

FLIGHT JACKET

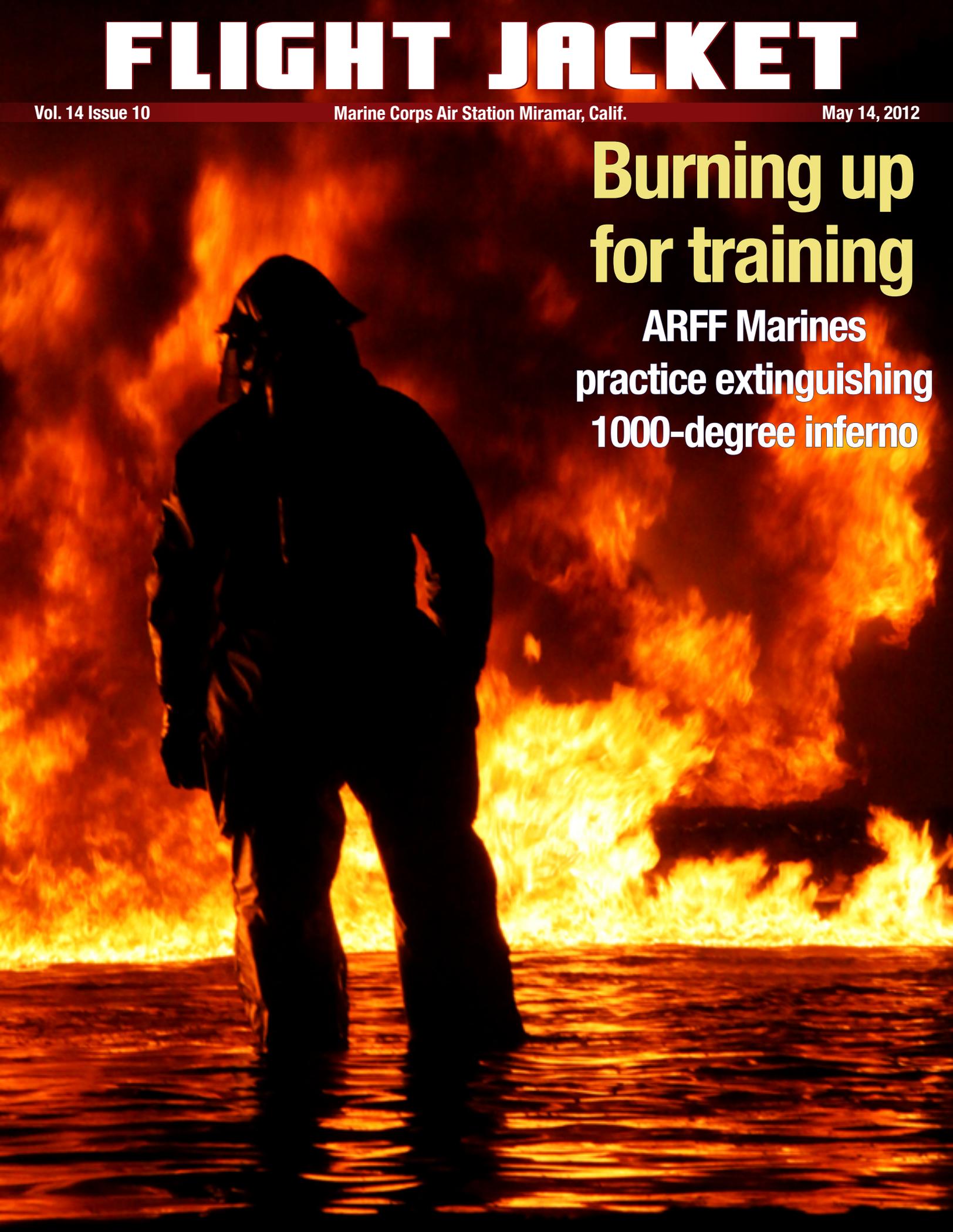
Vol. 14 Issue 10

Marine Corps Air Station Miramar, Calif.

May 14, 2012

Burning up for training

ARFF Marines
practice extinguishing
1000-degree inferno





Security Augmentation Forces: hands on training to keep Miramar safe

Marine Corps Air Station Miramar's Security Augmentation Force trains for times when threat levels rise.

For full story, click [Click HERE for more photos](#)

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Fighting fire from above: HMH-462 conducts fire bucket training

Marine Heavy Helicopter Squadron 462 conducted fire bucket training aboard Marine Corps Base Camp Pendleton.

For full story, click [Click HERE for more photos](#)

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Exploring the use of unmanned helicopters

3rd Marine Aircraft Wing (Forward) explores the use of unmanned helicopters to transport large amounts of cargo and reduce the need for convoys.

For full story, click [Click HERE for more photos](#)

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Maj. Gen. Andrew O'Donnell Jr.
Commanding General
3rd Marine Aircraft Wing



Col. Frank A. Richie
Commanding Officer
MCAS Miramar

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3rd MAW Marine recognized by Georgia Ministry of Defense

MARINE CORPS AIR STATION YUMA, Ariz. – Staff Sgt. Michael Quintero, intelligence chief with Marine Attack Squadron 214 and a Phoenix native, is presented a Republic of Georgia Ministry of Defense Medal by Lt. Col. Troy Perhrson, commanding officer of VMA-214. Quintero was awarded for his contributions to the U.S. Marine Corps Forces, Europe-led Georgia Deployment Program - International Security Assistance Force. (Courtesy photos)



ON THE COVER:

An Aircraft Rescue and Firefighting Marine stands by to ensure the safety of the Marines handling water hoses during a Fire Ball training exercise here April 27. Many factors can affect a fire and training helps the Marines experience and prepare for factors such as wind and the amount of fuel involved. (Photo by Pfc. Melissa Eschenbrenner.)

Old Corps meets new Corps

Retired Marines make music with 3rd MAW Band

By Lance Cpl. Christopher Johns

(Right top) Active duty and retired Marines play music together at the 3rd Marine Aircraft Wing Band hall here May 3. The retired Marines were once part of Marine Corps bands all over the nation and came to Marine Corps Air Station Miramar, Calif., for another chance to do something they love—play music.

(Right bottom) A retired-Marine band member exchanges a sheet of music with an active-duty Marine with the 3rd Marine Aircraft Wing Band at the band hall here May 3. Both generations of Marines came together to play selections ranging from classical music to more lively ensembles.

(Below) Active duty and retired Marines play a tune together at the 3rd Marine Aircraft Wing Band hall here May 3. The retired Marines were once part of Marine Corps bands all over the nation and came to Marine Corps Air Station Miramar, Calif., for another chance to do something they love—play music.

Click [HERE](#) for more photos



Marines remember fallen comrade in memorial ride

By Lance Cpl. Michelle Piehl

(Opposite top) One year after losing a fellow Marine, motorcyclists with Marine Corps Air Station Miramar, Calif., gather together to ride in honor of Master Gunnery Sgt. Brent L. Sherrell, who was a corrections specialist with the Naval Consolidated Brig here May 3.

(Opposite bottom) Master Sgt. Garry Greenbush, provost marshal office operations chief with Headquarters and Headquarters Squadron and a Havelock, N.C., native, begins to ride his motorcycle during a memorial ride starting at Marine Corps Air Station Miramar, Calif., May 3. The ride, honoring Master Gunnery Sgt. Brent L. Sherrell, who was a corrections specialist with the Naval Consolidated Brig here, departed MCAS Miramar for a 70-mile ride to Riverside National Cemetery in Riverside, Calif. Twelve Marines from Marine Corps Base Camp Pendleton, Calif., met with the air station riders at the halfway point. The focus of the ride was to honor Sherrell, build camaraderie between motorcyclists and enforce proper riding safety procedures. After arriving at Sherrell's internment site, Chief Warrant Officer 4 John I. Hawthorne III, a station training officer with MCAS Miramar and a Cleveland native, led a ceremony honoring Sherrell's life. Sgt. Maj. Kenneth Warren, with Security Battalion, MCB Camp Pendleton, closed the ceremony with a rendition of Amazing Grace.

