

THE PROSPECTOR



Serving the Marine Corps since 1947
Marine Corps Logistics Base Barstow, Calif.

Vol.2 No.13

July 11, 2013



*‘The Three Musketeers:’
60 years and still together*

PAST HEROES: GENERAL VANDEGRIFT

Marines know him as the 18th commandant. Some know him as the first four-star general, but fewer know him for the actions and leadership traits that he valiantly displayed in World War II.

General Alexander Archer Vandegrift not only embodied the values of the Corps, he served in the branches' highest billet and was the first Marine to be promoted to the highest rank, four-star general, in the Marine Corps.

Vandegrift was commissioned as a second lieutenant in 1909. Throughout his time in the Corps, the Charlottesville, Va., native climbed the officer ranks where he displayed multiple leadership traits and has had a significant part in the Corps' history, according to arlingtoncemetery.net.

In 1942, during World War II, Vandegrift led the 1st Marine Division in the first large-scale attack against the Japanese on the Solomon Islands: Guadalcanal, Tulagi, and Gavutu. With his courage and experience, he helped secure one of the first victories against the Japanese during the second world war. As a major general, Vandegrift was the first commanding general to leave the shores of the United States to fight with his troops, according to history.navy.mil.

The attack on the islands proved vital because Guadalcanal was the mid-point between the U.S. and Australia, leaving the sea lanes between America and Australia open and free from ambush. A majority of Vandegrift's time in the war was spent in the thick of battle, and death was a present threat, as is usually the case in times of war. He was almost killed in action by an enemy officer, according to the Arlington website.

At one point during the Battle of Guadalcanal, an enemy officer charged the general with



a sword. However, the Japanese officer was shot dead mere feet in front of Vandegrift. One of his men saved him, personifying the love and trust his troops had for him, according to arlingtoncemetery.net.

At the end on 1942, Vandegrift was awarded with the Navy Cross for the victories and sacrifices of his campaign. Also, he was awarded the Medal of Honor for his defensive tactics and leadership in holding the islands for four consecutive months, according to arlingtoncemetery.net.

Vandegrift didn't stop there. He further advanced his career by becoming the 18th Commandant of the Marine Corps in 1944. One year later, he made history in the Marine Corps by becoming the Corps' first four-star general. He retired in 1949, according to arlingtoncemetery.net.

For more of Vandegrift's accomplishments, read 'Once a Marine: memoirs of Gen. A. A. Vandegrift' on the Commandant's Reading List.

On The Cover:

Front Cover:

Photo Illustration by Cpl. T. Allen Bricker
Rudy Villareal, Henry Torres, and Oscar Valenzuela, residents of Barstow, Calif., and former Marines, discuss what life was like when they served in the Marine Corps in the 1940s and 50s. The three Texas natives have been together for more than 60 years.

Back Cover:

Photo by Pfc. Samuel Ranney
Sergeant Joel Richards, a stableman with the Marine Corps Mounted Color Guard, on Marine Corps Logistics Base Barstow, rides his horse, Norman, in preparation for the Xtreme Bulls Night Rodeo, June 30, in Cody, Wyo. The MCG presented colors for five different rodeos, rode through parades, and participated in a variety of events with the community during the trip.

THE PROSPECTOR

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The editorial content of this magazine is prepared, edited and provided by the Public Affairs Office of Marine Corps Logistics Base Barstow, California. Mailing address: Commanding Officer, Attn: Public Affairs, Box 110130, Barstow, CA 92311-5050. The Public Affairs Office is located in Building 204. Phones: (760) 577-6430, 577-6450, 577-6451, FAX 577-6350, DSN prefix 282. This magazine is an authorized publication for members of the Department of Defense. Contents of **THE PROSPECTOR** are not necessarily the official views of, or endorsed by, the U.S. Government, the Department of Defense, or the U.S. Marine Corps.

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Photo by Sgt. Shannon Yount

Service members, Civilian Marines and family members stand for morning colors during the relief and appointment ceremony of Sergeants Maj. Richard M. Charron and Karl D. Simburger on Marine Corps Logistics Base Barstow, June 28.

