all he heard from his platoon sergeant- to which he promptly replied, "Good to go."

Montes, a San Antonio native from Combat Logistics Company 36, was midway through his first deployment when he was chosen to serve as a motor transportation operator by the Okinawa-based 31st Marine Expeditionary Unit.

"When I first heard the news, I had to ask around to see what exactly a MEU was," laughed Montes as he forced his sleeping system deep into his "Molly" pack with his combat boot.

"Once I figured it out, I was at a loss for words. I probably had a pretty goofy-looking smile on my face," said Montes.

Montes is always adding a level of comic relief to a situation. Most know him to be a fine teacher of his job's technical aspect and an easy-going friend.

"Ask him anything about his job and he'll know it. He's always joking and it makes the day go by faster," said Lance Cpl. John A. Black, CLC-36 motor transportation mechanic and native of Gulfshores, Ala. "That's why he's going to do well on the MEU."

CLC-36 comprises 35 Marines and Sailors and is a close-knit company according to Montes. While checking into the small unit here in May, Montes was the only motor transportation operator and oftentimes found himself working closely with other Marines outside his occupation specialty.

"I was always impressed by how quick he learned what we were teaching him," said Black. "Sure he messed up a few times, but let's just say he didn't break anything I couldn't fix."

In the time Montes spent with CLC-36, he learned the duties of a motor transportation mechanic, welder and an electrical equipment repairman.

"I've always loved learning. There's no way I could have had a job like this in San Antonio," said Montes. "My biggest hope for joining the Corps was to be able to have a job I could enjoy and one that would also take me all around the world."

The 31st MEU, based in Okinawa, Japan, is the only permanently forward-deployed MEU and deploys all around the Pacific and surrounding waters.

"I don't think there was one person here who wasn't jealous when they heard the news," said Lance Cpl. David B. Moronez CLC-36 electrical equipment repair specialist and Janesville, Wis. native. "Montes is the perfect guy for the job. He's a hard worker and he makes friends very easily."

Montes grew up on the outskirts of San Antonio with a Spanish-speaking family. After his father died of a heart attack when he was 7 years old, his single mother took care of him, his brother Joe, and sister Karen.



▲ Pfc. Sonny A. Montes, Combat Logistics Company 36 motor transportation operator and native of San Antonio, waits in his tent for a vehicle that will take him on the next flight back to Iwakuni.

"We could never travel anywhere and we hardly left San Antonio," said Montes with his thick Spanish accent. "When you grow up in that type of environment, you're friends are all you have. I just wish my friends back at home could see me now. They probably would have joined like I told them to."

Montes is all set to embark on the ride he signed up for. He is slated to return to Iwakuni late February 2008.



▲ Replicas of the mysterious statues in Easter Island lined a cavern wall inside the Underground Kingdom in Mikawa Mu Valley.



▲ The entrance cost to the Underground Kingdom in Mikawa Mu Valley was 1,200 yen for adults, 900 yen for junior high school students and 600 yen for children.

Underground Kingdom, a maze of mysteries

Story and photos by Lance Cpl. Cindy G. Alejandre
Shimbun Staff

Tucked in the lush green Mikawa Mu Valley is the Underground Kingdom, an underground maze displaying some of early human civilization's mysteries.