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Col. Frank A. Richie, commanding officer of Marine Corps Air Station Miramar, Calif., speaks at a presentation on the parade deck here May 2. The presentation was preceded by a one-mile walk around the air station to raise awareness about sexual assault. (Photos by Lance Cpl. Michelle Piehl)

[Click HERE for more photos](#)

Stomp out sexual assault

Service members, community participate in awareness walk

By Lance Cpl. Michelle Piehl

Service members, dependents and community members participated in a walk to raise awareness about sexual assault aboard Marine Corps Air Station Miramar, Calif., May 2.

The 3rd Annual "Forward March" for Sexual Assault Awareness began at the Great Escape and ended at the parade deck. Col. Frank A. Richie, commanding officer of MCAS Miramar, led the one-mile walk through the air station.

"They start the walk at the barracks, because that is where most assaults happen on the installation," said Latricia Kamins, the Sexual Assault Prevention and Response program manager with MCAS Miramar.

The walk is preceded by Sexual Assault Awareness month during April. Service members are encouraged to stay vigilant against sexual assault regardless of the season.

"It's not just during the month of April. It's important to be aware and take a stand, no matter what time of year," said Kamins.

Following the walk, speakers addressed the crowd of walkers during a presentation. The presentation featured a personal testimony from DeBrenna L. Glastervann, a former sailor, now the director of public relations with the National Women's Veterans Association of America. The presentation also included an address from the commanding officer of MCAS Miramar.

The Forward March was promoted on the air station, as well as in the community. The free and public event boosted nearly 200 participants.

"It's not just an active duty problem, anyone could be sexually assaulted," said Kamins.

Cpl. James M. Ponpon, a legal clerk with Headquarters and Headquarters Squadron and a Staten Island, N.Y., native, decided to march after undergoing the sexual assault prevention annual training.

"I wanted to come out after the [course] and support it," said Ponpon. "It's good to bring awareness to the table so that people can be alert and know what to look for. Get informed. Educate yourself and use the buddy system to prevent sexual assault."

According to Kamins, 1-in-4 females and 1-in-6 males have been a victim of sexual assault in the Marine Corps.

"If we don't bring awareness to this problem, then a majority of people think 'Oh, it doesn't happen much' when it actually happens quite often," said Kamins.

According to the SAPR program manager, the successful walk is expected to continue annually.

"This is my first walk. I hope there will be many more to come. I see a lot of motivated people out here, [service members] and civilians," said Ponpon.

Service members and civilians are encouraged to stay vigilant to stomp out sexual assault. By having situational awareness and never leaving a buddy behind, service members can work to eliminate the threat of sexual assault.

Marines who need guidance regarding sexual assault can call the 24-hour victim advocate hotline at (858)880-5931.



Security Augmentation Forces

Hands on training to keep Miramar safe

By Lance Cpl. Christopher Johns

“Get on the ground!” ordered a Marine as he drove his resisting suspect to the ground. As the suspect lay down, the Marine maneuvered himself to where he could kneel on the suspect’s shoulder and safely place hand cuffs on his wrists.

The Marine and simulated suspect were a part of a training scenario for the Marine Corps Air Station Miramar Security Augmentation Force.

SAF is a group of Marines who augment the Provost Marshal’s Office for times when threat levels rise.

“The Security Augmentation Force is a contingency force that is trained and put in place in case [the air station] goes into a higher threat condition,” said Jose Maldonado, the lead instructor for SAF training with PMO and a Houston native.

Marines are taught basic law enforcement training, knowledge on standard operating procedures for PMO, basic marksmanship with the 9mm pistol, familiarization with the M1014 shotgun and use of force training during the training evolution.

Once the threat level for the air station rises, Marines with SAF will activate. SAF Marines become a part of PMO to perform necessary tasks to keep MCAS Miramar’s inhabitants safe from harm.

“The majority of [the Marines] are highly motivated and volunteered to be here,” said Maldonado. “They look at this as an opportunity to expand their horizons.”

During the first week of training, Marines spend time in class learning about use of force, procedures for field interviews and how to search suspects and vehicles. Marines are then taken to the field by PMO to learn how to properly use hand irons, batons, oleoresin capsicum spray and defensive tactics.

The defensive tactics themselves can be used either before other tools like the baton and OC spray, or in conjunction with both if a suspect attempts to resist.

Marines taking part in Security Augmentation Force training fire M1014 shotguns at targets here April 16. Marines are taken to the sheriff’s range in the second week of SAF training to become familiar with the 9mm pistol and the M1014 shotgun. (Photo by Lance Cpl. Christopher Johns)

As part of the training, each Marine is exposed to OC spray, then must fight through a gauntlet of obstacles.

“The pain the spray inflicted was almost unbearable,” said Sgt. Gregory Craig, the class leader and a Houston native. “I felt a sort of nervous excitement about the OC spray, it hurt so badly, but you had to fight through it.”

During the second week of training, Marines go to the sheriff’s range to undergo shotgun and pistol training.

“The weapons training we went through was invaluable, because when you’re out on patrol or standing guard at the gate, your primary weapon is the pistol,” said Craig.

Not only do Marines undergoing SAF training have the opportunity to qualify with a new weapon, but the training itself makes them

more competitive for boards.

“Here on Miramar, mostly staff non-commissioned officers and officers are the only ones who get to qualify with the pistol unless their [military occupational specialty] requires it,” said Shannon Evans, an instructor with PMO and a Hamilton, Ohio, native. “Getting the option to qualify with the pistol is an opportunity a lot of Marines look forward to, because it gives them another tool in their belt making them more competitive against their peers.”

After five days at the range and qualifying with the pistol, the class graduated and received certificates for completing the SAF training as well as the level one OC certification the Marines fought to earn.

For 10 days, 34 Marines took part in the training necessary to successfully augment the military police.



Lance Cpl. Aaron West, an administrative specialist with Headquarters and Headquarters Squadron and a Fort Smith, Ark., native, demonstrates a palm-heel strike during Security Augmentation Force training here April 16. (Photo by Lance Cpl. Christopher Johns)

Master plan prepares Miramar for the future

By Cpl. Steven Posy



Members from the Urban Collaborative Master Planning and Design team visited Marine Corps Air Station Miramar, Calif., April 27 to discuss preferred alternatives for the future of the air station. Once the master plan is complete, MCAS Miramar will become the 1st military installation to comply with a new bill recently passed by congress requiring all military installations to create master plans every 10 years. (Photo by Cpl. Steven Posy)

With more than 23,000 acres to consider, effective use of space can be a challenge, but with the help of a master plan, the future look, functionality and placement of its facilities will make Marine Corps Air Station Miramar, Calif., the model of the future for all other military installations to follow.

Members from the Urban Collaborative Master Planning and Design team visited the air station April 27 to discuss preferred alternatives for the future of MCAS Miramar.

Once the master plan is complete, Miramar will become the 1st military installation to comply with a new bill recently passed by congress requiring all military installations to create master plans every 10 years.

“Focusing on what Miramar will look like 15-20 years from now is very important,” said Lt. Col. Scott A. Madziarczyk, director of information and logistics, unit. “Miramar is a model base for energy, aviation and how an installation should look. Right now we are considering functionality, location, proximity and accessibility of our units. The planning is the journey, but not necessarily the destination. No matter what happens, someone will always be able to look at this plan and know where we’re going.”