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IF YOU

SEE



SAY

SOMETHING

SOMETHING

Eagle Eyes is a neighborhood watch reporting tool used by Marine Corps Logistics Base Barstow. It asks people of the community to report any suspicious activity by calling 1-877-356-3937, or by going online at: www.usmceagleeyes.org. The site will ask you to fill out a form including location and the description of the activity and anyone involved in the activity; it takes approximately five minutes to complete the form.

News Briefs

Leave Share Program

The following is a comprehensive list of individuals currently affected by medical emergencies and in need of leave donations: **Alvin Blackford, Robert Monroe, Johnny Davis Jr., Roger Dull, Eileen Garcia, Uriah Garcia, Lisa Lucero, Tulu Niusulu, and Lisa Wood.**

Anyone desiring to donate annual leave under the Leave Sharing Program may do so by obtaining a leave donor application form from the Human Resources Office. Ensure completed forms are turned into HRO as well. For more information, contact Josie Marquez at 760 - 577 - 6481.

Anticipated Vacancies

Trades Division- Machinist, WG-3414-10. Rigging worker, WG-5210-08. Welder, WG-3703-10. Heavy Mobile Equipment Repairer, WG-5803-08. HME Mechanic, WG-5803-10.

Business Division- Production
4 Controller Leader, GS-1152-11.

FSD- PEI Branch- Security Guard, GS-0085-05. Supply Technician, GS-2005-07. Materials Handler, WG-6907-05.

Please look for announcements under the new link at <http://usajobs.gov>

Swimming Lessons

The Oasis Pool & Water Park will be offering swimming lessons this summer. Children will be placed in appropriate levels based on their swimming skills. Scheduling, payments, and sign-ups are available at the pool. For more information, call Recreation services with Marine Corps Community Services, at 760-577-6971.

NMCRS Thrift Store

New hours! The MCLB Barstow NMCRS Thrift Store will be open the second Saturday of each month, 9 a.m. to 1 p.m., starting July 13. The opening sale includes a \$5 bag sale. **Volunteers needed!** If interested, stop by or call the Thrift Store at 760-256-0444.

Upcoming Events

Spouses Social is a monthly opportunity to meet with fellow military spouses, July 9, Aug. 8, and Sept. 10, from 9:30 to 11:30 a.m. Cooking classes will be held every Monday of July, from 9 a.m. to 12 p.m., in the Multipurpose Room. Sewing and craft classes are slated to be held in August and September, and Jane Wayne Day will be held on Friday, Oct. 4. Save the dates! For more information, contact MCFTB at 760-577-6408.

Energy Tip:

Did you know ceiling fans cool people, not rooms, by creating a wind chill effect? That being said, there is no point leaving the fan on and wasting energy when no one is in the room.

Fire Prevention Saves Lives

Story and photos by
Sgt. Shannon Yount
Press Chief

At the age of seven, Gabriel Hammett decided he wanted to be a firefighter.

Unlike those childhood dreams that change frequently, Hammett pursued this particular passion and it is now part of his everyday life.

In 2004, Hammett joined the ranks of the Marine Corps Logistics Base Barstow Fire Department as a firefighter. Today, Hammett serves as the fire prevention officer with Fire Station 402, Yermo Annex, MCLB Barstow, and has become an active member of the community.

"I love the nature of the job," said Hammett, who believes that serving the community is important, and his job is one that truly matters.

"We give back ... when it really counts. When people are at their lowest point, we are there to help them," said the Barstow native, who moved here after serving in the Army honorably as an active duty firefighter.

Fire prevention and emergency services are reciprocals of each other, explained Hammett.

"We prevent fire through fire investigation," explained Hammett.

As an example, Hammett recalled the recent tragedy in Prescott, Ariz., that claimed the lives of 19 firefighters. When the incident investigation is complete, there will be safety briefs and revised training throughout the whole fire service in order to make our jobs

safer, he said.

"If we can prevent it from starting, it puts us ahead of the game," stated Hammett.

During his time on the installation, Hammett has pursued other avenues in fire services such as fire fighting, fire inspecting and fire investigating.

Along with upholding the responsibilities of a fire prevention officer, Hammett continues his childhood dream of being a firefighter.

To maintain this billet, Hammett is required to maintain his fire fighting skills and annual training along with maintaining his fire inspector and investigator training requirements.

"I get the best of both worlds," he explained. As a firefighter, there is an adrenaline rush and a desire to fight fires that never goes away, he said.

A fire prevention specialist prepares and prevents fire emergencies.