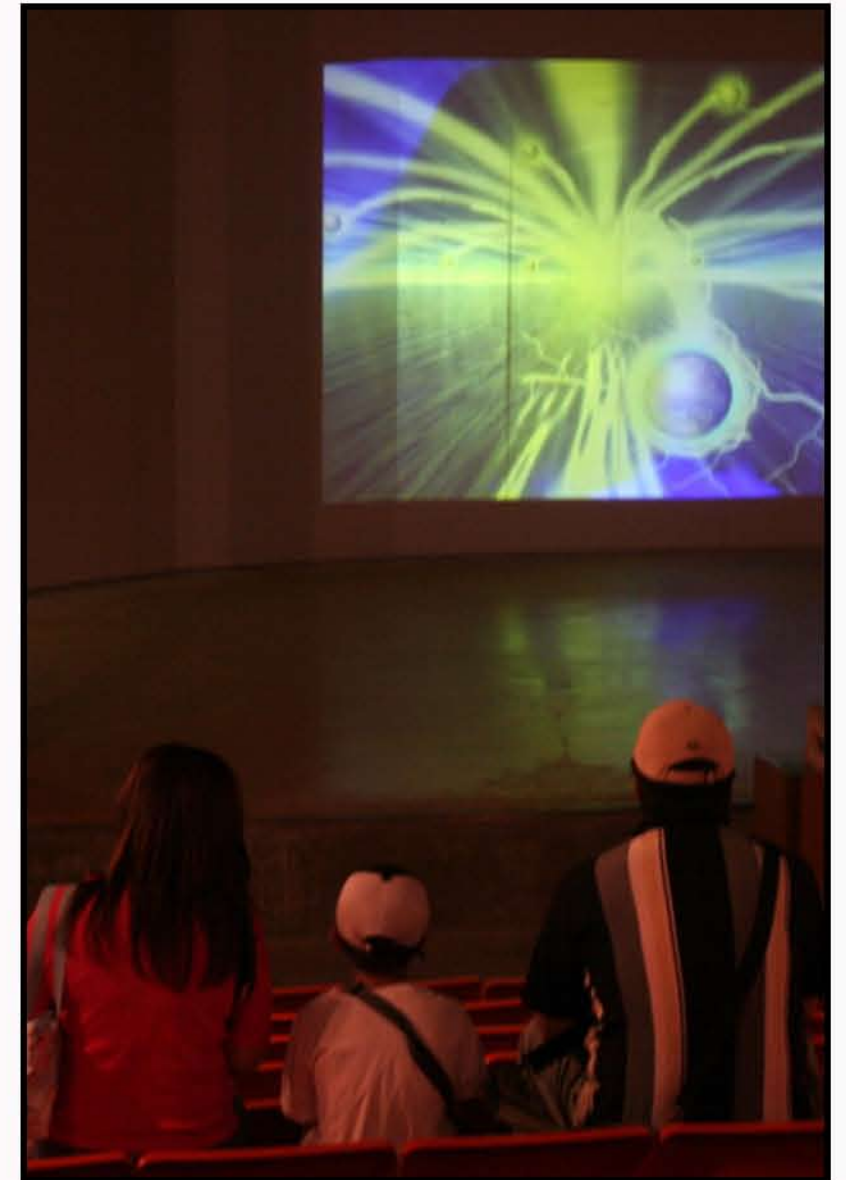
The park, a 40 to 50-minute drive northwest on Route 2 and later Route 187, features a labyrinth of caverns, gold mining in a pool during the summer months, a themed restaurant, gift shop, outdoor snack stands, a lodging facility and hot springs.

Never having heard of caverns in the area's mountains, it was hard to know what to expect but as houses started becoming sparse between the green hills, the right mood was set.

For a hot weekday afternoon there seemed to be plenty of visitors walking around, taking pictures or having lunch along the mountain.

Gaining entrance to the Underground Kingdom costs 1,200 yen for adults, 900 yen for junior high school students and 600 yen for children. Dogs and cats are also allowed in the caves for free.

See Mu on page 12



▲ A family sits in an auditorium a short distance from the mountain's entrance, waiting for a tour video to begin at the Underground Kingdom in Mikawa Mu Valley.



▲ Lance Cpl. Bryan A. McDonnell, American Forces Network combat correspondent and native of Aurora, Colo., touches a large pool of water at the Underground Kingdom in Mikawa Mu Valley Aug. 16.

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Along with the ticket, costumers also received a card and key which correspond with five spots, five pictographs or five caves. Together they provide a prediction of future adventures, encouraging children to continue to learn about ancient mysteries.

Upon entering the caves the pleasantly cool air inside was a welcome change from the humid heat outside. The walls drip only a bit from moisture and there is an easy to follow paved concrete path leading visitors to a video room. Although the video was in Japanese with no English subtitles, it provides an idea of what to anticipate.

Continuing on, there are replicas of the statues in Easter Island, South American carvings, treasures resembling finds in the pyramids of Egypt and a space ship mounted in the corner of one cave among other sights.

The walk through the caverns was reminiscent of an “Indiana Jones” movie, except for the space ship which seemed out of place.

