



The Globe Sports takes a look back at Camp Lejeune's year in athletics. **Page 1B**



Marines serving aboard Camp Lejeune have many accomplishments to celebrate as the year draws to a close. **Page 2C**



Carolina Living features the best of 2008. **Page 1D**

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TUESDAY DECEMBER 23, 2008

2008 YEAR IN REVIEW

24th MEU returns

SGT. RANDALL A. CLINTON
24TH MEU

It's over for 24th Marine Expeditionary Unit Marines. No more midday patrols in 150 degree heat or endless gusts of powder-like sand. No more sleeping on hum-vee hoods or in some Afghan villager's bombed out compound. Marines began returning home following an eight-month deployment to southern Afghanistan.

Their deployment illustrated how adaptable a Marine Air Ground Task Force is in the Global War on Terrorism.

"As a MEU, our missions are always unique and you can never predict what the next year will hold. Deploying to Afghanistan was another example of how versatile this unit is. One year we evacuated Americans from the Beirut Embassy in the largest such evacuation of non-combatants, and the next we spent eight months in southern Afghanistan fighting the Taliban," said Lt. Col. Kent Hayes, executive officer, 24th MEU.

After much self-sacrifice many Marines returned longing for life's simple pleasures. Such was on the mind of Gunnery Sgt. Angel Cruz, who just wanted to be back home, "sleeping in my own bed, next to my wife and being in my house playing with my daughter and the dogs."

Cruz, the 24th MEU's information assurance officer, and a handful of other Marines who came back before of the rest of the unit and were unexpectedly greeted by USO volunteers while walking through the airport.

"I was taken back by all of it. It was the last thing I thought would happen at 11 p.m. in Baltimore. Those families of other service members waiting to greet us was a beautiful display of support for us," he explained, still noticeably honored by the patriotic display.

As Marines continue arriving, there are constant reminders of their still-fragile success in Helmand province. The 24th MEU commander, Col. Peter Petronzio, has begun explaining the exploits of

SEE RETURNS 7A▶

B E I R U T



Marines stand at parade rest during the Beirut Memorial Observance Ceremony 25th Commemoration, Oct. 23.



Marines, veterans, family members of victims and members of the community raised their hands in gesture of unity during an emotional moment at the Beirut Memorial Observance Ceremony 25th Commemoration, Oct. 23.



(Above and below) Beirut remembrance moves community, honors those who lost their lives on that tragic day 25 years ago, Oct. 23.



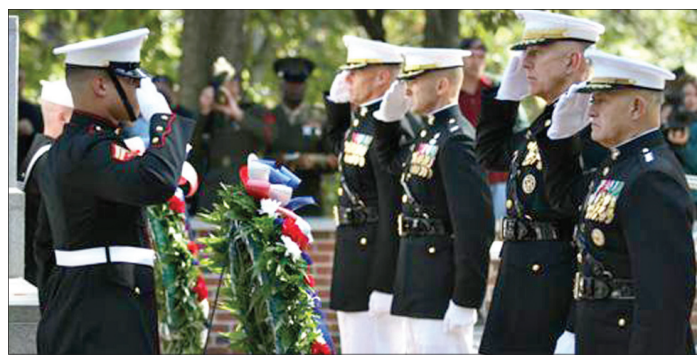
Marines, community mark 25th Beirut remembrance

LANCE CPL. JOSEPH D. DAY
Marine Corps Base

Twenty-five years ago, 241 men gave their lives in the biggest non-nuclear explosion in history, catapulting this nation into a war now known as the Global War on Terrorism.

Veterans, active duty service members and citizens from across America joined together at the Beirut Memorial, in remembrance of the men who died.

The ceremony had many distinguished guests attending including Commandant of the Marine Corps Gen. James T. Conway, 29th Commandant of the Marine Corps Gen. Alfred M. Gray Jr., the II Marine Ex-



(From right to left) Lt. Gen. Dennis Hejlik, II Marine Expeditionary Force commanding general; Commandant of the Marine Corps Gen. James T. Conway; Col John K. Love, 8th Marine Regiment commander; and Col. Richard P. Flatau Jr., Marine Corps base commander, salute at the 25th anniversary of the Beirut bombing, Oct. 23.

peditionary Force commanding general, Lt. Gen. Dennis J. Hejlik and the Mayor of Jacksonville Sammy Phillips. "We are one community,

Gen. Conway was greeted by the crowd with a standing ovation. His words were simple, but impactful.

"You can bloody our uniforms, you can fill our hearts with sorrow, but you can't stop us," said Gen. Conway. "We will replenish those units, and we will come after you with a terrible resolve."

The Marines of Beirut are forever engraved upon the "Other Wall" in Jacksonville. Twenty-five years have passed since the day of the bombing, but America still holds the event in the forefront of their minds.

Family members and friends of fallen warriors gathered around the wall after the ceremony. Many people left

tokens along the wall for their fallen heroes.

The explosion was responsible for the most Marine deaths in a single day since the battle of Iwo Jima.

The event concluded with Gen. Conway, Lt. Gen. Hejlik, Marine Corps Base Camp Lejeune commanding officer, Col. Richard P. Flatau Jr., and the 8th Marine Regiment commander, Col. John K. Love placing a wreath at the memorial. A 21-gun salute honored those who gave their lives for peace.

One veteran walking away from the memorial said, "Today, I'm good. I'm with my brothers. This is where I needed to be today. Nowhere else but here."