"Fire prevention is more proactive, and you see more of a return in investment as you would call it," said Hammett. "Every day is different. There is no daily routine, and that's an enjoyable part of the job."

Fire prevention officers have many responsibilities, he explained. They are responsible for inspecting all buildings on the installation, along with educating the community on potential fire and safety hazards in residential and office areas.

When the fire prevention specialists inspect an area or building, they look for a number of things.

"We really look for things out of the normal, and if it catches our eye and it doesn't look safe, we look in to it," he added. "The key role of inspecting is keeping the safety of the community first and foremost."

"Every structure [on the installation] is inspected semi-annually, and some are inspected quarterly because they are considered a higher risk," he explained.

When following



Gabriel Hammett, a prevention officer with fire station 402, Yermo Annex, Marine Corps Logistics Base Barstow, examines a fire extinguisher during an inspection at Marine Depot Maintenance Command, July 1.

the rules and regulations of fire prevention, the MCLB Barstow Fire Prevention Branch follows the base order P11320.5G which follows the Marine Corps and National Fire Prevention Association guidelines. So far, the Marine Corps is the only service who has adopted the current regulations published by the NFPA, explained Hammett.

When a fire does occur on the installation, it is the responsibility of the fire prevention branch to investigate it.

"It is a requirement that every fire is investigated, and the cause of the fire is determined," explained Hammett. "From the fire prevention point of view, we want to get to the cause of the fire and figure out how we can prevent it from happening, again. We want to educate the community. We have a vested interest in investigating fires ... to prevent them."

"We take every aspect of fire prevention seriously," he added.

Dedicated to improving the safety of the community, Hammett and fellow fire prevention officers continue to live by their mission statement 'Protect life, Protect environment, and Protect government property.'



Firefighters with fire station 402, Yermo Annex, Marine Corps Logistics Base Barstow, execute a simulated rescue mission on Marine Depot Maintenance Command, July 1.

Small town welcomes

Story and photos by
Pfc. Samuel Ranney
Combat Correspondent

The Marine Corps Mounted Color Guard from Marine Corps Logistics Base Barstow, Calif., journeyed more than a thousand miles to present our nation's colors for an exceedingly patriotic town in Wyoming, June 27.

Sergeant Edgar Torrealba, the staff non-commissioned officer in charge of the MCG, Sgt. Jacey Marks, Sgt. Joel Richards, and Cpl. Bryanna Kessler, stablemen with the MCG, along with Norman, John, Cho, Dean, Rookie and Reno, their faithful steeds, left California's High Desert for Cody, Wyo., to participate in their traditional Fourth of July festivities. These celebrations included: presenting colors at five rodeos, participating in the Cody Kiddies Parade, two Cody Stampede Parades, and making a variety of appearances throughout the town.

This year marked the 75th anniversary of the Cody Night Rodeo, explained Larry Johnson, the Stampede board president, who has been working with the board for 18 years. It is one of America's most prestigious rodeos; people travel from all over the country to attend.

"The rodeo averages 5,000 people a night," Johnson said. "It's very important to the community ... the Marines make the rodeo what it is."

Among the rodeos, the MCG participated in Xtreme Bulls Night, the only rodeo featuring bull riding alone, where the MCG presented colors along side the bull riders to start the night, and Tough Enough to Wear Pink Night, where the MCG donned pink rodeo shirts to raise awareness for breast cancer.

"The Marines presenting colors is the best

way to start a rodeo," explained Johnson. "As soon as the Mounted Color Guard comes out ... the audience is immediately on their feet and cheering. The Marines really get the crowd fired up."

Aside from the rodeos, the mounted Marines participated in two Stampede Parades and the Cody Kiddies Parade, which was a first for the MCG, explained Torrealba.

"The Kiddies Parade was one of my favorite parts of the trip," said Torrealba. "It was an exceptionally successful part of the mission because of the kids coming up to us and interacting with the Marines. It left a great impact on the kids and the future of the Marine Corps."

During the Cody Stampede Parades on July 3 and July 4, the MCG carried the nation's colors and were taken aback at the patriotism the crowd displayed as they walked by in



MCG with open arms



Marines hold to the highest standard, no matter what era or branch of service they are.”

The Marines also enjoyed sitting down and listening to the stories the veterans had to tell, explained Marks.

