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THE PARRIS ISLAND BOOT

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Golf, Oscar complete Crucible to earn EGA

Photo by Lance Cpl. Javarre Glanton

Rct. Trevor Needham, Platoon 2010, Golf Company, 2nd Recruit Training Battalion, secures the area for his fellow recruits as they complete an obstacle during the Crucible. The recruits had to fight through 54 hours of exhausting events to accomplish their goal of earning the Marine Corps emblem.

Marine starts life of her dreams

Lance Cpl. Michael Rogers
Staff Writer

An Oscar Company graduate overcame a difficult childhood and earned her Eagle, Globe and Anchor at Parris Island, Jan. 27.

Pfc. Melani Livingston, originally a Sedona, Ariz., native was just 15-years-old when she decided to leave her parents home in Mexico to live with her parents in the United States.

"I wanted to pursue a higher education and my lifelong goal of being a Marine," Livingston said.

Once in the states, Livingston's grandparents sent her to a boarding school where she finished her high school education and graduated as valedictorian.

"Afterward, I decided to pursue an education at the University of Arizona and try to become an officer in the Marine Corps," Livingston said.

This goal was cut short as new problems came up with her grandparents, Livingston said.

"I didn't finish out my education there," Livingston said. "My grandfather fell ill, and I made the decision to work full time instead so I could take care of my grandparents."

Livingston said she can still see the glass as half full despite the trials and hardships she lived through at an early age. She became the guide, or head recruit, of Platoon 4003 during the second month of recruit training.

"I believe my childhood affected my mental stability and really helped me

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Rct. Melani Livingston, Platoon 4003, Oscar Company, 4th Recruit Training Battalion, stands after an obstacle during the Crucible, Jan. 27. Livingston completed recruit training leaving her home in Mexico to better her own life and become a Marine.

Photo by Lance Cpl. Michael Rogers

Photo by Lance Cpl. Javarre Glanton

The new 5A frames (right) have replaced the S9 model.

Say goodbye to 'BCGs'

Lance Cpl. Javarre Glanton
Staff Writer

The "S9" glasses, commonly referred to as birth control glasses by Marines due to their unattractive look, are being replaced after 21 years of being issued by a new, better-looking pair.

The old-style glasses, a staple of recruit training since 1990, were recently replaced by the new, more attractive "5A" frames, Jan. 3.

"The feedback that I have gotten so far is that they're more fashionable," said Navy Lt. Cmdr. Larry Schmiege, department head for Naval Hospital Beaufort's optometry services. "You really don't see a lot of people wearing the S9s."

Recruits, however, are required to wear the frames in training if they need corrective eyewear.

About 35 to 40 percent of recruits are issued glasses during recruit training, said Navy Petty Officer 1st Class Conward Bundrick, leading petty officer for ancillary services at Branch Health Clinic on Parris Island. The medical clinic on Parris Island issues more than 14,000 pairs of glasses to recruits annually.

So far, the 5A models are preferred over their unattractive counterpart.

The 5As look better than the old S9s, said Pvt. Sarah Gantheir, a Marine in the Basic Marine Platoon who wore the S9s through recruit training.

The new frames, which are now available to recruits, will be issued to reserve and active-duty service members within the next six months, Schmiege said.

NEWS BRIEFS

Notice to Mariners

Marine Corps Recruit Depot Parris Island will be conducting extended live-fire training Wednesday from 6 a.m. to 7 p.m. The marsh and waterways in the range impact area to include Archers Creek, Ribbon Creek, and Edding Creek will be closed to boater traffic.

For questions regarding firing times and waterway closures, please contact the Weapons and Field Training Battalion Range Control at 843-228-3170.

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GOLF AND OSCAR COMPANY GRADUATES

Golf Company Honor Graduates

Pfc. J. M. Johnson, Jacksonville, N.C.
Platoon 2008, Johnson was recruited by
Staff Sgt. Mabe and trained by Staff Sgt. Steams

Pfc. E. C. Jones, Yulan, N.Y.
Platoon 2010, Jones was recruited by
Sgt. Wilson and trained by Gunnery Sgt. Miller

Pfc. M. C. Rogers, Waynesburg, Pa.
Platoon 2013, Rogers was recruited by
Gunnery Sgt. Finger and trained by Staff Sgt. Logan

Pfc. R. K. Morey Jr., Mayfield, N.Y.
Platoon 2009, Morey was recruited by
Sgt. Doel and trained by Staff Sgt. Gragg

Pfc. A. R. Sharpless, Huntingdon, Pa.
Platoon 2012, Sharpless was recruited by
Gunnery Sgt. Huddleston and trained by Staff Sgt. Wiley

Pfc. M. A. Wong, Columbus, Ohio
Platoon 2014, Wong was recruited by
Sgt. Trish and trained by Staff Sgt. Steele

Oscar Company Honor Graduates

Pfc. T. Peppe, Salem, N.H.
Platoon 4002, Peppe was recruited by
Staff Sgt. Rouma and trained by Staff Sgt. Madrid

Pfc. M. L. Livingston, Sedona, Ariz.
Platoon 4003, Livingston was recruited by
Sgt. Vasquez and trained by Sgt. Lemerond