INSIDE THE GLOBE



BATTERY A HAMMERS INSURGENTS. **PAGE 6A**

LEJEUNE SPORTS **1B**
INSIDE LEJEUNE **3C**
CLASSIFIEDS **3C**
CAROLINA LIVING **1D**

LEJEUNE STUDENTS show their pride in 2008

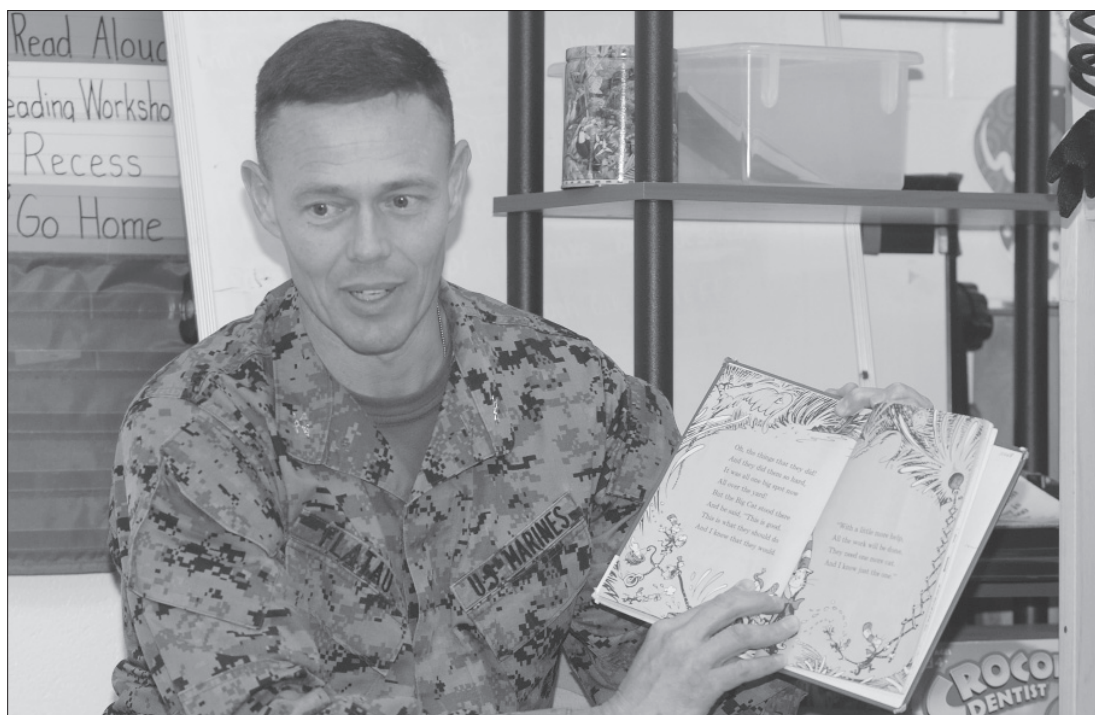


Photo by Heather M. Owens

HEATHER M. OWENS
Carolina Living editor

Students from the seven Camp Lejeune Dependent Schools distinguished themselves through many school and community activities during 2008. Military family members of all ages participated in a whole school year's worth of activities — from the youngsters who published their first books at Johnson Primary and Bitz Intermediate Schools to the Lejeune High School students who earned top honors in a culinary arts competition. In addition to expressing themselves

through art, music and drama, students of all ages gave back through community service. Brewster Middle School students walked the equivalent of a marathon in support of Hope for the Warriors and its spring fundraiser, the Run for the Warriors. Outside of school, CLDS students engaged in community projects, from building fences for the Warrior Homes on McHugh Boulevard to assisting other youth through Jacksonville's HorseSense family education program. As the school year ended, Lejeune High School graduated its smallest senior class ever, 46 students; and CLDS students were released to enjoy their hard-earned summer break.



Photo by Cpl. Patrick M. Fleischman



Photo by Shirley Bryan

Lejeune High School teacher Shirley Bryan and her advanced culinary arts students headed to Myrtle Beach to the 2008 Carolina ProStart Student Invitational during the winter. The students secured top honors in the competition's culinary division and third place in the "Knowledge Bowl and Case Studies" division. Above left, Col. Richard P. Flatau Jr. reads "The Cat in the Hat Comes Back" to students at Johnson Primary School. Camp Lejeune Dependent Schools observed Read Across America Day with a week's worth of activities during March. The photograph at left features students from Lejeune High School's Marine Corps Junior Reserve Officer Training Program who attended a summer leadership academy hosted by the school.

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HEAVE HO

Marine sports in the field



Photo by Cpl. Dean Davis

Company F Marines compete against Company C, 1st Light Armored Reconnaissance Battalion, 1st Marine Division, during the Highlander Games. Company F, a newly added reserve company, won the games competing for their first time ever.

JAMIE CAMERON
Assistant managing editor

No matter where they go, Marines will find a way to compete against one another on the playing field. Even in the rugged, combat zones wherever Marines are deployed, impromptu games of football, softball and soccer spring up whenever warriors can scrape together a little down time.

Playing the sports of youth makes home seem a little closer, and even when there aren't enough Marines and sailors to cobble together a proper team, just talking about sports can help pass the time.

When it comes right down to it, the symbolism and comfort embodied in a simple, round object makes a softball, basketball, football perhaps among the most important pieces of equipment carried by units going into the battle zone.

Sports also offer a unique opportunity for service members to interact with local community members who might not share anything in common with their American protectors other than the love for kicking a ball through a pair of goalposts or facing an opponent on an even playing field to match skills and strength amid the backdrop of friendship.

It is especially welcome when the super stars of professional sports take the time to visit with service members and their families in recognition of the sacrifices they make.

Marines and sailors fighting the War on Terrorism were visited by a wide variety of sports icons. It seems strange that the heroes of the athletic field can evoke such enthusiasm from the true heroes of the battlefield, but in the end, both sides come away from these happy meetings feeling enriched.

Finally, Marines and sailors stationed at home take advantage of the wide range of organized sports to maintain fitness and the competitive edge, but there are times when taking those athletic skills into the civilian community can act as a wonderful ambassador between those who serve and those who support them.