The Underground Kingdom was an out of the ordinary trip and although it seemed to be meant for young students and families, it offers a great time for anyone who wants to take an interesting walk and take plenty of pictures. Although the predictions were hard to understand then, I can foresee another visit the caverns in the near future.

Iwakuni varsity basketball team gears up for regional tourney

by Lance Cpl. Chris Dobbs
Shimbun Staff

In what was dubbed an all-star game by players and coaches, the Iwakuni varsity basketball team matched up against the Outcasts - a team made up of the league's best players not on the varsity team - during a doubleheader at IronWorks Gym Saturday.

The games helped the varsity team gear up for the Western Pacific Regional Basketball Tournament at Marine Corps Base Camp Smedley D. Butler, Okinawa, Sept. 23-30, according to Iwakuni varsity team guard Anthony Alexander, a native of Brooklyn, N.Y.

"It helped us get our confidence level up by practicing against good opponents," said Alexander.

The two highly talented teams put on a show for the spectators in attendance, gracefully finger-rolling reverse lay-ups and knocking down three pointers from everywhere beyond the arc. In the first game, the varsity team broke a 16-16 halftime tie, pulling away in the second half to win 46-37.

The Outcasts retaliated in the offensively explosive second game, 59-54.

"It was just a friendly competition between the best players on the station," said Iwakuni shooting guard Maurice Jones, a native of Philadelphia. "We just wanted to have fun and play some good basketball."

Some of the area's best basketball will be played during the regional tournament, where teams from III Marine Expeditionary Force, 3rd Marine Division, 1st Marine Aircraft Wing and Marine Corps Bases Japan will go head-to-head. All-Marine scouts will also be on hand, recruiting players for the elite All-Marine squad.

"Down there it's like playing on the collegiate level," said Alexander, who will be making his third appearance at the tournament. "It's a very competitive atmosphere."

Practicing against first-class opponents is one of the keys to preparing for the tournament, according to Iwakuni coach Thackery Dancy, a native of Dayton, Ohio, who paid tribute to the opposing team after the game.

"Don't get it twisted that some of the guys don't have the talent to play on the base team, because they do," said Dancy, who added that in many cases, it was duty-related commitments, not lack of talent or skills, that kept several Outcasts' players off the station team. "It was a quality team we played and we knew that."

"What it did was give us an opportunity to play against just that - a quality team," Dancy added.

Playing against a strong, physical team like the Outcasts prepared the varsity players for the kind of opponents they'll be facing at Regional's, said Dancy.

"They're the type of athletes we're going to run into down there in Okinawa," added Dancy, who has been a coach or referee at a number of varsity-level games. "Playing against those types of players is what I think is really going to benefit us."

Without any more scheduled games, the varsity team must find other ways to get primed for the tournament. Practice, practice, and more practice is in store for the team in the upcoming weeks.

"We're going to get together three, four times a week, if not five," said Alexander. "We're a good squad, we just have to get continuity."

Team cohesion is critical if the team is going to be successful, said Dancy.

"If we practice and we get chemistry and we learn our roles, we're gonna be all right," added Dancy.



Lance Cpl. Chris Dobbs

▲ Iwakuni point guard Deante Clemmons takes a jump shot during an intramural basketball game against the Outcasts at IronWorks Gym here Saturday.

Extra day off – a.k.a. Labor Day

by Cpl. Luke Blom
Shimbun Staff

National holidays – they're great excuses to get out of the office and extend the precious weekend for one more cherished day of rest and relaxation. But guilt and responsibility usually get the best of us. More often than not there's some socially obligatory function memorializing the sacrifices of presidents, veterans, mothers and fathers.

But Labor Day is different; the whole point of this holiday is to forget. Forget work, forget overtime, forget deadlines and forget your bosses. This holiday is literally the celebration of a day off. In more recent history it has also signaled the unofficial end of summer, but Labor Day was originally established as a holiday to simply give workers a much earned break. Let me rewind for a minute.

Up until the late 1800s, there were little to no regulations regarding labor. There was no minimum wage, no 40-hour work week, it didn't matter if you were 8 or 80, and there were almost no safety regulations.