Platoon 2008

Pvt. C. M. Ball, Pvt. A. R. Bowman, Pvt. J. A. Bradham, Pfc. J. A. Broadwater, Pvt. J. F. Brooks, Pvt. D. C. Burt, Pfc. J. J. Callier, Pvt. N. A. Camilleri, Pvt. B. T. Claveau, Pvt. S. D. Cochrum, Pvt. M. S. Colbert, Pvt. J. M. Collins, Pvt. J. L. Davidson, Pvt. A. L. Ducksworth, Pfc. J. B. Dyer, Pvt. R. D. Eads, Pvt. T. D. Guion, Pfc. K. D. Hamby, Pfc. J. T. Higginbotham, Pvt. P. D. Ith, Pfc. J. D. Jackson, Pfc. K. H. Jeffords, Pfc. J. M. Johnson, Pfc. D. R. Johnston, Pfc. K. B. Jones, Pvt. A. S. Jordan, Pfc. J. L. Kugerperez, Pfc. C. R. Lavelle, Pvt. A. J. Logan, Pfc. S. D. Long, Pvt. K. A. Lozano, Pvt. J. H. McCarter, Pfc. A. C. McCollum, Pvt. J. W. McKenzie, Pfc. C. H. Moore, Pfc. L. D. Munro, Pvt. W. Z. Nunnery, Pvt. D. A. Oliver, Pvt. E. M. Palmer, Pvt. D. L. Quarterman, Pfc. R. J. Rakestraw, Pvt. T. L. Royal, Pvt. G. T. Saxon, Pvt. D. S. Smith, Pvt. R. F. Thornton III, Pfc. A. D. Tillman, Pvt. A. S. Trippeter, Pvt. A. Urbanyak, Pfc. J. Vazquez, Pvt. Z. R. Watkins, Pvt. C. J. Welch, Pvt. J. D. Wilber, Pvt. K. D. Williams

Platoon 2009

Pvt. E. J. Adams, Pvt. C. E. Arnett, Pvt. T. L. Bailey, Pvt. J. R. Boggs, Pvt. S. A. Boyington, Pfc. D. L. Carlson, Pvt. D. C. Catron, Pfc. L. Cibischino Jr., Pvt. D. I. Clayton, Pfc. A. E. Cleveland, Pvt. J. B. Colyer, Pfc. B. J. Decker, Pvt. C. A. Diazrivera, Pvt. I. R. Duckett, Pvt. C. M. Dunford, Pvt. K. C. Esch, Pfc. R. A. Fletcher, Pvt. J. M. Godino, Pfc. J. T. Gordon, Pvt. S. N. GreenwichBlue, Pvt. J. D. Grenke, Pvt. T. R. Guggenheim, Pvt. R. Infante, Pfc. F. C. Ives, Pvt. B. Jarman, Pfc. S. Jiang, Pvt. J. L. Jones, Pvt. G. C. Jones, Pvt. A. Kamara, Pvt. K. Khemlani, Pfc. J. A. Kriz, Pvt. A. P. Magliocco, Pvt. G. H. McDonald, Pvt. N. Mitchell, Pvt. J. K. Montealegre, Pfc. R. K. Morey Jr., Pvt. J. M. Noboa, Pvt. P. Owens, Pvt. S. T. Ponton, Pvt. T. Rhodes, Pvt. D. A. Rose, Pfc. J. C. Serracastillo, Pvt. J. C. Shifflett, Pvt. C. M. Sparks, Pvt. J. S. Spokes, Pvt. E. S. Staab, Pvt. J. R. Stamets, Pfc. M. D. Stewart, Pvt. J. R. Ward, Pfc. T. D. Wicks, Pvt. N. T. Wylds, Pvt. A. I. Wylds Jr., Pvt. C. E. Zimmerman

Platoon 2010

Pvt. D. Aguiar, Pvt. A. Aguirre, Pvt. K. R. Bailey Jr., Pvt. B. T. Baker Jr., Pvt. W. B. Beck, Pvt. G. E. Belibasakis, Pvt. T. L. Bowling, Pfc. E. J. Braud, Pvt. J. C. Chester, Pvt. M. A. Clark, Pvt. J. P. Colavecchia, Pfc. C. F. Cramer, Pvt. A. J. Dapice, Pfc. B. H. Davis, Pvt. J. A. Davis Jr., Pfc. Z. J. Dooley, Pvt. C. R. Duch, Pvt. G. L. Easterbrook, Pfc. Q. A. Ellis, Pvt. D. G. Friedman, Pvt. S. J. Gerbe, Pfc. H. Guayara II, Pfc. M. C. Haley, Pvt. K. J. Hardee, Pfc. N. A. Hartmann, Pvt. B. K. Hartsfield Jr., Pfc. S. T. Hill, Pvt. M. D. Hubbard, Pfc. E. C. Jones, Pfc. D. J. Kappos, Pvt. G. W. Keith, Pfc. C. D. Lemons, Pfc. M. T. Madole, Pvt. A. T. Malone, Pvt. B. Mauri, Pvt. J. M. Miller, Pvt. R. C. Murr, Pvt. T. J. Needham, Pfc. C. J. Ocon Jr., Pvt. J. D. Oconmoreno, Pvt. D. J. Osterberg, Pfc. J. R. Peters, Pvt. N. J. Petitfrere, Pvt. N. T. Petty, Pvt. E. E. Porter, Pvt. A. Pulles, Pvt. C. A. Russell, Pfc. K. A. Smith, Pfc. J. A. Strickland, Pvt. A. J. Tacderan III, Pvt. T. M. Tipton, Pvt. C. D. Tollison, Pvt. C. J. Yancey, Pvt. D. J. Young