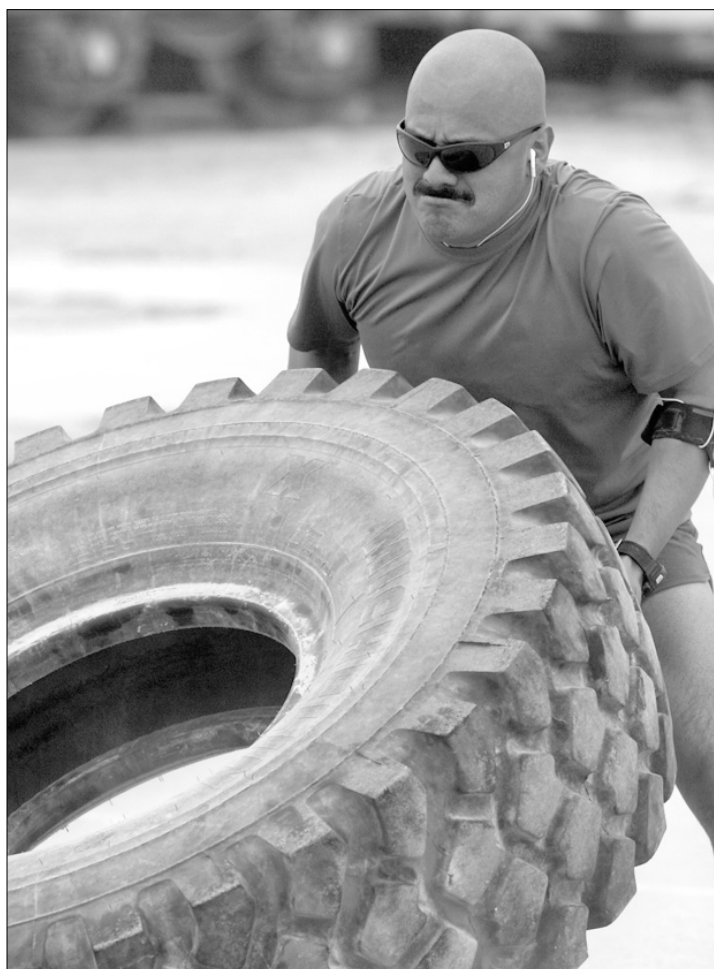


Photo by Cpl. Billy Hall

Joel Rivas, a riverine with Rivron Squadron 2, Detachment 1, Task Force 3rd Battalion, 2nd Marine Regiment, Regimental Combat Team 5, flips a 7-ton truck tire during the Endurance Challenge at Camp Al Qa'im, Iraq, March 30.



Photo by Cpl. Nicole A. LaVine

Dominique Waters, Fight Club 29 fighter, prepares to swing at an opposing teammate clinging to his leg during the USA National Pankration Team Championships tournament held at Santa Ana High School in Orange County, Calif., July 26.

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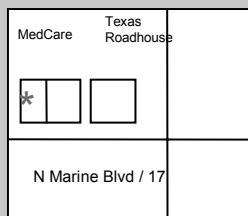
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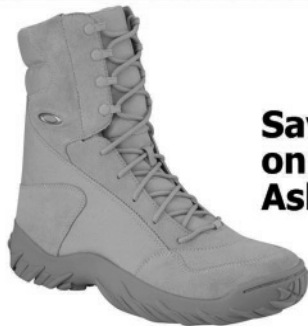
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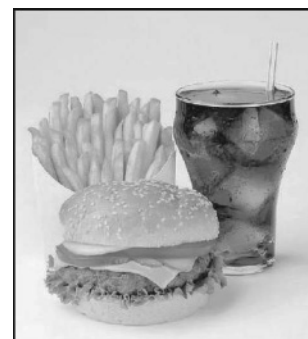
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Pentagon Memorial unveiled

Sgt. Clinton Firstbrook

An American flag hangs over the spot where American Airlines Flight 77 crashed into the Pentagon, killing 184 people. The flag was hung Sept. 10 for the Pentagon Memorial Dedication Ceremony, which took place the following day.

WASHINGTON

SGT. CLINTON FIRSTBROOK
Headquarters Marine Corps

The names of all 184 victims who perished at the Pentagon Sept. 11, were read aloud during the official Pentagon Memorial dedication ceremony.

The memorial, on a two-acre plot with dozens of maple saplings, consists of 184 illuminated benches, each engraved with a victim's name and arranged north to south from oldest to youngest, respectively.

"I lost my younger brother Dave here seven years ago," said James J. Laychak, Pentagon Memorial Fund chairman. "When I see the reflected sunshine climb up the sides of the memorial units, I see the beauty of life. I hope the Pentagon Memorial will provide a sense of closure and comfort to all those who are still in pain ... The memorial represents what great things can happen

when we all work together to create something good."

More than 15,000 people, including families and friends of the fallen, filled the Pentagon south parking lot to remember their loved ones and colleagues on the seventh anniversary of the terrorist attack. During the dedication, several military and government leaders told how the memorial in the Pentagon's shadow will stand as a symbol of a nation's undying memory, love and resolve.

"Parents will come here to remember children who boarded Flight 77 for a field trip and never emerged from the wreckage," President George W. Bush said. "Husbands and wives will come here to remember spouses who left for work one morning and never returned home. People from across our nation will come here to remember friends and loved ones who never had the chance to say goodbye. A memorial can never replace what those of you mourning a loved one have lost ... We pray that you



Lance Cpl. Bryan G. Carfrey

Dedication ceremony spectators walk through the Healing Field flag display near the Pentagon Memorial prior to the dedication ceremony Sept. 11. The flag display was sponsored by the nonprofit Healing Field Foundation. The almost 3,000 flags represent those who perished Sept. 11, 2001.

will find strength in knowing our nation will always grieve with you."

Construction workers broke ground on the memorial June 15, 2006, almost five years after

American Airlines Flight 77 crashed into the Pentagon at 9:37 a.m., the moment when stone became dust, steel became shrapnel — where flames, smoke and destruction stole the

lives of 184 men, women and children, said former Secretary of Defense Donald H. Rumsfeld.