The average annual wage at the turn of the century for a manufacturing laborer was less than \$500, the average work-week was 59 hours (but many worked seven-day 84-hour-work weeks to make ends meet). In 1913 more than 25,000 people died while working in factories while more than 700,000 were injured so severely that they required a minimum of four weeks of disability.

Those 700,000 injured were out of luck though; America was the only industrialized country in the world with no form of workman's compensation. The American work place was in dismal shape despite the industrial boom.

These conditions escaped no one, not the elderly, women or children. In 1880 one out of every six children between the ages of 10 and 15 were working full time jobs in factories, mines, textile mills and street level jobs. Kids suffered three times the amount of on-the-job accidents as the adult workers.

These issues increasingly took center stage on the national platform. Groups like the Knights of Labor and the American Federation of Labor championed the rights of the workers advocating for regulations and laws to be put in place protecting the workers. There were strikes across the country demanding better treatment. It worked.

Throughout the next 40 years workers demanded change, and eventually the government and industrial tycoons were forced to listen. The American worker of today is guaranteed a minimum wage, he's guaranteed that if he wants to work more than 40 hours in a week that he will be rightly compensated, and he's guaranteed a system that is in place to protect his rights. The checks and balances protecting America's workforce today was paid for in blood and sweat by our great-great-grandparents.

I know in the military we regularly work more than 40 hours per week, but compared to our American ancestors we live like royalty.

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But Labor Day does not really apply to us, that's why we have Veterans Day, it applies to the American public – our families. So while most of us were out golfing and barbecuing I sincerely hope that we each remembered that America was not built by the military - it was built by Americans who dealt with incredible hardships while constructing the foundation of the country we swore to protect.

Without the American labor force, we're simply a bat with out a batter.

(Editors note – All historical figures taken from "America: A Narrative History" sixth edition, volume two).



Master Sgt. John A. Cordero, station public affairs chief and El Cajon, Calif. native, receives a Navy and Marine Corps Commendation Medal on the station parade deck Sept. 5. He was awarded the medal for leading a team of combat correspondents on two occasions to the Ramadi government center to set up and operate a satellite broadcast system between the Anbar government and the Pan-Arab television networks. Under great personal risk he erected the satellite dish from a position of advantage on the roof of a building adjacent to the Ramadi government center under the cover of darkness on two occasions. These live interviews between the Anbar governor and the Pan-Arab media offered some of the only constructive media engagements from the area of operations to the middle eastern public and were a critical part of the strategic communications campaign.

For Navy care providers, Cambodia mission is sobering, rewarding

KAMPONG SOM PROVINCE, Cambodia



Sgt. Ethan E. Rocke

by Sgt. Ethan E. Rocke
MCB, Camp Butler

It's 9 a.m. and the daily crowd of patients is lined up outside the makeshift medical clinic at the Ma'Ahad El-Muhajirin Islamic Center in southern Cambodia. They peer inside the building, watching a Navy medical team at work.

As medical officer, Lt. Jonathan Endres sees his fifth patient of the day, his face is bright and his spirits high. He knows exactly how to help 9-year-old Mutiah Zaynuttin. The rash on her scalp is textbook, and she has a mild cold. Endres writes her prescription, smiles and sends her next door to another dim, shabby room that serves as the team's pharmacy.

Zaynuttin is one of the approximately 500 residents of the center, located in the midst of Kampong Som Province's remote farmland. She is the 98th patient Endres and his team of corpsmen from the Okinawa-based Marine Wing Support Squadron 172 have seen since they began a medical civil assistance project here two and a half days earlier. She is one of the 96 whose ailments the "docs" have been able to effectively treat, and she is one of the patients that leaves Endres smiling.

But as Endres and his docs measure their worth with the care and comfort they can provide the sick, and the other patients – those few whose serious illnesses they can't treat in this environment – weigh on their minds.

◀ A Cambodian student strolls through rows of wooden huts Aug. 15. The huts house students at the center.



Sgt. Ethan E. Rocke

▲ Cambodian boys wait to be seen outside a makeshift medical clinic at the Ma'Ahad El-Muhajirin Islamic Center Aug. 17.

Their humanitarian mission is a familiar one that Okinawa service members carry out in countries all over the Pacific.