Platoon 2012

Pvt. B. D. Allen, Pvt. W. F. Amerman Jr., Pvt. C. A. Bailey, Pvt. J. A. Beatty, Pvt. E. J. Bettis, Pfc. D. C. Braden, Pvt. R. J. Brown, Pvt. T. A. Buxton, Pfc. B. T. Campbell, Pvt. J. T. Cardell, Pvt. R. I. Collett , Pvt. B. A. Conger, Pfc. A. J. Cousin, Pvt. P. R. Cushion, Pvt. A. L. Davis, Pfc. R. J. Deluca, Pvt. T. J. Devlin, Pvt. G. A. Didilus, Pfc. B. DonesOortega, Pfc. K. K. Dorsey, Pfc. C. R. Dossantos, Pvt. M. J. Falcone, Pfc. M. D. Fallert, Pvt. D. T. Feeney, Pfc. R. W. Garrison, Pfc. J. G. Gelnett, Pvt. P. J. Hatfield, Pvt. J. W. Henry IV, Pfc. N. Jiang, Pvt. J. D. Johnson, Pvt. S. D. Lamourex, Pvt. C. J. Laverdiere, Pvt. J. D. Lesniak, Pvt. A. S. Long, Pvt. C. J. Mar, Pfc. B. J. Massolia, Pvt. E. T. Ouellette, Pfc. J. M. Peppler, Pfc. J. C. Perez, Pvt. W. R. Puzio, Pfc. M. C. Renner, Pvt. A. F. Ritacco IV, Pvt. K. J. Roderiques, Pfc. M. R. Sanchez, Pfc. L. Y. Santiago, Pfc. J. W. Saunders, Pfc. R. D. Scheck, Pfc. J. E. Schwartz, Pfc. A. R. Sharpless, Pvt. K. C. Shea, Pvt. B. E. Somero, Pvt. J. P. Triola III, Pfc. J. C. Wagner, Pvt. J. J. Widrig

Platoon 2013

Pfc. J. A. Allstaedt, Pfc. C. J. AquinozFamilia, Pvt. C. M. Augello, Pvt. R. W. Barnes, Pfc. S. A. Blalock, Pfc. W. A. Brock, Pvt. B. W. Brock, Pvt. A. H. Buenaventura , Pvt. J. G. Bueno, Pvt. N. D. Bulson, Pvt. N. Canty, Pfc. N. M. Caris, Pvt. C. Y. Chung, Pvt. A. O. Collazo, Pfc. J. D. Danmyer, Pvt. S. A. Davis, Pfc. T. R. Decant, Pfc. A. Dien, Pvt. B. F. Doing, Pvt. L. EllingtonFarley, Pfc. G. J. Encalada, Pvt. J. D. Estes, Pfc. J. P. Fontenot, Pfc. Y. M. Gomezcabrera, Pvt. B. M. Grames, Pfc. R. Guerra, Pvt. T. N. Hall, Pfc. D. D. Hall, Pvt. J. N. Harris, Pvt. K. J. Hockman, Pvt. A. A. Horne II, Pvt. T. J. Jewell, Pvt. J. J. Lamson, Pvt. H. D. Lara, Pfc. G. Lee, Pfc. G. A. Luncan, Pvt. C. A. Mankowski, Pfc. T. W. Marson, Pvt. M. R. Myer, Pvt. J. J. Nikitas, Pfc. J. A. Owens, Pfc. J. A. Penatorres, Pvt. C. S. Puckett, Pvt. M. C. Rogers, Pvt. G. E. Steenberge, Pfc. B. D. Stenger, Pvt. C. M. Sullivan, Pfc. R. R. Szymanski, Pfc. K. J. Tant, Pvt. A. J. Tommassello, Pvt. J. D. Vasquezescanio, Pfc. N. I. Washington, Pvt. L. G. Williams

Platoon 2014

Pvt. C. D. Albacarys, Pfc. B. D. Bayko, Pfc. M. S. Biggers Jr., Pvt. J. S. Blanding, Pfc. P. T. Bouley, Pvt. Z. D. Brown, Pfc. J. E. Bryan, Pvt. C. T. Cameron, Pfc. A. C. Clough, Pvt. A. Cooper, Pvt. M. A. Cornier Jr., Pfc. T. B. Debarr, Pvt. J. D. Evans, Pvt. J. J. Franks, Pvt. D. J. Gobert, Pfc. M. W. Grandstaff, Pvt. E. L. Greer, Pvt. W. L. Grubbs Jr., Pvt. J. L. Hardimon, Pvt. J. P. Hollis, Pvt. T. S. Khehra, Pvt. M. J. Kim, Pvt. A. L. King, Pfc. J. P. Krul, Pfc. J. W. Krul, Pvt. P. S. Lautzenheiser, Pfc. A. W. Lukosevic, Pfc. J. D. Marsh, Pfc. H. Martell Jr., Pvt. B. Martinez, Pvt. K. C. McGaha, Pvt. T. W. McManaway, Pvt. P. W. Montrony, Pvt. J. R. Orth, Pvt. A. L. Pierce, Pfc. J. M. Pletcher, Pvt. V. U. Reyesbenitez, Pfc. L. S. Reynolds, Pfc. M. Rodriguez, Pfc. H. W. Rodriguezruiz, Pfc. R. S. Schindler, Pvt. R. L. Sierrarodriguez, Pvt. A. C. Startzel, Pvt. J. J. Suckling, Pfc. B. N. Swain, Pfc. J. C. Tackett, Pvt. T. W. Verbos, Pvt. P. O. Vinas, Pfc. V. B. Walker, Pfc. R.Wang, Pvt. A. J. Wild, Pfc. M. A. Wong, Pvt. R. D. Wyatt, Pvt. W. J. Zychowski