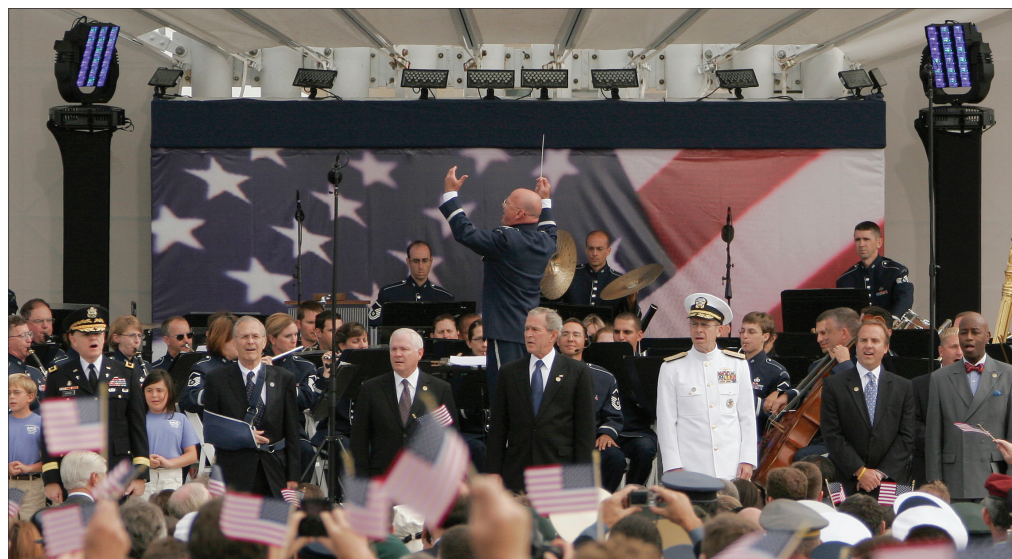
"This memorial tells a story of their last terrible moments on this earth,"

Rumsfeld said. "When a symbol of America's strength was scarred. Today we renew our vows to never forget how this long struggle began and to never forget those who fell first."



Pfc. Kevin M. Beebe Jr.

Gary Swanson, a former airman from Virginia, pays his respects after the dedication of the Pentagon Memorial Sept. 11.



Sgt. Clinton Firstbrook
Army Maj. Gen. Douglas L. Carver, U.S. Army chief of chaplains, former Secretary of Defense Donald H. Rumsfeld, Secretary of Defense Robert M. Gates, President George W. Bush, Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff Adm. Michael G. Mullen, Pentagon Memorial Fund Chairman James J. Laychak and Ref. Rear Adm. Barry C. Black, U.S. Senate chaplain, sing "God Bless America" before the conclusion of the Pentagon Memorial Dedication Ceremony Sept. 11.



Sgt. Clinton Firstbrook

The United States Naval Academy Chorus serenades the crowd during the Pentagon Memorial Dedication Ceremony Sept. 11.

Camp Lejeune warriors, spouses honored

Consistent dedication recognized in 2008

Photo by Heather M. Owens
Marine Corps Base Camp Lejeune command staff and the Marine Corps Base Military Retiree Council honored several groups of Hardcore Warriors this year. Hardcore Warriors are veterans who served their country during three wars: World War II, Korea and Vietnam. At left, Chief Warrant Officer 4 Donald P. Ivers is shown just after receiving his Hardcore Warrior recognition, Jan. 25.



HEATHER M. OWENS
 Carolina Living editor

Due to their extraordinary commitment, especially during a period of high deployment rates, many service members, veterans and military spouses were recognized this year.

The Hardcore Warrior recognition program, begun by the Marine Corps Base Camp Lejeune Military Retiree Council and Camp Lejeune command staff, continued during 2008.

Marine Corps Base and the Retiree Council have been honoring veterans who served their country during three wars, World War II, Korea and Vietnam, as Hardcore Warriors.

The first recognition ceremony of the year was held Jan. 25, and the ceremonies continued throughout 2008.

In a long standing tradition, family members and friends posted welcome home banners along the fence near the base main gate on Highway 24 to

honor Marines and sailors returning from deployment.

During April, the Carolina Living section featured a "rest of the story" feature on one family's welcome home sign. Amanda Covell, wife of Gunnery Sgt. David Covell, enlisted friends Shelley Myers and Ember Lesh to create two artistic signs.

In the story, the Covells spoke about their time apart and their preparations for their reunion.

Landmark Military Media of North Carolina, the publisher of The Globe and The RotoVue, began a new tradition this spring when it held the 2008 Heroes at Home Military Spouse of the Year awards program for military spouses in eastern North Carolina.

Earlier in the year, service members were able to nominate their spouses for all of their hard work on behalf of the military family.

The inaugural year netted 72 nominees from which five finalists were selected. They were Leigh Ann

Bibona, a Marine sergeant and wife of Sgt. Andrew Bibona; Ruby Clendenning,

a Marine sergeant and wife of Staff Sgt. Carl Clendenning; Robin Mouton, wife of Chief Warrant Officer 3 Kenneth Mouton; Lauren Nelson, wife of U.S. Army Capt. Thomas M. Nelson and Janice Robinson, wife of Master Gunnery Sgt. Byron Robinson of the II Marine Expeditionary Force.

More than 100 people, including the nominees, their spouses, and dignitaries, attended the May 15 ceremony at the Officers' Club.

Mouton held her hands to her face in disbelief as her name was called as the 2008 Military Spouse of the Year.

"Military families have shown extraordinary commitment during the Global War on Terrorism. It was only right to honor the spouses who shepherded these families during this stressful period," said Jim Connors, publisher of The Globe and The RotoVue.



Photo by Ena Sellers

Landmark Military Media of North Carolina, the publisher of The Globe and The RotoVue, held a luncheon at the Camp Lejeune Officer's Club May 15 to honor the nominees for the 2008 Heroes at Home Military Spouse of the Year. Above, the five finalists pose for a photograph after the luncheon. They are Lauren Nelson, Robin Mouton, Sgt. Leigh Ann Bibona, Janice Robinson and Sgt. Ruby Clendenning.



Photo by Amanda Covell

Gunnery Sgt. David Covell, holding his daughter, poses by a sign that was posted on his house in honor of his April return from Iraq. His wife also posted a sign, featuring an embracing couple, on the fence along Highway 24 near the Camp Lejeune main gate.

"You can never do enough for the military and their dependents."