The team from Urban Collaborative focused on seven main areas of opportunity to maximize the functionality of the installation in the next 20 years. New buildings, infield expansion, extension of the flight line, new hangars, connectivity and transporta-

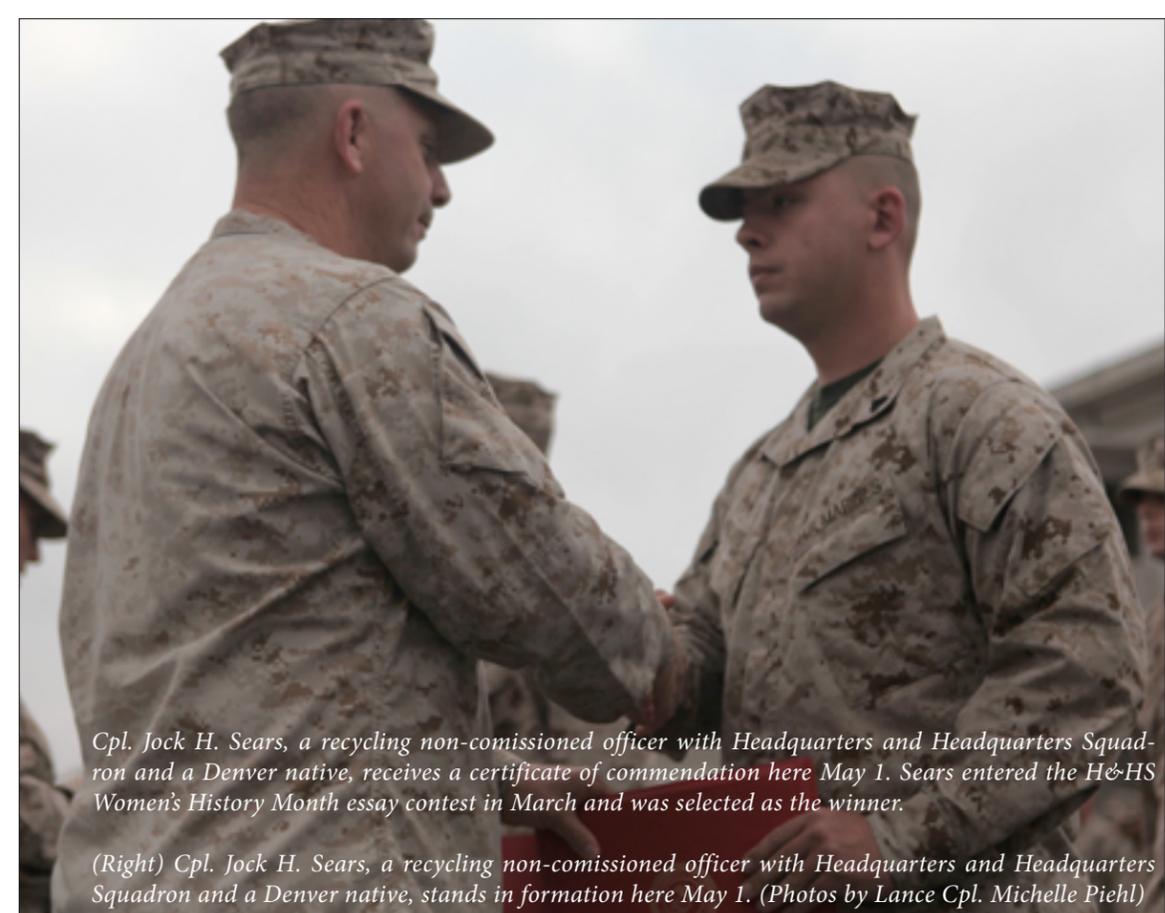
tion are topics identified by Mark L. Gillem, Phd, principal of the Urban Collaborative LLC, as ways to improve the air station.

Upgrades to these areas will adhere with the goal to enhance Miramar’s mission of supporting Marine and Naval Aviation and quality of life by creating a connected community living and working in walkable campuses with efficient buildings, functional landscapes and complete streets.

The master plan also consists of embedded energy solutions that work in conjunction with the Net Zero energy conservation concept. During the visit members of Urban Collaborative discussed how the master plan will incorporate future energy demands and lead the way in addressing short and long-term needs.

“We need to make the best use of our money and create a plan which meets today’s needs, but also prepares us for tomorrow,” said Gillem.

As Miramar continues to lead the way in installation excellence, its master plan will ensure the air station continues to do so in the future.



Cpl. Jock H. Sears, a recycling non-commissioned officer with Headquarters and Headquarters Squadron and a Denver native, receives a certificate of commendation here May 1. Sears entered the H&HS Women's History Month essay contest in March and was selected as the winner.

(Right) Cpl. Jock H. Sears, a recycling non-commissioned officer with Headquarters and Headquarters Squadron and a Denver native, stands in formation here May 1. (Photos by Lance Cpl. Michelle Piehl)



Cpl. Jock H. Sears, center, a recycling non-commissioned officer with Headquarters and Headquarters Squadron and a Denver native, holds a certificate of commendation after being recognized in an awards ceremony here May 1. Sears' winning essay, *The Alabaster Box*, was selected out of 10 other submissions in the H&HS Women's History Month essay contest during the month of March. (Photo by Lance Cpl. Michelle Piehl)



Sacrifice

A woman's story immortalized

By Lance Cpl. Michelle Piehl

Cpl. Jock H. Sears, a recycling non-commissioned officer with Headquarters and Headquarters Squadron and a Denver native, received a certificate of commendation for writing the winning essay in the H&HS Women's History Month essay contest aboard Marine Corps Air Station Miramar, Calif., May 1.

In addition to the certificate of commendation, Sears was awarded a 72-hour weekend in appreciation for his essay.

Sears was inspired to enter the base-wide essay contest during March to immortalize a nameless woman of the Bible, who, in her sacrifice, shed a bad reputation to serve others.

"I wanted to write about a woman people had never heard of before," said Sears. "She was a [courtesan] who was scorned and mocked, but she was commended and forever remembered for what she sacrificed."

The young woman featured in his story lived an unpopular and impoverished life, explained Sears.

According to the original story, the only possession of worth she owned was a box of perfume. Nevertheless, she was willing to give up her most precious belonging for the betterment of another and to show a willingness to change her ways.

"The woman in my essay had something she cherished so much and because she had complete faith in her Lord and savior, she gave him everything," said Sears.

Sears said his reason for entering the contest stems from his faith and desire to give the woman of his essay a proper memorial. He believes the sacrifice of her most valuable possession is something many people would struggle to do in today's society.

Sears quoted a Bible verse from Matthew 26: 6-13: "Verily I say unto you, where-soever this gospel shall be preached in the whole world, there shall also this, that this woman hath done, be told for a memorial of her."

"For a woman to take that authority was very profound for me," said Sears. "Women were held with very little standing [during that time]. For a woman to be written about in that day was a big deal."

Sears entered the writing contest with members of his platoon. Out of 10 entries, Sears' essay was selected as the winner.

"We entered as a platoon," said Gunnery Sgt. Brad L. Thomas, the recycling staff non-commissioned officer in charge with H&HS and a San Diego native. "We encouraged everyone to participate."