Platoon 4002

Pfc. Y. Y. Acostasaenz, Pvt. L. R. Ashton, Pfc. K. E. Baughman, Pfc. E. Bloise, Pvt. B. D. Brogdon, Pfc. S. S. Canada, Pvt. A. M. Carr, Pvt. C. D. Clark, Pvt. S. M. Colon, Pfc. S. D. Craig, Pvt. F. B. Cummings, Pvt. J. A. Diaz, Pfc. M. F. Fisher, Pvt. E. K. Flanagan, Pvt. S. L. Florke, Pvt. R. L. Frymire, Pvt. A. N. Grissom, Pfc. D. A. Jacobs, Pvt. K. A. Jenni, Pfc. C. S. Johnson, Pfc. T. D. Joiner, Pvt. K. E. Katley, Pfc. D. L. Lahodik, Pvt. A. R. Latterner, Pfc. A. L. Leachman, Pfc. H. K. Manning, Pvt. S. M. Martinez, Pvt. B. M. Masonia, Pvt. J. A. McClanthen, Pvt. S. L. McKay, Pfc. V. R. McKenzie, Pvt. R. D. McKinney, Pfc. B. A. Milbocker, Pfc. M. L. Mueller, Pfc. M. E. Niemer, Pfc. P. Ortega, Pfc. K. J. Owen, Pvt. B. M. Page, Pvt. B. L. Parker, Pfc. J. Payne, Pvt. N. K. Pendock, Pfc. T. Peppe, Pfc. A. M. Perez, Pvt. T. R Portis, Pfc. P. P. Prickett, Pfc. C. E. Rigo, Pfc. B. Rodriguez, Pfc. M. Rodriguez, Pfc. B. Rodriguezdiaz, Pfc. R. M. Salazar, Pvt. K. L. Schmitt, Pfc. C. L. Scott, Pfc. V. R. Smith, Pvt. K. E. Traverse

Platoon 4003

Pvt. C. M. Airgood, Pfc. D. J. Ancheta, Pvt. A. C. Anderson, Pvt. D. K. Anderson, Pfc. D. M. Anderson, Pvt. V. Aragon, Pvt. G. M. Brooks, Pvt. J. T. Bryant, Pvt. F. M. Clark, Pfc. R. M. Contreras, Pvt. C. R. Corcoran, Pvt. V. J. Coronado, Pvt. K. Daniels, Pfc. S. J. Diamond, Pvt. B. A. Emberton, Pfc. L. J. Fiero, Pvt. D. S. Guzmanterrero, Pvt. B. S. Hauck, Pvt. R. V. Hilzman, Pfc. S. A. Hixson, Pvt. D. Huizar, Pfc. M. M. Hurn, Pvt. K. A. Johnston, Pfc. T. Juangorena, Pvt. L. M. Judge, Pvt. E. F. Leece, Pvt. A. A. Leenknecht, Pfc. S. A. Lindley, Pfc. M. L. Livingston, Pvt. K. J. Ma, Pfc. K. M. Maldonado, Pfc. C. M. Manley, Pvt. C. E. Marshall, Pvt. M. M. Method, Pvt. M. A. Montiel, Pvt. L. Montoya, Pvt. E. M. Oros, Pfc. K. I. Ortega, Pvt. D. M. Palacios, Pvt. T. P. Pender, Pvt. S. S. Pressley, Pfc. A. E. Pritchett, Pvt. S. E. Raza, Pvt. C. C. Richards, Pfc. R. A. Riley, Pvt. L. Rivera, Pvt. I. S. Rosales, Pfc. M. Schillaci, Pvt. A. P. Smiles, Pvt. C. E. Strahl, Pfc. C. M. Tumeo, Pvt. S. Ventimiglia, Pvt. J. M. Volz, Pvt. J. T. Yang

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DREAMS

Continued from page 1

become more mature and capable of handling stressful situations," Livingston said.

Her stress management and willingness to take initiative was visible to the other recruits in her platoon.

"I knew from the beginning that she should be the guide," said Pfc. Mary Method, Platoon 4003 and a Hilo, Hawaii, native.

Livingston's ability to lead was apparent to her drill instructors, and she held a number of billets and took on tasks and responsibilities that the other recruits avoided.

"She is a lot more mature, and she takes on a lot more responsibility than the other recruits," said Sgt. Kayla Cerda, one of Livingston's drill instructors. "She is my go-to recruit."

Livingston set the bar for other recruits and it paid off. She will graduate as the honor graduate for Oscar Company today.

Rct. Melani Livingston, platoon honor graduate for 4003, negotiates an obstacle.

Photos by Lance Cpl. Michael Rogers

Rct. Melani Livingston (right), Platoon 4003, Oscar Company, 4th Recruit Training Battalion, stands with another member of her platoon after an event at the Crucible, Jan. 27. Livingston left Mexico to become valedictorian of her high school and a U.S. Marine.

Rct. Melani Livingston (left) works with a fellow recruit during the Crucible to move a metal barrel over an obstacle.