“It’s great to exchange personal stories with the veterans, and hear the ones that aren’t written in the history books,” Marks added.

Torrealba, Marks, Richards, and Kessler all enjoyed the patriotism displayed throughout the town and even on their ride there and back to Barstow, the Marines explained.

The hospitality and patriotism the Marines encountered was incomparable, Torrealba said.

“People we didn’t know would thank us for our service as we walked around or stopped at places to eat,” Torrealba added. “When they found out we were part of the Mounted Color Guard people would come up to give us hugs, take pictures, ask for autographs, and want to introduce us to their families. It left an everlasting impression.”

Marks added that any town, big or small, should celebrate the Fourth of July the way Cody does: in a truly patriotic manner. The Idaho native further explained that although he will not be returning to Cody with the MCG next year, due to a change in duty stations, he will definitely be visiting the community and the friends he made during the MCG’s trip to Cody, Wyo.

“Cody as a whole was an amazing experience,” said Kessler. “The patriotism and open arms of the community was very moving. The rodeos are usually my favorite (part of trips), but in Cody you can’t pick out one part that tops the rest, it’s a total package.”



formation, Torrealba explained.

“Everyone at the parade, including young children, stood for us and had their hand over their hearts,” added the Los Angeles native. He further explained he had never seen a parade with so many people so quiet and so patriotic.

When the Marines were not presenting colors at rodeos or trotting down the streets of Cody for parades, they were interacting with the community and meeting with Veterans of Foreign Wars.

“It’s a great honor to hold the position I have with the MCG and represent the Marine Corps to maintain the history, discipline, honor, courage and commitment of the Marine Corps,” Torrealba explained. “If it wasn’t for them (the veterans) we wouldn’t be where we are today. Representing them is something myself and my



CODY, WYOMING



RODEO CAPITAL OF THE WORLD

FEDERAL EMPLOYEES GIVE BACK TO COMMUNITY

Story and photo by
Sgt. Shannon Yount
Press Chief

To make a difference in the local community, the Marine Corps Logistics Base Barstow Commissary kicked-off its third annual 'Feds Feed Families' food drive June 21, and will continue to accept donations until Aug. 30.

The campaign started in response to the "United We Serve Act," signed by President Barack Obama in 2009, asking for Americans to engage in sustained, meaningful acts of community service in their neighborhoods.

Last year, the Department of Defense contributed more than 2.1 million pounds of non-perishable items during the food drive campaign, according to Deputy Secretary of Defense Ashton B. Carter's campaign letter that was published June 9, 2013.

There has been a huge increase in donations this year, said Lt. Benjamin Warner, the base chaplain. This kind of support just shows the type of people we have on base and that a weak economy has not stopped people from helping each other, said Warner.

So far, Barstow's commissary has col-



(Left) Lloyd Doolittle, the store director of the Marine Corps Logistics Base Barstow Commissary, (center) Col. Michael L. Scalise, the commanding officer of the base, and (right) Lt. Benjamin Warner, the base chaplain, pose with more than 850 pounds in donations at the base commissary, June 28. The base kicked-off its third annual 'Feds Feed Families' food drive June 21, and will continue to accept donations until Aug. 30.

lected more than 850 pounds in donations and encourages DOD personnel to continue to participate and make a difference.

"Children and families across the United States continue to be in great need of donated food this summer," said Michael Dowling, deputy director for the Defense Commissary Agency, based in Fort Lee, Va. "Food banks stocks have been depleted due to the economic downturn and natural disasters which continue to occur."

The summer is a critical time for students,

because they are out of school and might not get the nutrition they need and would normally get from school lunch programs, explained Lloyd Doolittle, the store director of the base commissary here.

"For those who are looking to donate, it is very easy," said Doolittle. "The cashiers at the commissary are taking donations and informing customers about the options they have."

Customers who want to donate have two options, explained Doolittle. They can purchase or bring in a non-perishable item and give it to the cashier or they can purchase a pre-packaged bag filled with non-perishable items and donate it to the campaign, explained Doolittle.

The packaged bags cost \$10 and are filled with essentials such as water, grain, canned vegetables, fruit, and condiments, said Doolittle.

Once the drive is over, the donated food from the commissary will be placed on pallets and transported to a food bank in Barstow.