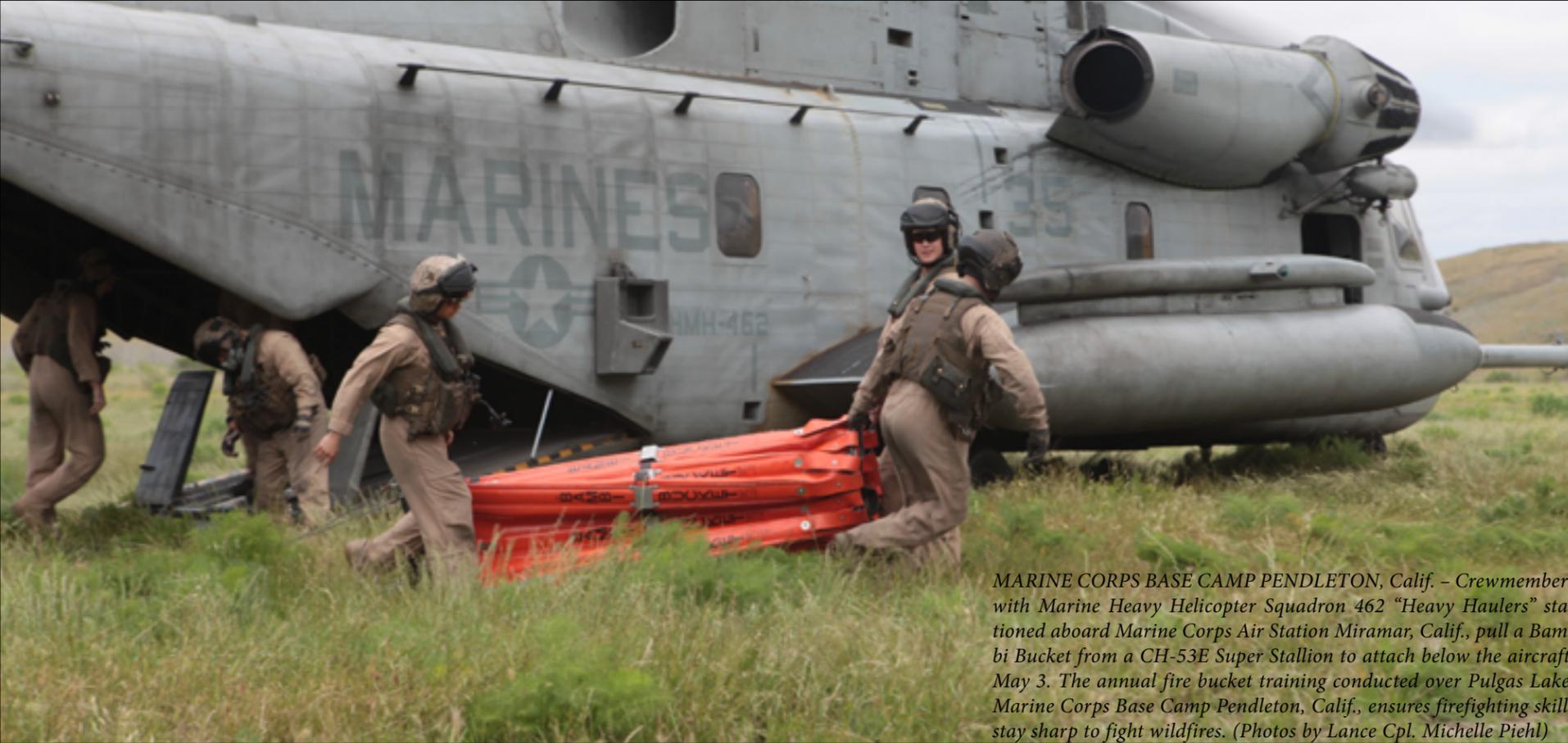
Sears answered the call to write during Women's History Month with enthusiasm.

"He's a motivated Marine," said Thomas. "He's always trying to excel and better himself. He's a hard worker, always showing up and leading Marines."

As for the women of today, Sears believes women have made great strides in terms of rights, opportunities and overcoming adversity.

"Women are taking a stand to make their place in the world," said Sears.

Sears' essay highlighted the exemplary courage of a woman during a time in which women were not highly regarded. Regardless of the age of the story, her act of supreme giving and willingness to serve others is remembered among the most courageous women of history.



MARINE CORPS BASE CAMP PENDLETON, Calif. – Crewmembers with Marine Heavy Helicopter Squadron 462 “Heavy Haulers” stationed aboard Marine Corps Air Station Miramar, Calif., pull a Bambi Bucket from a CH-53E Super Stallion to attach below the aircraft, May 3. The annual fire bucket training conducted over Pulgas Lake, Marine Corps Base Camp Pendleton, Calif., ensures firefighting skills stay sharp to fight wildfires. (Photos by Lance Cpl. Michelle Piehl)



Fighting fire from above

HMH-462 conducts fire bucket training

By Lance Cpl. Michelle Piehl

A giant orange bucket dangles beneath a CH-53E Super Stallion as pilots direct the aircraft into position hovering over water during fire bucket training aboard Marine Corps Base Camp Pendleton, Calif., May 3.

Pilots and crew with Marine Heavy Helicopter Squadron 462 “Heavy Haulers,” work together to maintain balance between the CH-53E and a Bambi Bucket. Coming in at only 250 pounds, the Bambi Bucket is a lightweight, collapsible water-carrying device used primarily in firefighting missions.



MARINE CORPS BASE CAMP PENDLETON, Calif. – A crewmember with Marine Heavy Helicopter Squadron 462 “Heavy Haulers” stationed aboard Marine Corps Air Station Miramar, Calif., attaches a Bambi Bucket through a hatch in the floor of a CH-53E Super Stallion during annual fire bucket training over Pulgas Lake at Marine Corps Base Camp Pendleton, Calif., May 3.



Four pilots participated in the training to ensure the squadron is ready for the upcoming wildfire season.

Crew chiefs direct the pilots to maneuver the aircraft and lower the bucket to fill it with water, explained Capt. Joshua Gates, a pilot and safety officer with HMH-462 and a Shreveport, La., native. Crew chiefs must guide the pilots because the pilots cannot see the bucket. Several factors, such as wind speed, altitude and weight of the bucket all affect how the pilots must fly the aircraft.

"The mission is to fill the bucket up, clear the terrain and try to pinpoint where we drop the water," said Cpl. Justin M. Wood, a crew chief with HMH-462 and a Euless, Texas, native.

Aircraft drop water in front of a fire to prevent it from moving forward, Wood explained. This line allows wildlife firefighters on the ground to gain control and extinguish the fire. To get the water on line with the fire, the Bambi Bucket operator will signal to release the water, explained Wood.

The Heavy Haulers are no stranger to external carries with other types of vehicles and equipment. However, this type of training proves to be a more difficult form of external.

"The fire bucket remains attached the entire time," said Wood. "There is no dropping the bucket or releasing it, because it's attached through the [aircraft] cabin for its power. The whole time the pilots are fighting with it, because when they pick up the water, it [simulates the feel] of an external load. Then they drop the water, but they still have an external load, it is just really light."

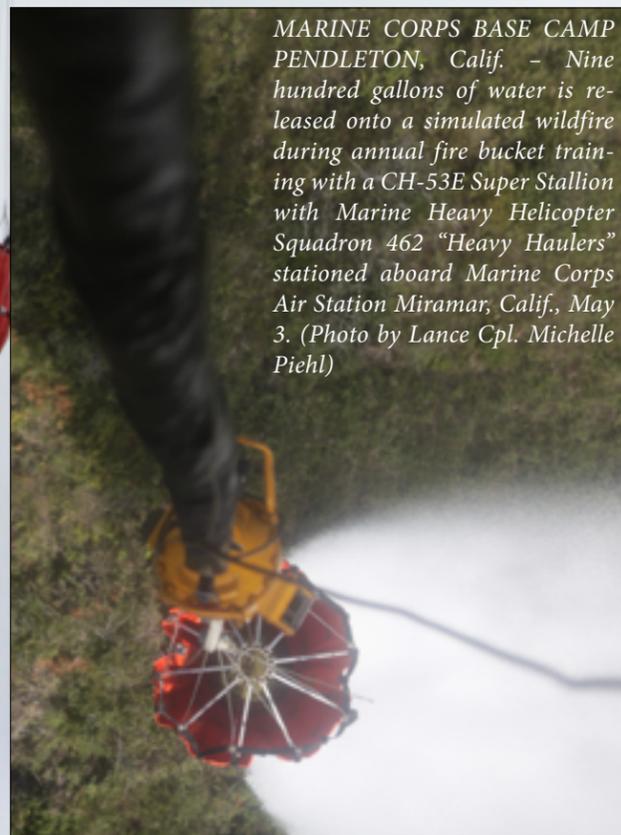
Since the bucket hangs 50 feet below the aircraft, pilots and crew need to maneuver as if the aircraft is flying at an altitude 50 feet lower. This allows them to compensate for the Bambi Bucket and fly safely over any terrain.