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Miguel Rodriguez (in blue) slides back under pressure from Ryan Rodgers. For three nights running, Goettge Memorial Field House was transformed into a paradise for fight fans who came to take in the inaugural Marine Corps Boxing Invitational. Sept. 4

Photo by Jamie Cameron

MAJOR EVENTS

Camp Lejeune hosts tournaments

JAMIE CAMERON
Assistant managing editor

Any fans who missed Camp Lejeune's lineup of major sporting events in 2008 should never complain of any perceived lack of entertainment on base.

Starting in late spring, the base hosted the 5th annual Marine Corps Celebrity Classic golf tournament. For four days, players from the worlds of professional sports, entertainment and politics took to the links at Paradise Point Golf Course and the Jacksonville Country Club to support charities for service members and their families in need. The long-hitting duo of Sean Fister and Bobby Anderson won the tournament, but the Marines and sailors aboard Camp Lejeune and the surrounding civilian community took home the biggest prize — a chance to rub shoulders with the celebrity set, all in the name of charity.

Of particular interest to the warriors aboard base was the midsummer Mixed Martial Arts extravaganza, entitled Brawl at the Beach. Following the successful East Coast Champions Unleashed MMA Pro/Am in April, the "Brawl" marked a recognition of MMA's growing audience among service members. Around 400 fans turned out to cheer on professional fighters from up and down the East Coast, along with amateurs, a few of whom were stationed aboard Lejeune. Best of all, proceeds from the event went to support wounded warriors.

The action at Goettge Memorial Field House was not over. The All-Marine Boxing Team hosted the first Marine Corps Boxing Invitational; bringing teams from gymnasiums as far away as Nova Scotia, Canada. The All-Marines took on all comers



Photo by Jamie Cameron

The first Halloween Dodgeball Tournament aboard Marine Corps Air Station New River, Oct. 29, was not for the faint of heart. For the record, the side representing Camp Johnson Logistics Operations School was the last team standing, but that didn't stop everyone else from having the time of their lives. Kevin Malke of Team 5 Ds winds up against the opposition in New River Single Marine Program's tournament.

over the course of the three-day event. Fighters in 11 weight classes competed for championship belts under the watchful eyes of some of the most experienced judges and referees in North America.

Though not as well-publicized, the base played host to other important sporting events over the course of the year, including acting as the tryout site for the assemblage of the 2008 All-Marine Rugby Team. Ruggers from installations as far away as Hawaii

traveled to Eastern North Carolina with the hopes of being selected. In the end, the rugby team featured several players with Camp Lejeune roots.

Last, but not least, were the myriad intramural events designed to add fun to the athletic scene. Perhaps most entertaining of these was the MCCS and Single Marine Program MCAS New River dodgeball tournament at Halloween. It couldn't get any more fun than that.



Photo by Jamie Cameron

Former National Hockey League great, Ed Westfall hits his way out of a sand trap on the 18th hole. Westfall played seven seasons with the Boston Bruins and seven seasons with the New York Islanders.

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HELMAND PROVINCE, AFGHANISTAN

Artillery battery hammers insurgents



Marines with Company A, 1st Battalion, 6th Marine Regiment, 24th Marine Expeditionary Unit, International Security Assistance Force, move equipment, July 23.

CPL. RANDALL A. CLINTON
24th MEU

In the early morning hours before the first roosters crow, Marines from Battery A place their remaining rounds inside trucks and rig the last of their M777 howitzers for towing. They ride to a nearby operating base and in a stir of sweat and sand recalibrate their cannons for the new location and are once again mission capable.

In a matter of minutes, the Marines entrenched the howitzers, prepared an assortment of shells for fire and draped camouflage across their newly formed gun line.

"Within last 24 hours we did a complete march order. This consists of breaking down the howitzer, loading up the truck, you have to get all the fire essential gear up and get moving," said Lance Cpl. Paul Adey, cannoneer, Battery A, Battalion Landing Team 1st Battalion, 6th Marine Regiment, 24th Marine Expeditionary Unit. "We just got here right now, and we are fire capped, ready to fire, if need be."

For the majority of the deployment, the artillery battery was isolated on a plateau overlooking friendly positions, a large contrast from how these weapons and Marines are employed in Iraq.

"Other batteries, when they go to Iraq, are usually in a (forward operating base) like we are now, but we were outside the wire pretty much on our own. The main difference was being out there and

not having any other security, out there in the middle of the desert providing everything for ourselves," said Adey.

The Marines have a certain pride about their months in the desert, not just in the less-than-luxurious living conditions, but also for their role in taking the insurgent-riddled city district of Garmsir.

"When we first got here, the first three weeks to a month we were putting rounds down range pretty heavily. We had fire missions all the time, we were working pretty hard, but as time went by, things calmed down. We got word that people were stopping fights because of artillery fire," explains Adey.

Cpl. Cody Saunders, cannoneer, Battery A, an Iraq veteran after a tour with the battery, knows just how lucky these Marines are to make contributions to the battle from the gun line.

"My first (deployment), I did military police work. I drove around and patrolled the area. This one is more fun, I am actually doing my job and I get to save lives. We have been really, really busy. These weapon systems are new. We just got them about a year ago. We have shot more rounds out of these guns than pretty much any other battery," explains Saunders, second in command on his howitzer.

When he mentions saving lives, he said it so matter-of-factly, so modestly it takes a second to realize the magnitude of his statement. As the cannoneer tasked

with pulling the cord and ultimately sending shells into enemy positions, he is keenly aware of his impact on the battlefield.

"The grunts are down there getting into a firefight and need help, so we need to get rounds down range to help them out," he said.

According to First Sgt. Fortunato Rubio, company first sergeant, Battery A, the Marines round expenditure was unprecedented.

"In a matter of 35-40 days, the battery shot 1,200 rounds. It's almost unheard of for artillery to fire that amount. If you compare to Iraq, mostly (improvised explosive devices), here it was actually no kidding a combined arms mission, infantry elements, air support and artillery. It was a classic combined arms operations," said Rubio.