"It's very challenging," said Endres, who is deployed on his first medical civil assistance project. "You do what you can and want to help as many people as you can, and we are able to treat the majority. There are only a few that we got stuck on, and that's frustrating."

By the project's third day, there were two patients Endres could not help. One, he suspects has hepatitis and another appears to be in the beginning stages of tuberculosis.

See Corps on page 17

AROUND THE CORPS

KAMPONG SOM PROVINCE, Cambodia



Sgt. Ethan E. Rocke

▲ Petty Officer 1st Class Kelly R. Wallen gives Cambodian girls at the Islamic center a lesson in preventive medicine Aug. 17.

Corps continued from page 16

Many patients U.S. teams see on humanitarian assistance missions have never seen a doctor. And while they are the minority, cases that exceed a deployed team's capabilities are a disheartening reality for American doctors accustomed to Western health care standards.

The team's enlisted leader Chief Petty Officer Joe Palmares, a 20-year Navy veteran who planned and coordinated the Cambodia medical project, has been faced with that reality several times; the Cambodia mission marks the ninth medical civil assistance project he has been involved with while stationed on Okinawa.

"There are times that you really wish you could provide more," he said. "Every time we do this, you can only do so much, so we do the best we can and hope."

Their best means treating patients every day from 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. and also providing preventive medicine training that covers topics such as hygiene and preventing heat casualties.

Most patients have several diagnoses many of which are the result of poor living conditions. Infections and parasites are among the most common problems in the small Cambodian community.

The medical team hopes to lengthen its impact beyond the two weeks they are on the ground by showing the residents how to better protect against disease and infection, a responsibility that falls to preventive medicine technician Petty Officer 1st Class Kelly R. Wallen, who is also deployed on his first civil assistance mission.

"This can be an emotionally draining experience," he said.



Sgt. Ethan E. Rocke

▲ Petty Officer 3rd Class Roberto Alberto examines a Cambodian patient Aug. 17.

"It's backbreaking work at times, but I actually look forward to getting up in the morning, knowing it's going to be hard, because I know I'm going to help people."

Wallen and his colleagues share a driving sense of compassion and commitment that is a constant reminder to them that, while they cannot help everyone, there is something very special about helping those they can.

"We come out here and we care," said Palmares. "That's our mission, and we do it well. As Americans, we are very blessed. We're such a strong country, and that's why we provide this humanitarian relief, because we can and because we should. You can't provide everything, but to touch somebody's life, that's special. They will cherish this; they will remember this."



Sgt. Ethan E. Rocke

▲ Medical officer Lt. Jonathan Endres examines a Cambodian boy in Cambodia's southern province of Kampong Som Aug. 17



Cpl. Belarmino Costa
Manhattan, N.Y.

"It kind of worries me about the kind of security that's being provided back on the home front. We've got a lot more things to worry about if they can hack into computers in the Pentagon."

Master Sgt. Arthur Hagans
Norfolk, Va.

"It's just crazy that they can get into our system. With all the safeguards that we put in place, it still amazes me that there's openings in our system. The question is: just how deep can they infiltrate? ... If they can tap into it that deep now, what's to say they can't get even deeper later?"



For many years now, socioeconomic and military experts have said China, in the future, will have the resources and capabilities to challenge the United States as the world's superpower. Well, it seems the future is here. Chinese military hackers successfully hacked into the Pentagon's computer system during a cyber-attack in June, the Pentagon announced Tuesday. This isn't the first time China has attacked American networks either, and it doesn't seem it will be the last. What appears to be a soft spot in our nation's defense has left many people wondering how safe we are as a nation. So we were wondering...

How do you feel about the latest attack on America?



Dale Bennett
Virginia Beach, Va.

"When I think of America, I think of America having like top-secret technology. I think that some of us Americans don't even know what's going on. So for China to do that, it's just kind of like a bummer because America's supposed to be the best country in the world."

Lance Cpl. Joseph Horvath
Cleveland

"I'm a little amazed. That's a big security issue and obviously something that needs to be addressed so improvements can be made."





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Editorial content is edited, prepared and provided by the Public Affairs Office of Marine Corps Air Station Iwakuni, Japan.

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