Ensuring safety at all times is paramount for the Super Stallion crews, including the safety of humans and wildlife affected by fires.

CH-53E squadrons remain on standby during dry summer months in order to be ready for activation during a fire, typically

spanning from June to November.

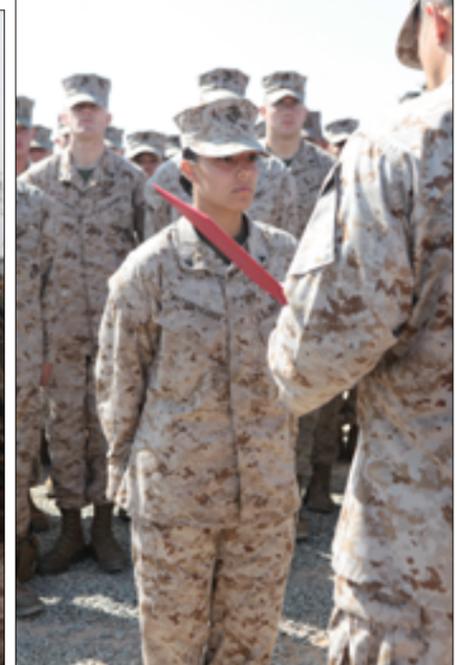
These training missions with the fire bucket provide an extra level of defense from California wildfires. Completing annual training with the fire bucket ensures the Marines of HMH-462 remain steadfast in readiness to fight fire, wherever and whenever they are called.



MARINE CORPS BASE CAMP PENDLETON, Calif. - Nine hundred gallons of water is released onto a simulated wildfire during annual fire bucket training with a CH-53E Super Stallion with Marine Heavy Helicopter Squadron 462 "Heavy Haulers" stationed aboard Marine Corps Air Station Miramar, Calif., May 3. (Photo by Lance Cpl. Michelle Piehl)



Marines with Marine Heavy Helicopter Squadron 462 make the final curve to head back to the squadron aboard Marine Corps Air Station Miramar, Calif., May 9. The 5.6 mile conditioning hike involved carrying approximately 35 pounds of gear.



(Above) Lance Cpl. Teela Muthersbaugh, an intelligence analyst with Marine Heavy Helicopter Squadron 462 and Chicago native, was recognized as the Marine of the Quarter for HMH-462 aboard Marine Corps Air Station Miramar, Calif., May 9. Muthersbaugh was honored for an excellent work ethic and high levels of motivation.

HMH-462 promotes unit cohesion, confidence

By Lance Cpl. Michelle Piehl

Marines with Marine Heavy Helicopter Squadron 462, "Heavy Haulers," participated in a motivational unit hike aboard Marine Corps Air Station Miramar, Calif., May 9.

The motivational hike was arranged as a way for the Marines to condition their bodies for future hikes, as well as to foster a sense of camaraderie within the unit.

"Our squadron has been all over the place, on [Marine Expeditionary Units] and in Afghanistan," Capt. Ryan W. Pallas, the airframes officer in charge of HMH-462 and Florence, N.J., native. "We've been separated for a long time, and now we are coming back together as a full squadron. It is a culmination event to recognize that we got through all of this."

Each member of the squadron was required to carry an assault pack, filled with a pair of camouflaged utilities, a pair of Small Arms Protective Inserts, a change of socks, a full CamelBak, two full canteens and an Individual First Aid Kit. The full gear weighed approximately 35 pounds.

Bearing the weight of the loaded assault pack, the Heavy Haulers proceeded to hike 5.6 miles around the trails surrounding the fish pond and flight line area.

"The commandant has been preaching a 'back to basics' approach with good leadership standards," said Pallas. "It all starts with simple Marine Corps evolutions. Everyone has done them, whether you started at boot camp or at the Officer Candidate School. It centralizes the focus on why we do what we do and why we are Marines."

This type of motivational physical training occurs once a month, varying in format, explained Pallas.

Noncommissioned officers designed the hike to build confidence in the abilities of their Marines, according to Master Sgt. Adrian A. Fonseca, the maintenance chief with HMH-462 and a San Diego native.

"The Marines really motivate one another," said Fonseca. "It builds confidence in the team. Our Marines are motivationally unequaled. They live and breathe [HMH-462]. It's an awesome squadron."

The high level of motivation within the unit was proudly displayed in a brief ceremony at the halfway point on top of a hill, overlooking the pond. Lance Cpl. Teela Muthersbaugh, an intelligence analyst with HMH-462, and a Chicago native, was recognized as the Marine of the Quarter. She was presented with a plaque and a certificate for her supreme work ethic and enthusiasm.

Following the return from the rugged terrain, Marines attended a brief from their commanding officer and were treated to a barbecue. At the conclusion of the workday, the squadron was awarded a 96-hour weekend in recognition of 90 consecutive days free of alcohol-related incidents.

"You won't find a better group of individuals," said Pallas. "No matter what demands are placed on them, they will always do it. It makes you awestruck to sit back and watch the [Marines] who actually work for you, inspire you."

The raw pride of the Heavy Haulers displays the infectious quality of unit cohesion. HMH-462 continues a tradition of high levels of motivation and enthusiasm in the workplace.

More hikes, each becoming progressively more challenging, are in the works for future motivational events for HMH-462.

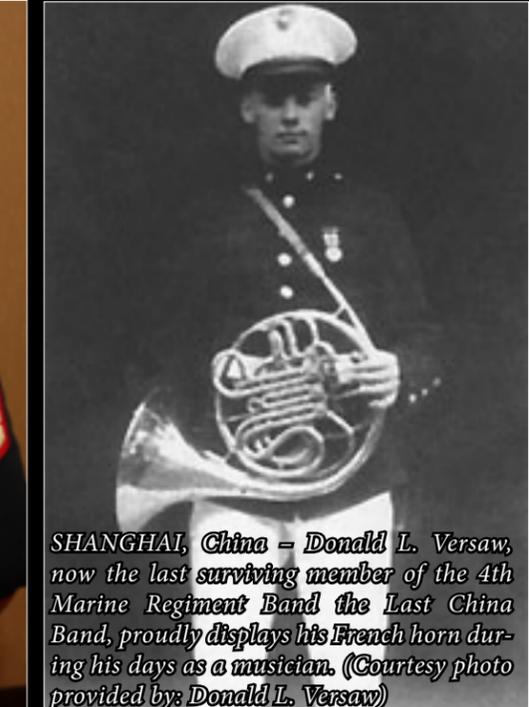
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(Right) SHANGHAI, China – Members of The Fourth Marine Band march down East Nanking Road, Shanghai, China, during their final performance in 1941. The bandsmen would later be augmented into an infantry unit, exchanging their instruments for rifles during World War II. (Courtesy photo provided by: Donald L. Versaw)



(Center) SAN DIEGO – Donald L. Versaw, a retired master sergeant and the last surviving member of the 4th Marine Regiment Band, the Last China Band, poses with Staff Sgt. Joshua Lively, a percussionist with the 3rd Marine Aircraft Wing Band, during the 27th annual Marine Corps Musician Association meeting here May 5. (Photo by Lance Cpl. Michelle Piehl)



SHANGHAI, China – Donald L. Versaw, now the last surviving member of the 4th Marine Regiment Band the Last China Band, proudly displays his French horn during his days as a musician. (Courtesy photo provided by: Donald L. Versaw)

LAST SURVIVING CHINA BAND MARINE RELIVES EXPERIENCES

BY LANCE CPL. MICHELLE PIEHL

SAN DIEGO – Every Marine a rifleman. Regardless of military occupational specialty, Marines throughout history trained to fight, defend and carry out the duties of an infantryman should their country call. For members of the Fourth Marine Regiment Band, “The Last China Band,” this call to arms became their new persona on Dec. 8, 1942.