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Cpl. Alex C. Guerra
Marines watch as artillery rounds impact a known insurgent stronghold.

ber of tasks they are trained to handle. Even before they moved into this forward base the Marines were in charge of the Civil Military Operations Center in Garmsir, a place for locals to receive payments for damages caused during the fight for the city. By moving, they now have more manpower for their other tasks including operating two convoy units, which provide security and logistics support.

"Every battery in the Marine Corps, because of the necessity for mobility and being able to move to a lot of things at one time, gives us the ability to do things that an infantry battalion can't," Brown said referring to their two convoy elements.

"It's definitely unique with what we bring to the fight because there is that flexibility with

being able to do anything that can be required, provisional infantry, civil affairs, we are able to do a number of things and still in the end go back to fire artillery, what we are best at. I guess we are jacks of all trades, master of one."

It has been weeks since the last exchanges of fire with insurgents, but the battery's Marines still approach each day with the same vigilance as when operations began. Convoys come and go, villagers receive battle damage payments, and looming under a canopy the gun line stands watch. Shells sit patiently stacked in lines and columns, always just a lanyard-pull away from adding to the record setting number of fire missions, or as Saunders would think, one pull away from saving a fellow Marines' life.

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Honor restored

Woman has father's Beirut funeral flag refolded

Story and photos
HEATHER M. OWNES
Carolina Living editor

Sarah Wherland, a resident of Kansas City, Mo., who was born in Jacksonville, returned here during October to honor her father who died in the Beirut terrorist attack one year after her birth. As part of her visit, she asked Marines to refold her father's funeral flag.

At some point in the past, the flag had been unfolded. Wherland's stepfather used to hang it on a door each Fourth of July.

Marines from 1st Battalion, 8th Marine Regiment, refolded the funeral flag in a private ceremony.

Capt. Pablo Cabrera presented Wherland with her father's funeral flag after his Marines refolded it for her.

"It was important for me to refold (the flag) because every fold had a meaning, and I wanted to put the respect and honor back into it," said Wherland.



Photo by Heather Owens
Local students, Reggi Dooley, Kaila Gentry and Katelynn Howell created a podcast about the Beirut Memorial during April. The girls were honored by the Jacksonville/Onslow Chamber of Commerce for their achievements, and the podcast was later posted on the Chamber's Web site.

iPod photo by Lance Cpl. Ryan Turnage
Beirut Memorial photo by Cpl. Patrick M. Fleischman



Photo by Heather M. Owens
Capt. Pablo Cabrera presented Sarah Wherland with her father's funeral flag after his Marines from 1st Battalion, 8th Marine Regiment, refolded it for her Oct. 23.

Digital generation REMEMBERS BEIRUT

HEATHER M. OWENS
Carolina Living editor

"My mom said that if people aren't careful, history can repeat itself," said Kaila Gentry, an eighth grader at Jacksonville Commons Middle School.

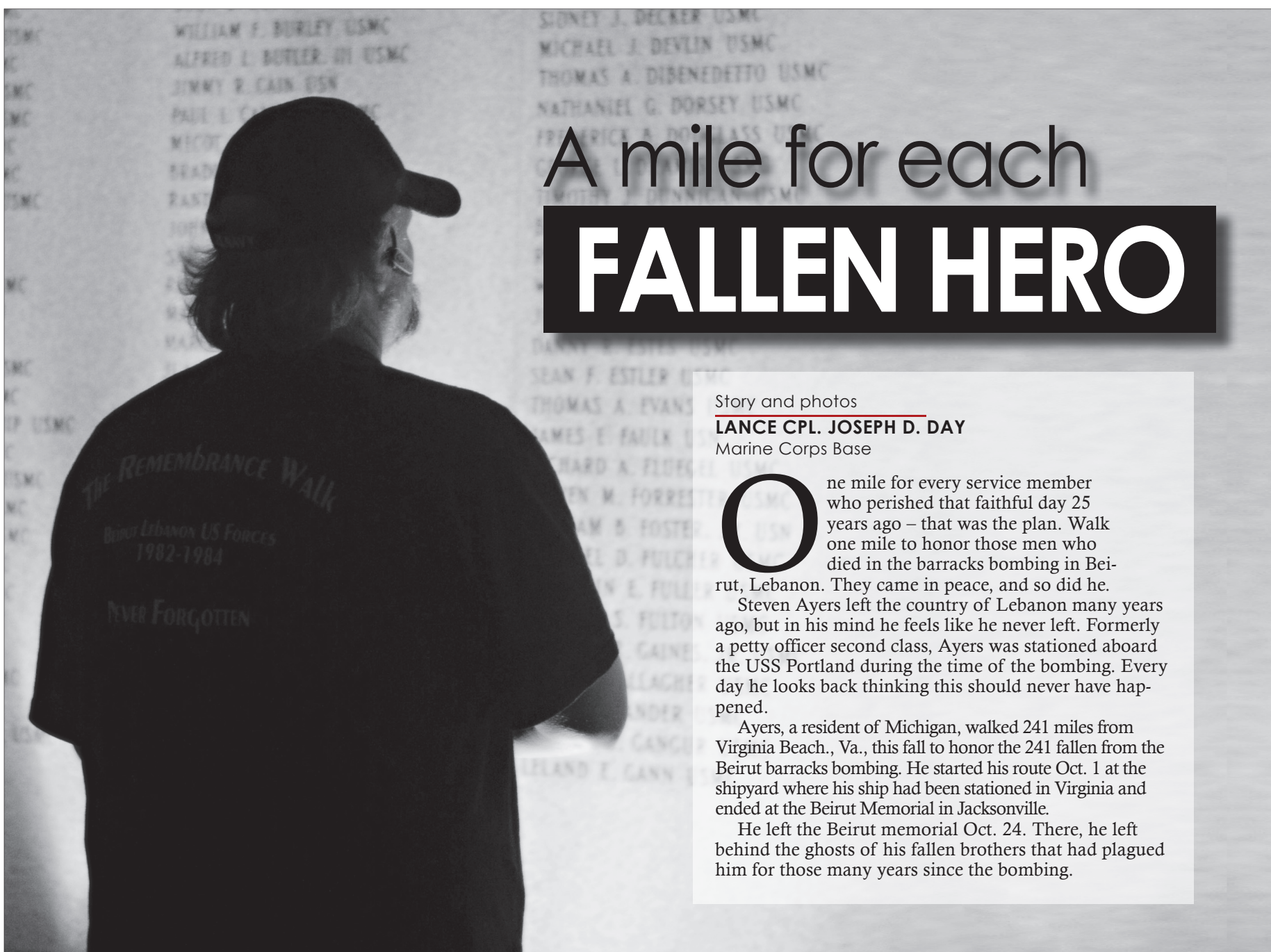
Earlier this year, Gentry wrote a speech about the Bradford pear trees which surround the Beirut Memorial in Jacksonville. She