For more information on the drive, contact Lloyd Doolittle at 760-256-6760 or Lt. Benjamin Warner at 760-577-6849.

MARADMIN 330/13

FY14 Voluntary Enlisted Early Release Program

Rewrite by
Sgt. Shannon Yount
Press Chief

The Marine Corps has released a revised Voluntary Enlisted Early Release Program (VEERP) for fiscal year 2014, allowing Marines to leave the Corps up to a year before their contracts expire.

The VEERP remains focused on cost savings for the Marine Corps and is not an individual entitlement program. Marine Administrative Message 330/13 explains that it will continue through fiscal year 2014 and it outlines eligibility and requirements for Marines who plan to get out early.

8 The program is a cost-savings initiative that will permit shaping and

sustaining the force within the constraints of the approved budget.

Marines who volunteer and haven't yet met their obligated time are still required to complete time in the Individual Ready Reserve. Service members under the VEERP will be in the same status as Marines who completed their active service and will complete their eight-year service obligation.

This program is only being offered to Marines whose term of service will end during the remainder of fiscal year 2013 and fiscal year 2014. Marines may request separation no more than 365 days prior to their current EAS.

Marines, who plan on applying for the VEERP, are required to submit a request through their chain of command as soon as possible. At a minimum, Marines need to submit their request at least 45 days prior to

their requested early release date.

Though every Marine is eligible for the VEERP, there are some conditions that will hinder a Marine from getting out earlier than their current contract date. Marines are required to attend mandated pre-separation counseling and the Transition Assistance Management Program and must be eligible for an Honorable or General (Under Honorable Conditions) Discharge at the time of early release. They also will have to be medically qualified to leave the Marine Corps. Marines who are currently serving in anticipation of gaining citizenship in the United States, must have served a minimum of three years active service at the time of early release.

For more information, contact your unit career planner, or view the MARADMIN at <http://www.marines.mil/news/messages/Pages/MARADMIN330-13.aspx>.

A small world, smaller Corps: Texas Marines stay together for more than 60 years

**Story by
Cpl. T. Allen Bricker
Combat Correspondent**

California's High Desert has become home for countless veterans over the years. But what are the chances of three friends from two Texas cities no more than 150 miles apart joining the Corps in 1947, coming to Barstow in the 1950s, and remaining there for more than 60 years?

Oscar Valenzuela and Henry Torres from Corpus Christi and Rudy Villareal from San Antonio joined the Marine Corps and continued on paths that would keep the three of them together for the next six decades.

In the summer of 1947, three young men from Texas signed up to become a part of the few and the proud. Although World War II had recently come to an end, and the Korean War had not begun, tensions were still high due to the United States' involvement in the Cold War. This didn't dampen the drive Valenzuela, Villareal, or Torres had to enlist in the slightest.

"There wasn't much for me to do back home so I wanted to join the Marines," said Valenzuela, one of the Corpus Christi men. "I didn't want to stay home and get mixed up in the wrong stuff so I decided to leave and do something good for my life," he added.

Valenzuela and Villareal left in July for recruit training; Torres was only a month behind the platoon in boot camp known as the 'Texas Platoon' because of the high number of recruits from the Lone Star State. After their training at Marine Corps Recruit

Depot San Diego and their military occupational specialty training at Camp Pendleton, the self-deemed 'three musketeers' were sent to a new kind of territory: Hawaii and the Marianas Islands.

"It was like a deployment for us," explained Villareal, the San Antonio native. "When we went over to Guam, it was for 18 months," he added.

The three Marines each performed different jobs while in the Pacific. While Torres served as an administrative Marine in Hawaii, Valenzuela worked in an ice plant and Villareal worked as a driver for officers in Guam.

Again, the three musketeers would end up in the same area upon completion of their tours in the Pacific. The next spot on their tour would be their last. Enter ... Barstow, Calif.

It was the early 1950s and after the three had arrived in California, Valenzuela and Villareal worked for the fire department on base (then Barstow Annex, Marine Corps Depot of Supplies) while Torres continued with his administrative work in the Corps.

"I was an engineer with the fire department when I got to Barstow," Villareal explained. "I worked with Oscar there while Torres worked for the chief warrant officer over at the headquarters building," he said.