New Child Development Center opens

Photos by Lance Cpl. Michael Rogers

A new Child Development Center at Marine Corps Recruit Depot Parris Island opened, Jan. 27, for active-duty service members and Department of Defense workers.

The new facility includes temperature-controlled floors, a new playground that is visible from the entire building and solar panels on the roof. The building is projected to be more energy efficient than the old one.

Golf, Oscar conquer final field event

Lance Cpl. Javarre Glanton
Staff Writer

The last field event before recruits earn the title Marine is the Crucible. It is a 54-hour grueling event that challenges recruits with obstacles that repeatedly test their mental, physical and emotional strengths.

The Crucible includes six events containing between two and four smaller obstacles and activities.

With food and sleep deprivation added, the recruits use teamwork and all the skills they have learned during the previous 11 weeks to successfully complete the Crucible's challenges.

"The intent of the Crucible is to ensure recruits have adopted our core values of honor, courage and commitment," said Capt. Joseph Sgro, follow series commander of Golf Company, 2nd Recruit Training Battalion. "We need to make sure they complete the transition from civilian to Marine."

"Throughout the Crucible, they're tested physically, mentally and sometimes emotionally," Sgro said. "We use the Crucible as the final evaluation of everything they've learned in recruit training."

Recruits are given between three and five Meals, Ready-to-Eat and are on their feet with gear before dawn and after dusk.

Each event tests recruits on something they learned during their training. They must overcome difficulties from figuring out how to traverse untouchable terrain during the leadership reaction course to implementing techniques learned during their Marine Corps martial arts training in the "Octagon."

The "Octagon" is an eight-walled ring at Page Field with four entrances and two exits in which recruits run into and spar with one another in body boxing and pugil sticks.

"My feet hurt, I'm sore and tired, but this is all I've ever wanted," said Pvt. Amanda Carr, Platoon 4002, Oscar Company, 4th Recruit Training Battalion, during the second day of the Crucible. "Teamwork is difficult, but once we get it down, it's rewarding."

The conclusion of the near three-day ordeal is a 10-mile hike to the depot's Iwo Jima monument, where they receive their Marine Corps emblems from their drill instructors. When their drill instructors place the small, black, metallic Eagle, Globe and Anchor in their recruits' hands, it symbolizes their transition from recruit to Marine.

"It's surreal – I can't believe we'll have our [emblem] in our hands tomorrow," said Carr, a 21-year-old from Monroe, Mich. "I put everything I had into it. Friday, I'll be at my graduation as a U.S. Marine, and that's a title I claimed that no one can take from me."

Photos by Lance Cpl. Javarre Glanton

Recruits from Golf Company, 2nd Recruit Training Battalion, buddy rush between the sounds of simulated gunfire at Page Field, Jan. 27.

Sgt. Kyle Christian, chief Marine Corps Martial Arts Program instructor at Page Field, referees two recruits from Oscar Company, 4th Recruit Training Battalion, in the "Octagon" during the Crucible, Jan. 27.

Recruits from Golf Company, 2nd Recruit Training Battalion, maneuver their way across a rope bridge while transporting special gear needed for the mission. The recruits, in day two of the Crucible, fight through food and sleep deprivation to push toward their goal of earning the title of Marine.

Recruits from Oscar Company, 4th Recruit Training Battalion, stand in line, waiting for their turn at boxing in the "Octagon."

Recruits from Oscar Company help each other over the obstacles at the Crucible.

MEU Marines participate in small boat raid landing

Marines with A Company, 1st Battalion, 4th Marine Regiment, 31st Marine Expeditionary Unit, pull their combat rubber raiding craft onto a beach at Okinawa, Japan, Jan. 29. The Marines were conducting a small boat raid during the MEU's amphibious integration training in preparation for Exercise Cobra Gold 2012.

Photos by Cpl. Garry Welch

Cpl. Garry Welch
31st Marine Expeditionary Unit

KIN BLUE, OKINAWA, Japan — Appearing as dots on the horizon, the combat rubber raiding crafts silently slowed to a stop 1,100 meters offshore.

Once they were in position, the scout swimmers entered the water and pushed toward shore to clear a path for the rest of the landing force.

Marines with A Company from 1st Battalion, 4th Marine Regiment, 31st Marine Expeditionary Unit, which serves as a battalion landing team, conducted a small boat raid at Okinawa, Japan, Jan. 29.

The scout swimmers established security on the beach then signaled the landing force, which delivered more than 150 combat-ready Marines to the fight within a matter of minutes.

The Marines hit the beach with three sequential waves and pulled the rubber rafts ashore. The Marines pushed toward their objective — a helicopter landing zone — in a swift and synchronized fashion.

The unit began taking simulated small-arms fire from multiple enemy positions as they neared the objective. Reacting as one, the Marines pushed forward, eliminated the enemy role players, seized a weapons cache and secured the area.

"We conducted a daytime small boat raid in support of amphibious integration training with the Navy," said Capt. Jonathan Joannides, company commander. "During an actual operation, this would be conducted at night, but conducting it during the day lays down a firm foundation to build off of as we prepare for night operations."

For many of the Marines participating, this raid marked the first time they had ever launched from the back of a moving amphibious vessel.

"The Marines definitely learned something new," Joannides said. "We launched from the USS Tortuga, which was kind of a hair-raising experience. ... It was good to practice because they learned how to launch more smoothly."

According to Joannides, the training also acted as more than just a first time experience in amphibious deployment.