wrote the speech in honor of her uncle, Mike Webber, who had been a young Marine leader in Beirut, Lebanon, on the fateful day during October 1983 when terrorists attacked the Marine barracks there.

In April, Reggi Dooley and Katelynn Howell, both first year students at Northside High School's 21st Century Academy, recorded Gentry reciting her speech and turned it into a podcast.

Dooley and Howell visited the middle school to record Gentry's speech and then, by their own initiative, went to the Beirut Memorial to film extra footage to enhance the podcast.

During May, the Jacksonville/Onslow Chamber of Commerce honored all three teenagers for their efforts, and the podcast was later posted on the Chamber's Web site.



A mile for each FALLEN HERO

Story and photos
LANCE CPL. JOSEPH D. DAY
Marine Corps Base

One mile for every service member who perished that faithful day 25 years ago – that was the plan. Walk one mile to honor those men who died in the barracks bombing in Beirut, Lebanon. They came in peace, and so did he.

Steven Ayers left the country of Lebanon many years ago, but in his mind he feels like he never left. Formerly a petty officer second class, Ayers was stationed aboard the USS Portland during the time of the bombing. Every day he looks back thinking this should never have happened.

Ayers, a resident of Michigan, walked 241 miles from Virginia Beach, Va., this fall to honor the 241 fallen from the Beirut barracks bombing. He started his route Oct. 1 at the shipyard where his ship had been stationed in Virginia and ended at the Beirut Memorial in Jacksonville.

He left the Beirut memorial Oct. 24. There, he left behind the ghosts of his fallen brothers that had plagued him for those many years since the bombing.

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SOTG soars into OSPREY HISTORY

Marines with Special Operations Training Group, II Marine Expeditionary Force, and U.S. Marine Corps Forces, Special Operations Command, battle downward wind created by the MV-22 Osprey's rotors during Special Patrol Insertion/Extraction rigging operations here, June 18. These Marines are the first ropers in the Marine Corps to SPIE rig from the Osprey.

Photo by Cpl. Meg Murray

CPL. MEG MURRAY

II Marine Expeditionary Force

Acrophobia is an extreme fear of heights. People suffering from this disorder often have trouble getting on an aircraft and couldn't fathom dangling from a plane as it soars through the air.

Marines with Special Operations Training Group, II Marine Expeditionary Force, and U.S. Marine Corps For-

ces, Special Operations Command, are far from acrophobic. They've performed tactical operations with numerous aircraft, but their newest platform is the MV-22 Osprey.

The units went down in Osprey history as they performed MV-22 Helicopter Rope Suspension Techniques as well as Tactics, Techniques and Procedures validation here, June 16-19. A select few Marines have fast roped from an Osprey, but SOTG and MARSOC were the first to complete Special

Patrol Insertion/Extraction operations with the aircraft.

"SOTG is the lead agency for Marine Corps fast rope and SPIE rigging operations," said Gunnery Sgt. Preston Lambert, Expeditionary Operations Branch staff noncommissioned officer in charge, SOTG, II MEF. "We are in charge of certifying that the Osprey can perform certain tactical operations."

Fast roping allows Marines to exit an aircraft quickly, utilizing a large rope hanging

from the craft.

This technique allows Marines and equipment on the ground to be quickly extracted by aircraft. They hook up to a rope deployed from the craft while it hovers above.

However, Osprey operations do not come without a challenge.

"The Osprey is a varsity platform, so we need experienced ropers," Lambert said. "The (downward wind created by the rotors) is significant and can't be stressed enough."

In Lambert's mind, these challenges make it especially important for units to create follow-on training for Osprey ropers.

Sgt. Ryan Strickland, a logistics demolition subject matter expert with Marine Special Operations Advisor Group, MARSOC, and a participant in the training, said SPIE rigging and fast roping from the Osprey is taxing, but feasible.

"The Osprey is the warrior's platform," Lambert said. "Its

speed and agility as a troop carrier sets it apart from previous helicopters."

SOTG plans to assess Osprey fast roping and SPIE rigging capabilities in both the urban and water environments in July. They are leading the way for all Marine Corps ropers.

"The Osprey is what's going to fly the Marine Corps into combat from 2008, on," Lambert said. "It is the future of Marine Corps combat vertical envelopment."



Photo by Cpl. Meghan J. Canlas

Sergeants Robert B. Speanburg, regimental guide, Liliana Diaz, acting regimental sergeant major and Manuel E. Ahuamda, acting regimental commanding officer, lead Combat Logistics Regiment 27 on a run coordinated entirely by NCOs, Aug. 28. The run allowed the NCOs to take charge in the positions normally held by staff NCOs or officers, and to build their leadership.

NCOS RUN REGIMENT Paving road to leadership

CPL. MEGHAN J. CANLAS,
2nd Marine Logistics Group

Since the Battle of Chapultepec, noncommissioned officers have been the backbone of the Marine Corps. In keeping with that tradition, Combat Logistics Regiment 27, 2nd Marine Logistics Group held a regimental run led entirely by NCOs here, Aug. 28.

"We expect so much from NCOs," said Col. Vincent A. Coglianesse, commanding officer, CLR-27. "The run was an opportunity for them to develop their leadership and take charge in the absence of staff NCOs and officers."