One by one, Valenzuela, Torres, and Villareal got out of the Marine Corps after their enlistments were over but remained in Barstow, and in some form or fashion, stayed connected to the Marine Base. Valenzuela and Villareal continued their work at the fire

department while Torres became a materiel handler on the base's Yermo annex. During their time at the fire department, Valenzuela and Villareal became involved in other jobs as well.

"I started to get involved at the golf course on base after it was built," explained Valenzuela. "I helped out there by giving lessons," he added.

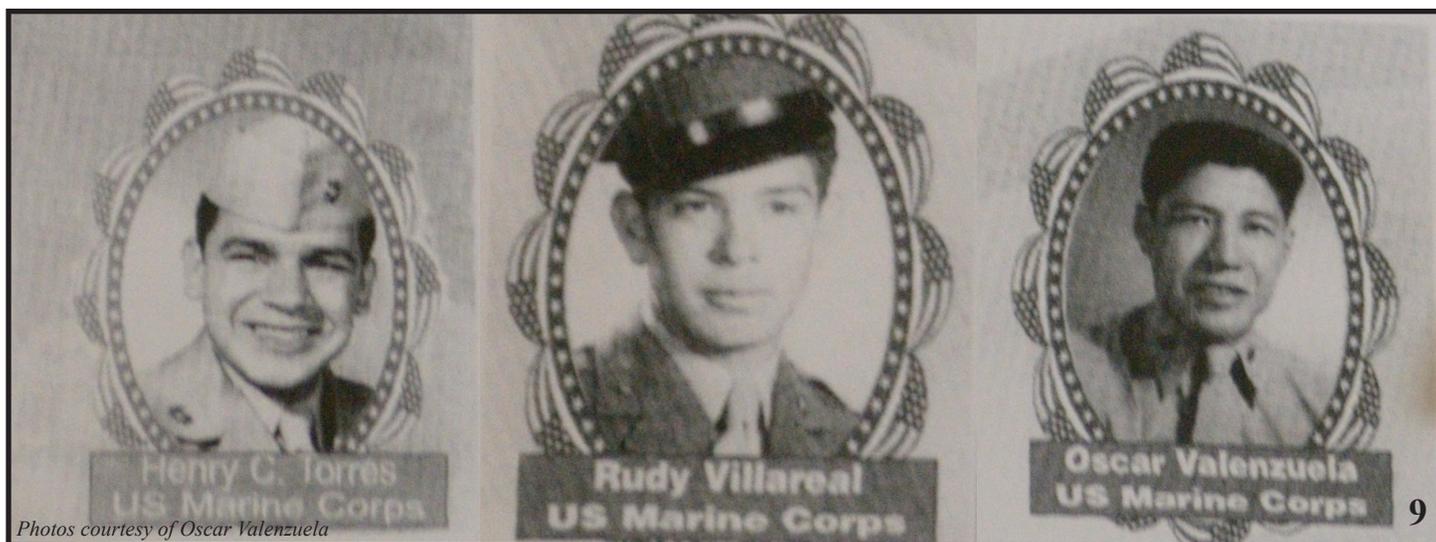
Villareal started a construction company while working at the fire department and after retiring, worked there until he passed the business to his son.

Throughout the years, the three musketeers have kept in contact with one another and get together periodically to catch up on what's new and reminisce about old memories.

"I spend a lot of time now in Ventura. So when one of the guys call me, they usually ask 'ok, are you in Barstow or Ventura,'" explained Villareal. When in Barstow, he tries to visit and catch up with Valenzuela and Torres, Villareal added.

When Valenzuela, Torres, and Villareal get together, the Marine Corps is sure to be a topic of conversation with the three, whether it's re-telling stories about their days in the Corps, or talking about the state of today's Marines.

One thing is certain though: it's not often three men from any state join the Marine Corps and stay together through their entire enlistment. It's even more uncommon to find these very same men 60 years later in the place where they ended their time in the Corps. Sixty years and the three musketeers remain undivided.



Photos courtesy of Oscar Valenzuela

Four legs, one goal: K-9s train day-in and day-out

Story and photos by
Lance Cpl. Norman Eckles
Combat Correspondent

More than 70 years ago, the use of military working dogs was introduced to the U.S. military to serve alongside service members and aid them in battle.

These dogs were used for many purposes during their time as a military working dog; however, when the K-9s are on active duty they are used for guarding sentries and detecting illegal contraband.