Donald L. Versaw, a retired Marine Corps master sergeant and Bloomington, Neb., native, marched with his fellow Marines in the Fourth Marine Regiment Band, originally stationed in Shanghai, China, in 1941.

“We performed various concerts for the troops scattered around the city,” said Versaw. “We played in parades and ceremonies for international settlements. Our purpose was to keep America’s best foot forward among the international community.”

Amid the threat of an impending world war, the entire band was withdrawn on orders from Headquarters Marine Corps and was relocated to the U.S. Naval Station at Olongapo, Philippine Islands.

“We left Shanghai playing,” said Versaw. “The last time I ever played in the band was November 1941. We never had a chance to unpack our instruments; we never performed as a band again, but we stayed together.”

While in the Philippines, a day ahead of the U.S., Versaw recalled listening to a sailor’s radio in the middle of the night on Dec. 8, 1941, and hearing the terrible words: Pearl Harbor has been hit. Nearly the entire fleet had been knocked out by the Japanese.

“It was very hard for us to believe,” said Versaw.

War had begun. As morning came, the band Marines laid down their instruments and took up their rifles. The Musicians of the 4th Marine Band now made up the 3rd Platoon, Echo Company, 2nd Battalion, 4th Marine Regiment.

“In the Marine Corps, you’re Marines first,” said Versaw. “Everything else is secondary.”

The band members turned infantrymen took defensive positions along the Olongapo coast in preparation against a beachfront attack.

Once the threat of such an attack subsided, the fighting bandsmen moved to the tip of the Bataan Peninsula, near Corregidor, the site of the terrible Bataan Death March, which took place a few short months later, Versaw continued.

While the regiment was spread over the island to resist further attacks from the sea, most of the enemy action had come in the form of artillery fire, Versaw recalled.

“The band platoon was fortunate in that it was positioned where it didn’t have to come in direct contact with the enemy,” said Versaw. “We just took a heck of a beating. We had to stay in our fighting holes all the time.”

Things had begun to take a terrible turn for the worse for the band. Seventy years ago, on May 6, 1942, the entire band platoon was taken as prisoners of war.

“The island was surrendered to the Japanese to prevent the wholesale slaughter of the refugees and wounded in the underground hospitals,” said Versaw. “It seemed to our commander that it was the more humane thing to do. [It] turned out that the war for us had just begun. Our battle with the enemy was survivorship. It was a long three-and-a-half years before we were liberated.”

Captured Marines were transported on the so aptly-named “Hell Ships.” Comparable to the packed freight cars of the holocaust, more than 1,000 POW’s were stuffed into the hull of the Nissho Maru, a Japanese vessel. The tightly-packed “human cargo” suffered from sweltering heat, unsanitary conditions, exhaustion, thirst and hunger.

Seventeen agonizing days later, the ship laid anchor in the dock of Moji, Kyushu, Japan. The POW’s were then transported by train and foot to the coal-mining city of Futase in Fukuoka province.

“My seniors and [noncommissioned officers] gave me a lot of encouragement,” said Versaw. “It was very depressing. We didn’t know what would happen to us day-by-day, hour-by-hour. You just got up in the morning, counted your bones, checked yourself out and hoped you didn’t get in any trouble that day. [You would hope] you wouldn’t get beat up or

abused. You wondered if you would find something to eat.”

The POW’s worked more than 11 hours a day, seven days a week, for pennies a day.

Three-and-a-half years later, the POW’s were liberated following the end of the war. The Marines took over a month to return stateside, returning to a long anticipated homecoming.

After his return to the states, Versaw was years out of practice on the French horn and decided to make a lateral move into another MOS.

He pursued a career in photography and videography, in the field of Combat Camera. He served as an instructor of Basic Still Photography at the former Navy Photography School in Pensacola, Fla.

Following his retirement from the Marine Corps, Versaw made a career in the aerospace industry, working on space programs such as the Saturn and Apollo missions, as well as the moon landing mission.

Versaw also served five years in civil service through the Army Corps of Engineers and the Air Force as a photographer respectively.

It wasn’t until years after his retirement that he was recognized for his sacrifice during World War II. Versaw was decorated with a POW medal by the commanding officer of Marine Corps Air Station El Toro, Calif.

Music continues to be a part of his life through the Marine Corps Musicians Association. He recently attended the 27th annual MCMA dinner in San Diego as a distinguished guest.

“Just being in the same room as him gives me goose bumps,” said fellow MCMA member William F. Schnell, a retired master gunnery sergeant, tuba player and an Avon Lake, Ohio, native. “I don’t know how many people know about [the band POWs], even Marines today. Just to know a bandsman went through that, like he did, is amazing.”

As the last surviving member of the Last China Band, Versaw’s legacy as well as the band’s continues in his books, “Mikado no Kyaku (Guest of the Emperor)” and “The Last China Band.”

To read more about Versaw and the ordeal of the 4th Marine Regiment Band Marines, visit the homepage of the Last China Band at <http://fourthmarineband.com>.

Click HERE for more photos



Aircraft Rescue and Firefighting Marines conduct a Fire Ball training exercise to prepare for emergencies here April 27. Every week, ARFF Marines train to build confidence and prepare for possible emergencies on the flight line. (Photo by Pfc. Melissa Eschenbrenner)

Aircraft Rescue and Firefighting Marines extinguish a fire during a training exercise here April 27. Once the fire has begun, the teams blast the fire with water hoses, pushing the flames into the far end of the pool until the fire is completely extinguished. (Photo by Pfc. Melissa Eschenbrenner)



ARFF ON FIRE FOR TRAINING

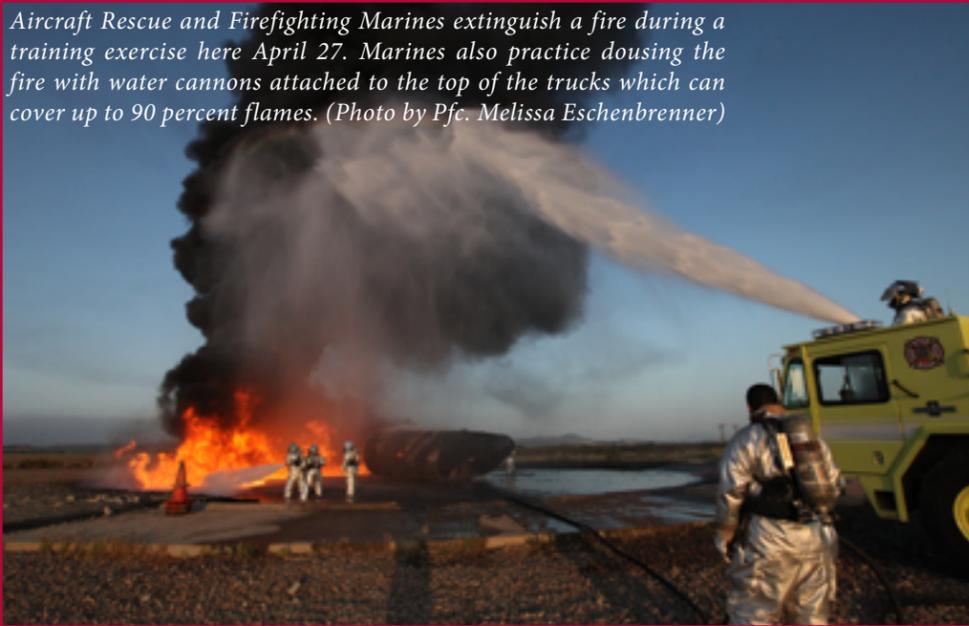
BY PFC. MELISSA ESCHENBRENNER

Aircraft Rescue and Firefighting set out at dusk, with the sun already touching the hills over east Miramar, to conduct a training exercise to battle a controlled fire, April 27. The Marines drove fire trucks to a simulated crash site, where they practiced extinguishing an inferno that reached temperatures of more than 1000 degrees.