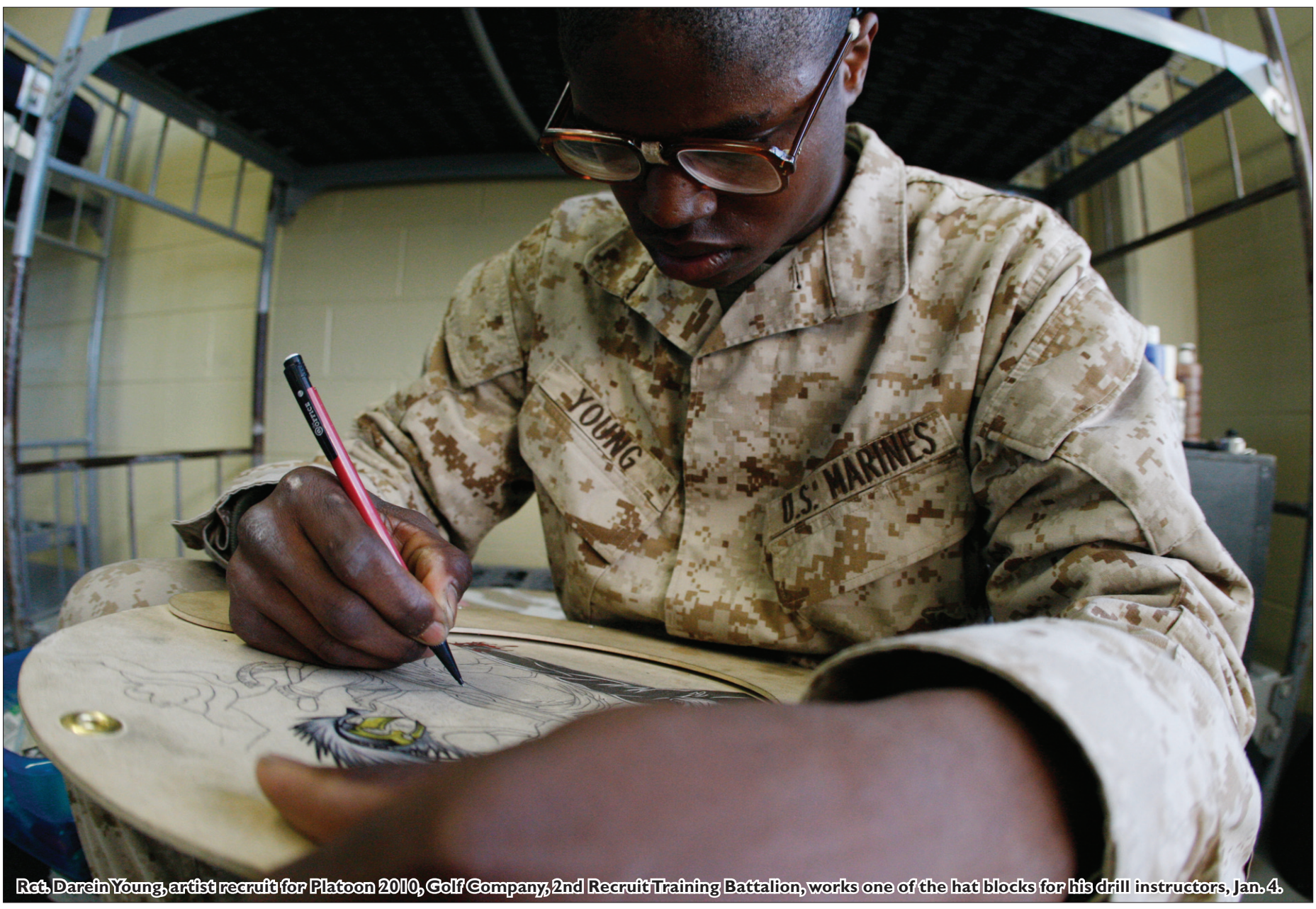
"This improves confidence in their ability to do things for real because during a real operation, they have to fall back on their training," Joannides said. "This allows [the Marines] to perfect the standard operating procedures that would be used during an actual operation."

As the Marines secured the objective and prepared to move back to the ship, they had a moment to reflect on how they had done.

"The Marines all reacted pretty well when they started taking fire," said Sgt. Nicholas Szczerba, a squad leader with A Company. "There were definitely some lessons learned, and we will go over some things and how we can improve them, but the Marines did well and were happy to be able to get out here and do what Marines do."

Marines with A Company secure the landing zone during a small boat raid training.

Scout swimmers with A Company push onto the beach, Jan. 29.



Rct. Darein Young, artist recruit for Platoon 2010, Golf Company, 2nd Recruit Training Battalion, works one of the hat blocks for his drill instructors, Jan. 4.

Recruit leaves his mark on Golf Co.

Story and photos by Lance Cpl. F.J. Abundes

Make art, not war – a simple phrase with a different meaning to everyone. Often, the expression is related to the contrast of creation and destruction.

Recruits at Marine Corps Recruit Depot Parris Island have been making art in war for more than half a century – the battle through training that is.

"Drawing's a part of me. I've been drawing my whole life," said Pvt. Darein Young, artist recruit for Platoon 2010, Golf Company, 2nd Recruit Training Battalion. "It's what I like to do to get away from everything and think and focus."

Artist recruits are typically chosen for their creative abilities during the range week.

"I felt it was a good opportunity to show what I can do," Young said. "I've always been pretty good at art, so why not make a use of it here."