Dogs from around the world come to the 341st Training Squadron on Lackland Air Force Base, Texas, where they are handpicked and pre-tested by evaluators before going to the Department of Defense Military Working Dog School.

“If the dog meets all of the requirements, then the dog will go on to become certified,” said Lt. Robert Ortiz, kennel master with the Marine Corps Police Department on Marine Corps Logistics Base Barstow, Calif. “It’s like their version of boot camp. It’s 12 weeks long, broken down into five phases: basic obedience, obstacle courses, getting used to gunfire, controlled aggression and searching for an individual through sight, sound, and scent.”

To start a K-9’s training, the instructors use rewards -- toys not treats, to teach the dogs basic commands such as ‘sit, no, down, out, heel and stay,’ said Ortiz.

The trainers use a back-tie, which is a leash that is tied to a stable object and connected to the dog’s collar. The stable objects are typically fences or trees. The trainer then starts to play with the dog by having it bite and hold a toy, said Ortiz. Then while playing with the dog, the trainer brings another reward into the dog’s sight and says ‘out’. If the dog lets go of the initial toy, they get the reward.

However, some dogs are harder to teach than others, expressed Ortiz. Some dogs do not let go of the toy being played

with on command, so, the trainer stops moving the toy in the dog’s mouth, and brings another toy in to the dogs view and starts to shake the reward. Ideally, the dog should release and want the toy moving because of its natural instinct.

Through each training phase, instructors use rewards to teach the K-9s, explained Ortiz.

If the dog obeys its trainer and follows the command given, it will get its reward. Toys are not the only rewards bestowed upon the hounds. One phase of the course, the controlled aggression phase, allows the dogs the opportunity to work with a bite suit.

Ortiz added, the bite suit exercise is where a person gets into a suit that protects them against a dog’s bite. After the decoy suits-up the dog is allowed to chase, attack, and guard the suspect. Using its natural animal instinct, the animal will catch a suspect running from authorities and know who is a threat to their human companion.

“There are multiple phases inside this one piece,” said Ortiz. It consists of suspects fleeing authorities, actively resisting authorities, and suspects that run and hide from the authorities.”

The dogs must learn to be aggressive on command, expressed Ortiz. Given that this is the case, the dogs are allowed to be as mean as they want; however, the dogs still have to be aware of the commands given to them by their trainers and under control at all times.

After the course, the dogs graduate and are the newest members of the Department of Defense as field-trained dogs. These dogs then move on to their new duty stations to fulfill their duties; however, their training doesn’t end there, explained Ortiz.

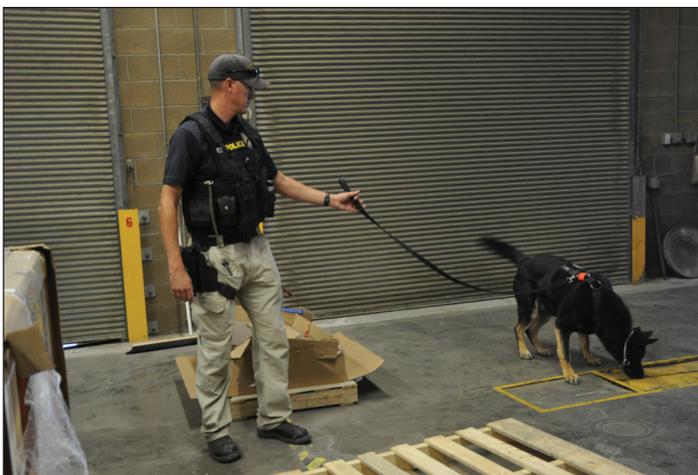
“It’s just like a service member when they get out of boot camp,” said Sgt. Steven Goss, dog trainer on MCLB Barstow. “They know enough to get the job done, but once they get here, we build them up.”

The foundation for training any dog is standard obedience. Every day, for hours at a time, the dog handlers with the MCPD are training their K-9 partners, said Goss.

“The DoD is also helping us with their training by introducing the electric collar, which could help the dogs who have trouble



Tina (left) and Hokie (right), K-9s with the Marine Corps Police Department’s K-9 unit on Marine Corps Logistics Base Barstow, pose for a photo after a day of training, June 28. The K-9s show their discipline by obeying the command, ‘down.’