Every week, ARFF Marines train

to build confidence and prepared for possible emergencies on the flight line.

Marines are trained for a worst-case scenario. The more hands-on training provided to the Marines, the more prepared and confident they will become when they have to act during an emergency, explained Sgt. William French, an assistant section leader with ARFF and a Whittier, Calif., native.



Aircraft Rescue and Firefighting Marines extinguish a fire during a training exercise here April 27. Marines also practice dousing the fire with water cannons attached to the top of the trucks which can cover up to 90 percent flames. (Photo by Pfc. Melissa Eschenbrenner)

Aircraft Rescue and Firefighting Marines extinguish a fire during a training exercise here April 27. Once the fire has begun, the teams will blast the fire with water hoses, pushing the flames into the far end of the pool until the fire is completely extinguished. (Photo by Pfc. Melissa Eschenbrenner)

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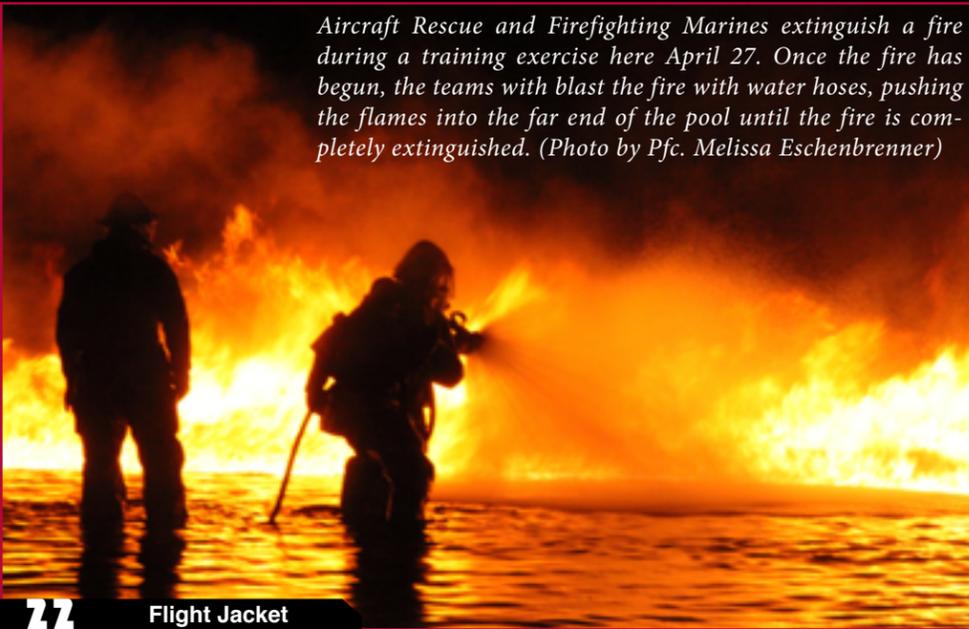
“IT’S SCARY ACTUALLY BEING SO CLOSE TO THE FLAMES”

PFC. AARON ALLEN

TERATEMAN WITH AIRCRAFT RESCUE AND FIREFIGHTING



Aircraft Rescue and Firefighting Marines extinguish a fire during a training exercise here April 27. Once the fire has begun, the teams will blast the fire with water hoses, pushing the flames into the far end of the pool until the fire is completely extinguished. (Photo by Pfc. Melissa Eschenbrenner)



The Fire Ball training consists of using dirty and left-over jet fuel, which Marines pour into a shallow pool containing a simulated aircraft.

Two teams of two Marines handling water hoses attack the towering flames from both sides. This allows the Marines to extinguish the flames as they work to the other side of the pool.

Marines also practice dousing the fire with water

cannons attached to the top of the trucks. The water from the cannon covers 90 percent of the fire and allows ARFF Marines to extinguish it quickly.

The first time participating in a Fire Ball training exercise is both scary and exciting for ARFF Marines.

“It’s scary actually being so close to the flames,” said Pfc. Aaron Allen, a terateman with ARFF and a Long Island, N.Y., native. “But the sergeants and staff

sergeants helped guide me and it built confidence for the next time.”

Many factors can affect a fire, such as wind and the amount of fuel, but training helps the Marines experience and prepare for everything.

Firefighting and rescuing is a team effort. ARFF Marines train everyday to ensure they are prepared for any possible emergency.

Lance Cpl. Max Humphreys (left) and Cpl. Collin Huffman, Marines with Helicopter Support Team, 1st Marine Logistics Group, prepare to hook up fuel bladders to a CH-53E Super Stallion with Marine Heavy Helicopter Squadron 466, in Camp Bastion, Afghanistan, April 26. Helicopters from HMH-466 transported fuel and supplies to 1st Tank Battalion in northern Helmand province. (Photos by Cpl. Isaac Lamberth)



Fuel bladders dangle from a CH-53E Super Stallion while flying to northern Helmand province, Afghanistan, April 26. Two helicopters from Marine Heavy Helicopter Squadron 466 transported approximately 2,000 pounds of JP-5 fuel to 1st Tank Battalion.



Cyclops fuels up 1st Tanks

By Cpl. Isaac Lamberth

CAMP BASTION, Afghanistan - After being delayed by rain and high winds, a small break in the clouds opens, allowing a short window for two CH-53E Super Stallions from Marine Heavy Helicopter Squadron 466 to deliver much needed fuel and supplies to 1st Tank Battalion, operating in northern Helmand province, Afghanistan, April 26.

Staff Sgt. Philip Michel, a crew chief with Marine Heavy Helicopter Squadron 466, observes fuel bladders being carried underneath a CH-53E Super Stallion en route to northern Helmand province, Afghanistan, April 26. (Photo by Cpl. Isaac Lamberth)



Undeterred by the threat of bad weather, the helicopter crews lift off and land a few hundred feet away from the airfield. Coordinating with Marines from Helicopter Support Team, 1st Marine Logistics Group, the giant Super Stallions each secure a cable to the netting holding the fuel containers. They hook up fuel bladders that carry approximately 2,000 pounds of JP-5 fuel.

Capt. James Everett, a pilot with HMH-466, said using heavy lift helicopters to resupply ground units prevents exposing convoys to attacks or improvised explosive devices.

"We can fly right over areas that are heavily occupied with the threat of IED's or ambushes," said Everett, of Donnelly, Idaho. "The safest way to transport a lot of food, fuel or water is by air."

Everett said in addition to the constant threat of convoys coming under attack, delivering supplies by helicopter is a much quicker option than having convoys deliver them over treacherous terrain.