The artists design a flag that is flown under the platoon's identifying flag and represents the platoon as a whole.

"The range flag is for motivation and to show off," said Gunnery Sgt. John Miller, Young's senior drill instructor. "It describes who the platoon is – something to give them pride when they go down to the range."

One side of the flag is given to the platoon's senior drill instructor and the other is for their primary marksmanship instructor.

Platoon 2010's range flag depicted a Spartan helmet and a skull with a desert utility uniform cover, along with the platoon number.

Along with the range flag, the artist recruits also design and decorate hat blocks, which drill instructors use to hold their campaign covers.

Drill instructors cannot accept gifts purchased by their recruits, so they purchase all of the supplies and the cover block, Miller said. The recruits are given time to work on the blocks, but many of them end up using their own personal time before bed and on Sundays because they get so involved in it.

Miller said the hat block reminds drill instructors specific things about their past training cycles.

"It's a way of giving back," Young said. "They're training me to be a Marine; the least I can do is draw them up a hat plaque."

For his senior drill instructor's hat block, Young painted a Spartan fighting off his foes.

"I wanted something that looked cool and represented my senior drill instructor," he said. "I just hope that when my senior drill instructor shows his hat block that other individuals look at it and see a great hat block."

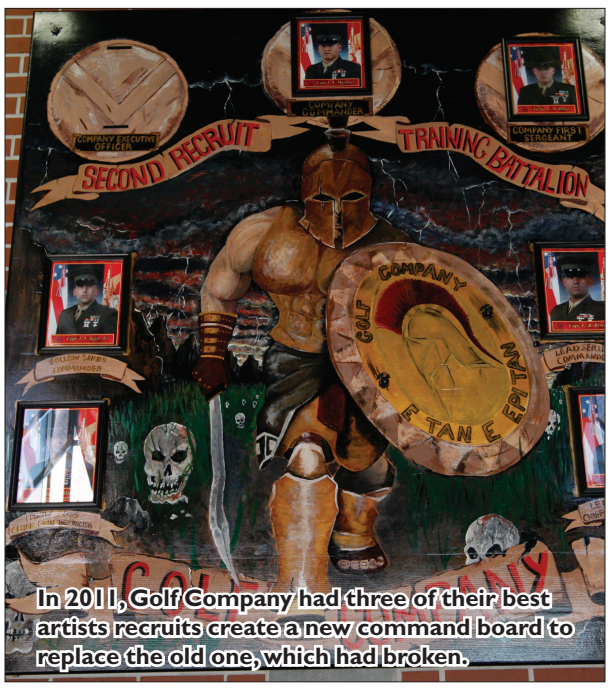
Young said the opportunity to paint has distracted him from the mental strain of recruit training.

"When I was doing the range flag, it helped me take the focus off not being home," he said.

Not only has his art helped him through recruit training, it has also influenced his passion.

"Coming here and learning to put my best foot forward has also helped my artwork," he said. "You need to give 110 percent at all times, but you must also respect your artwork, because if you don't, you don't get perfection when it's done.

"I take pride in my art and I just want to be the best," Young said. "Just as I hope to do as a Marine."



In 2011, Golf Company had three of their best artists recruits create a new command board to replace the old one, which had broken.

Hat blocks are designed for the drill instructors by their artist recruits.

Artist recruits are provided with all kinds of art supplies. Drill instructors purchase everything the recruits will use to create their master pieces.

Along with the hat blocks designed for each drill instructor, artist recruits also work on range flags that represent platoons during their time on the ranges.

Marines, Afghan police keep southern Afghanistan secure

Cpl. Tommy Bellegarde
2nd Marine Division

PATROL BASE 7171, Helmand province, Afghanistan – Afghan National Security Force and Afghan National Police personnel are working with Marines and sailors from F Company, 2nd Battalion, 4th Marine Regiment, to secure areas of southern Musa Qal'eh district, Helmand province, during Operation Double Check, which kicked off Jan. 3, when the Marines' helicopter-inserted into the area.

The troops cleared areas of the district south of Patrol Base 7171, including Surkyan, Khwajadad and Mosulmani, which were safe havens for insurgents in recent years.

Security posts for Afghan Uniformed Police personnel were constructed in these places during the first week of operations to ensure the Government of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan could maintain long-term control of the area.

"Fox Company was responsible for disrupting enemy forces on the eastern side of [Musa Qal'eh's dry riverbed]," said Capt. Aaron Awtry, the commanding officer of F Company and a Midland, Texas, native. "[During] the initial phase of the operation, … we dropped by helicopter assault and disrupted enemy targets, safe houses, cache sites and things like that to keep the enemy off balance, which allowed our engineering assets and the Afghan police to establish those posts.

"We've completed that phase, and now we're into the longer-term phase of the operation, [in] which we are down there operating with the Afghan Uniformed Police in support of their posts," he added.

The AUP and Marines are working together during the operation, but the Afghans also operate independently by conducting all-AUP patrols and providing security overwatch from their new posts.

"[The AUP] are the main effort," Awtry said. "They were there with the Marines during the initial clear of those target locations; they were there to select the sites of where the posts were going to be built at; they were there to man the posts and help construct the posts and then to operate out of the posts and with the local populace."

The Afghan government aims to gain support of the area's residents through direct interaction with the people and showing the Government of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan is permanently invested in the area and can provide a better alternative to the brutality and oppression of an unchecked insurgency.