Sergeant Steven Goss, dog trainer with the Marine Corps Police Department K-9 unit on Marine Corps Logistics Base Barstow, guides his dog, Hokie, through a contraband detecting training exercise, June 28. The K-9 unit trains their dogs on detection at least twice a month.

Chaplain's Corner

By Lt. Benjamin Warner
Base Chaplain

My father and I have an ongoing discussion on the relative merits and limitations of selling things on Craigslist versus selling them on eBay. Usually it boils down to this: Craigslist is faster, eBay is more secure. This past weekend I had my second Craigslist “no show.” That’s where someone agrees to meet you and buy something, but then they fail to show up. It’s a real hassle, but it comes with the territory. As I was sitting there, waiting, I began to consider the perspective of the person who fails to show up. I said to my wife, “Maybe they had to go to the hospital. Or maybe they lost their cell phone.” I’m not so naïve to believe that either of those is likely, but I started to think about something we like very little as human beings—we hate letting other people down. We don’t like to give bad news, we don’t like to tell someone what they don’t want to hear, and we don’t like to admit it when we fail to do what we said we were going to do in the first place. We’d rather fail, not talk about it, and then pretend it never happened.

This is just as true for our faith journey as anywhere else in life. Consider Saul, Israel’s first king in the Bible. We read over several

What happens when we fail?

chapters (1 Samuel 13-16) of various incidents where Saul has disobeyed God’s clear instruction to him. Each time that he is confronted with this reality, Saul tries to change the subject. He tries to twist the discussion in order to show how he wasn’t really disobedient. You see, just like we don’t want to admit to other people when we’ve done wrong, we make just as much effort in avoiding that conversation with God. We’d rather prove how what we did was right—even if only on a technicality—than admit where we failed.

We all recognize the problems inherent in this sort of dynamic. What if the other person agrees with us—they say yes, technically you are right. What will the relationship be like then? Will it be one built on trust? I think that’s unlikely. Instead, we’ll be the person who always has an answer and never takes responsibility. So, how do we find a way forward? As I said before, we don’t like admitting we’re wrong! We don’t like telling someone else what they don’t want to hear! How do we get over that? How do we surpass our displeasure with being wrong (or our displeasure with being uncomfortable)? In order to



get there, we have to embrace our weakness. We have to understand that yes, we are indeed fallible, and that yes, we are going to have to do things that we don’t like doing.

I think that was the situation in which the Apostle Paul found himself in 2 Corinthians 12:1-10. There Paul recounts how he was faced with a “thorn.” We don’t know what it was, and I’m suspect of anyone who claims to know. What we do know is that it was bad enough that Paul makes his case to God numerous times for this thorn to be removed. What he finds is that God’s response is not to remove the thorn, but to promise His own grace—that God’s grace is sufficient, and that His power is made perfect in weakness. Note that—it’s only in our weakness that God’s power is made perfect. So, yes, there are times and challenges that reveal our inability to do certain things—but it is only in our inability that God’s ability shines through.

Four legs, one goal

releasing a suspect on command,” explained Goss.

But not every dog handler trains dogs the same way. Handlers have their own way of making sure their dog knows what to do at the right time, said Goss.

“A lot of people try to make their dog a robot and you don’t want that,” said Goss. “The training between dog and handler is very strict and consistent.”

“I like to push my dog to be more independent,” said Goss. Emphasis is placed on allowing the dog to think on its own; that way the K-9 has the drive to keep going and it builds their confidence, Goss added.

When the time comes that Goss fully depends on his trusty companion in the field ... the K-9 will perform accordingly. Goss further explained he tries to put his dog in real world situ-

ations as frequently as possible.

MCPD Barstow’s K-9 unit trains their dogs to be ready for any real world situation, and is constantly on the lookout for additional training to better prepare their K-9.

“To further train our dogs, we are trying to get a car from the Defense Logistics Agency to practice high risk traffic stops,” said Goss. “This way we can practice sending a dog in and getting them used to jumping in vehicles and searching for suspects.”

Training across the DoD never stops for service members, even if they stand on four legs. These four-legged warriors spend months, sometimes even years, in garrison and on the battle field, just like everyone else who wears the uniform. They are consistently training for the day an emergency happens. Men, women, and dogs alike stand vigilant along one another prepared for the situations they may face in the future. **11**