"With the kind of terrain that's in Afghanistan, it just makes it easier on everyone to fly supplies instead of putting them on a convoy," he said.

Once the cables are properly fastened to the cargo netting, the helicopters lift off and fly to their destination to deliver their supplies.

Captain Samuel Jones, a pilot with HMH-466 and native of Macon, Ga., said Marine Aviation exists to support the Ground Combat Element.

Cpl. Colin Huffman, a Marine with Helicopter Support Team, 1st Marine Logistics Group, verifies all cables are properly secured to a CH-53E Super Stallion aboard Camp Bastion, Afghanistan, April 26. Helicopters from HMM-466 transported fuel and supplies to 1st Tank Battalion in northern Helmand province, Afghanistan. (Photo by Cpl. Isaac Lamberth)

[Click HERE for more photos](#)



“Anytime we combine combat power with heavy equipment, troops and supplies, we are going to accomplish the mission.”
After flying for 20 minutes, the helicopters land and deliver their pre-

vious cargo. Marines, already on the ground, secure the fuel while crew chiefs inside the Super Stallions prepare for a hasty departure. They reel up their cables, drag cargo nets inside and take off within a matter of minutes.

Once all gear has been secured and supplies have been unloaded, the helicopters take off and head back to Camp Bastion, ready to take on their next mission of the day.

A K-MAX helicopter with Marine Unmanned Aerial Vehicle Squadron 1 rests on a helipad while being refueled in Helmand province, Afghanistan, April 30. The Marine Corps is pioneering use of the unmanned helicopter as an alternative to alleviate the need for ground convoys. (Photo by Cpl. Isaac Lamberth)

Exploring the use of unmanned helicopters

By Cpl. Isaac Lamberth

HELMAND PROVINCE, Afghanistan - Improvised explosive devices have changed the way the Marine Corps engages hostile forces. The need has risen for supplies to reach the most remote parts of Afghanistan quickly, reliably and safely.

Late last year, the Corps began experimenting with the K-MAX - an unmanned helicopter, able to transport large amounts of cargo and reduce the need for convoys.

With troops spread across a desolate country with few paved roads, steep mountains, rocky terrain and abrasive weather, the K-MAX has arrived to help deliver supplies across the harsh lands of Afghanistan.

Presently, convoys are exposed to many potential dangers, such as improvised explosive devices and ambushes. Both have claimed the lives of Marines in the past.

"The need [for an alternate transport solution] came about because the Marine Corps wanted to get trucks off the road," said Maj. Kyle O'Connor, the detachment officer in charge for Cargo Resupply Unmanned Aircraft Systems [CRUAS], a component of Marine Unmanned Aerial Vehicle Squadron 1.

"They wanted to be able to deliver supplies from one locale to another without putting Marines in danger of IED's," he said. "The Marine Corps needed a fast, reliable platform with which to deliver to COPs [Combat Outposts]."

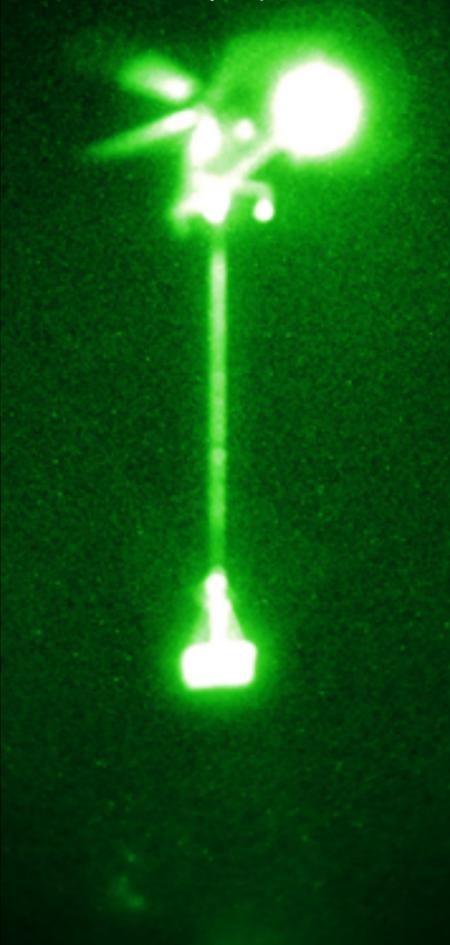


Sgt. Trevor Scarberry, an Air Vehicle Operator with Marine Unmanned Aerial Vehicle Squadron 1 navigates the K-MAX during takeoff in Helmand province, Afghanistan, April 30. Use of the K-MAX is being pioneered by the Marine Corps to help alleviate the need for ground convoys. (Photos by Cpl. Isaac Lamberth)

(Below) A K-MAX helicopter with Marine Unmanned Aerial Vehicle Squadron 1 rests in a hangar in Helmand province, Afghanistan, April 30. The K-MAX platform has two sets of rotors mounted side-by-side and turn in opposite directions. This configuration allows for superior stability and power while eliminating the need for a tail rotor.



A K-MAX unmanned helicopter with Marine Unmanned Aerial Vehicle Squadron 1 descends while transporting a pallet of Meals Ready-to-Eat (MRE's) in Helmand province, Afghanistan, April 30. The K-MAX ferried approximately 500,000 pounds of cargo in March and has transported close to 1.3 million pounds since its arrival in December of last year.



The Miramar Minute

ARFF Marines conduct training with fire

Video by Cpl. Sarah Fiocco



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The K-MAX platform has a unique configuration. The two sets of rotors are mounted side-by-side and turn in opposite directions. Each rotor on the helicopter is mounted at a slight angle to the other so that the blades can spin simultaneously without colliding. This configuration allows for superior stability and power while eliminating the need for a tail rotor.

K-MAX has, thus far, fulfilled the Corps' request of transporting large amounts of cargo over great distances in an expeditious manner.

O'Connor explained that in the month of March alone, the K-MAX ferried approximately 500,000 pounds of cargo and has transported more than 1.3 million pounds since its arrival five months ago. It has flown roughly 400 missions in theater.

O'Connor said the K-MAX has performed so well that the original six-month trial has been extended in theater.

"It's such a new system for the DoD [Department of Defense] that there isn't a whole lot of reliability data for it," he said. "Since it's done so well, the deployment extension is going to give us more time to continue to gather data on its performance and transport more cargo."

The data collected will give Corps officials insight on whether to keep the K-MAX as a permanent addition to the Corps' unmanned squadrons. "We're flying to see if there are any issues and see if problems come up," O'Connor said.

While data is being collected, new tactics, techniques and procedures have been created to weave the K-MAX into everyday operations across Helmand province.

Sgt. Trevor Scarberry, an Air Vehicle Operator with CRUAS said he has helped create new procedures for the aircraft.

"Since no one has done this and it's all brand new, we're having to develop new ways of doing things," said Scarberry, of Choctaw, Okla.

He said new procedures have been implemented for safety, landing zone and air space coordination. One such procedure ensures the safety of ground crews unloading the K-MAX once it reaches its destinations. The intermeshing dual rotors spin within a few feet of the ground and surrounding personnel must be keenly aware of the down tilt of the rotor blades.

Even though the K-MAX is still in its trial run, Scarberry said he is very pleased with the performance of the aircraft.

"The precision of the system is amazing," he said. "I've been impressed and surprised."

In addition to resupplying units on the ground, the K-MAX will also support the reduction of international troops. While NATO forces prepare to withdraw from Afghanistan, the K-MAX will be working alongside them.

"As the drawdown occurs, there will be fewer vehicles and a greater demand for air transportation," O'Connor said. "With K-MAX being extended, we hope to use it to assist in retrograde operations."

O'Connor added since February, the K-MAX has helped retrograde equipment from several combat outposts and will likely continue these types of operations in the future.

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