"The [insurgents] were very safe, and they were feeling safe here because the people were supporting them," said Masoor, an AUP commander participating in the operation. "[Insurgents are] destroying; they doing violence here – that's why people supporting them. If we show them, if we prove that we came here to help – we didn't come here to destroy or damages or violences here – we can make them sure that's who we are."

Double Check's early objectives have been accomplished, and a GIRoA presence now exists for the first time in years in the district's historically-troubled southern areas. The troops now plan to continue developing an operationally independent Afghan National Police force to ensure success for the area's long-term future.

"The final result desired and the thing that we are looking for is that the police are able to occupy and sustain themselves out of [those posts] and in doing so, provide security for the populace, and they're able to do this on their own without the Marines' support," said Awtry. We're going to support them initially, get them started, get them the confidence they need to operate out of there, and then let them complete the task themselves."

Photos by Cpl. Tommy Bellegarde

Cpl. Nathan Davidson, a fire team leader with F Company, 2nd Battalion, 4th Marine Regiment, and a Clayton, Ind., native, patrols through an alleyway in a residential area during the opening phase of Operation Double Check. F Company Marines, Afghan National Police and Afghan National Security Force personnel cleared Khwajadad and other areas of southern Musa Qal'eh district during the first phase of the operation to rid the area of insurgents.

Marines from F Company scan their surroundings for enemy combatants as an adjacent element of their patrol takes fire.

Lance Cpl. Jordan Nail, an infantryman with F Company and Grenada, Miss., native, keeps watch during a patrol through a bazaar.

Marine's best friend, insurgents' worst enemy

Cpl. Johnny Merkley
Regimental Combat Team 5

FORWARD OPERATING BASE GERONIMO, Helmand province, Afghanistan – When Cpl. Ross Gundlach enlisted in the Marine Corps in 2008, the last thing he expected to do was rely on a dog for survival while patrolling the rugged terrain of southern Helmand province.

Gundlach, a 24-year-old native of Madison, Wis., was first stationed at Camp Foster on Okinawa, Japan, where he worked as a supply manager. His hard work during the first year of his enlistment did not go unnoticed, and Gundlach was offered a position as the driver and assistant for Brig. Gen. Craig C. Crenshaw, commanding general of 3rd Marine Logistics Group, the following year of his Okinawa tour.

"When they came to me with the job, I obviously didn't turn it down," Gundlach said. "It was a great opportunity, and I learned a lot from the experience."

After two years on Okinawa, Gundlach was scheduled to transfer to a different unit. With several options on the table, Gundlach believed it was his duty to deploy to Afghanistan to serve his country and seek the once-in-a-lifetime experience that can only be found on the battlefield.

"I requested to be with an infantry battalion even though I was fully aware that I would be working as a supply clerk and probably not see any action," Gundlach said. "The sergeant major told me there was an opening with [2nd Battalion, 6th Marine Regiment], so I jumped on that opportunity."

After arriving at 2nd Bn., he was offered another opportunity of a lifetime. Gundlach was offered the job of dog handler, and was one of only two Marines in the battalion without an infantry background to be selected for that duty.

"When they told me I could be a dog handler, it was one of the happiest days of my life," Gundlach said. "I've loved dogs my whole life so being able to do this as a job … I wouldn't want to do anything else."

Gundlach was immediately sent to a six-week course for dog handling where he teamed up with his new partner Casey, a yellow, pure-bread Labrador retriever. Together, he and Casey worked long hours to train for the upcoming deployment.

"When you're training and working with these dogs, you have to have an open mind; each dog is different and has different temperaments and behaviors," said George Barrow, Improvised Explosive Device Detection Dog Field Service representative for the battalion. "When the Marines do this training, Gundlach and the others must learn how to read their dogs because their lives may depend on it."

After successfully completing the course, Gundlach joined Golf Company, 2nd Bn., at Enhanced Mojave Viper in Twentynine Palms, Calif., where he and Casey integrated with the company's other dog handling team. He quickly learned that having Casey for a friend wasn't always fun and games.

"I would imagine it's like having a kid," Gundlach said. "Whether it's cleaning her, feeding her, walking her or taking care of her medical needs this dog is my life."

"Gundlach has a positive attitude. That's what makes him such a good handler," Barrow said. "He's willing to do the necessary training to allow his dog to perform properly. He shows a lot of confidence and trust in his dog, which really separates him from other handlers."

Even with Gundlach's dedication to Casey and his love for dogs, he will be honorably separating from the Marine Corps at the end of his current deployment. He hopes to follow his dream of graduating from the University of Wisconsin with a degree in business and pursue a career in real estate.

"I've learned and done so much in the Marine Corps it would be hard for me not to apply everything I've learned here and use it the rest of my life," Gundlach said. "As for Casey, I trust her with my life, I have to. She and I have a very dangerous job, but we take it day by day and constantly learn more about each other and ourselves."

Photos by Cpl. Johnny Merkley

Cpl. Ross T. Gundlach, a dog handler with 2nd Battalion, 6th Marine Regiment, and native of Madison, Wis., trains with Casey, an improvised explosive device detection dog, in the Helmand province, Jan. 19. Gundlach and Casey search for improvised explosive devices while on patrol together.

▲ **Casey, an improvised explosive device detection dog, searches the side of a road for IEDs.**

Cpl. Ross T. Gundlach, a dog handler, and his trusted dog Casey stand on the side of the road after searching a local village. ▶