Sgt. Chris E. Tadlock, Service Co.'s postal supply chief, was chosen as the operations officer for the run. He spent two weeks coordinating safety vehicles, corpsman, communication systems and worked with Marine Corps Community Services in providing fruit and beverages to the Marine and sailors after the run.

Tadlock also coordinated four different safety stations focusing on motor vehicle safety, motorcycle safety, sexual assault and substance abuse classes. The stations were taught by NCOs who ensured all Marines in attendance left for the Labor Day liberty period with

safety at the forefront of their plans.

The senior enlisted of CLR-27 hand-picked who would be filling their billets for the run. Sgt. Maj. Cherry A. McPherson, sergeant major, CLR-27, chose Sgt. Liliana N. Diaz, radio platoon, Communications Co., to be the acting regimental sergeant major.

"When I first meet (Diaz) as a lance corporal, she told me she wanted to be a sergeant major," McPherson said. "I've seen her meritoriously promoted twice and her desires to be a sergeant major. I just wanted to give her an opportunity to see what it's like."

Diaz said it was an honor to stand in McPherson's shoes and she learned that, "there's a lot more to being a sergeant major than everybody thinks."

Sgt. Manuel E. Ahuamda, assistant environmental compliance coordinator and acting regimental commanding officer, said he was proud with the results of the run.

"All the NCOs did a great job," he said. "It was very motivating. The cadence stayed up and I think everyone was pretty happy to be here. As an NCO, the greatest thing to do is train and guide Marines."

Coglianesse said that the NCO regimental run and safety day, helped carry

out the guidance from senior Marine Corps leaders.

"From the commandant of the Marine Corps, to the II MEF commander, to the (2nd MLG commanding general), Gen. Ayala, there has been an emphasis about NCOs taking charge. This was a great opportunity to carry out the guidance further."

Sgt. Maj. Carl R. Green, 2nd MLG sergeant major, said the commanding general is a true believer of NCO leadership and wants all operational plans communicated to the youngest leaders, especially the NCOs.

While running that same morning, Green saw the regimental run, and said it brought him a great deal of pride.

"Seeing the NCOs of CLR-27 conducting a regimental run from start to finish sent chills down my spine," he explained. "It was indeed a great event to have witnessed first hand. The motivation level was high, the Marines and sailors were motivated and the event was well organized."

As I was out doing my daily run, 'I looked to the left and who did I see, the NCOs from CLR-27 leading regimental PT.' That is what I call pure motivation and leadership from the front, job well done to all involved."

First Marines from MARSOC to earn title of 'Lancero'

LANCE CPL. STEPHEN BENSON
MARSOC

During 73 days of some of the most physically arduous and mentally grueling training in all of the militaries around the world, two Marines from Marine Special Operations Advisor Group, U.S. Marine Corps Forces, Special Operations Command, persevered to become the first MARSOC Marines to earn the title of "Lancero."

Capt. German E. Duarte and Sgt. Roberto P. Sanchez, graduated from the Escuela de Lanceros Dec. 5, 2007, where the Colombian National Army and service members from friendly foreign militaries gather to endure Lancero training and develop themselves into highly skilled warfighters.

"I would say this has been the toughest and the craziest out of all courses I have been through or heard of," said Duarte. "Without Marine Corps training, I don't think we would have even made it."

The Lancero course began Dec. 6, 1955, after members of the Colombian National Army went through U.S. Army Ranger school and used what they learned to form their own special forces school in Colombia. Today, the Escuela de Lanceros is designed to develop its students into experts in small unit tactics and irregular warfare. More specifically, it prepares the Colombian military to combat terrorist groups who utilize guerilla tactics in their country.

"For the Colombian Army, being a Lancero is kind of like being a Ranger in the (U.S.) Army," said Duarte. "Marines help Marines wherever you go," said Duarte. "It's the same for Lanceros. When they see another Lancero, they say, 'Hey, how can I help you?' or 'What can I do for you?' They are always looking out for each other."



Courtesy photo

Capt. German E. Duarte, Marine Special Operations Advisor Group, U.S. Marine Corps Forces Special Operations Command, sights in using a bow and arrow during survival training in the jungle phase of the 10-week Escuela de Lanceros.



Photo by Jamie Cameron
Lejeune High School's Quintin Jeter, a track and field team captain, flies through the air as he competes in the long jump March 13. The Devilpups' boys and girls teams each had several athletes qualify to the North Carolina High School 1A Track Meet.

DEVILPUPS

Lejeune High School sports

JAMIE CAMERON
Assistant managing editor

The Lejeune High School Devilpups extended their proud history of participation in the rough and tumble North Carolina Division 1A Coastal Plains Conference in 2008.

The nature of Military Dependents Schools may put their athletes at significant disadvantage when matched up against teams from public school systems. Frequent deployments and the added stresses they bring often left the Devilpups' sports programs with shifting lineups and short benches. Lejeune's athletes, however, did themselves proud by never backing down when faced with opposition from bigger schools and experienced upperclassmen.

In the fall, it was the junior varsity football team that led the way to gridiron greatness. The JV Pups went undefeated in their Coastal Plains Conference schedule and set the bar high for next year's varsity squad as the underclassmen move up.

Both the boys and girls cross country teams made their mark in the conference and state championship meets. The Lady Devilpup tennis team made great strides in gaining experience that will pay big dividends as the players build upon their careers on the court.

Lejeune High School's basketball squads battled valiantly during the winter sports season, as did the Devilpup wrestling team, which sent several exceptional grapplers to the conference meet and beyond.

As spring rolled around, Lejeune fielded its girls soccer, golf, track and field, softball and baseball teams — all of which were successful in competing with the utmost in effort and sportsmanship.

Athletes and coaches will always change, but the pride that comes with representing Lejeune High School on the playing field never will. The Globe offers its heartiest congratulations to the Devilpups of 2008 and looks forward to covering them in the coming year.



Photo by Jamie Cameron
Lejeune High School's junior varsity football team finished an undefeated season Nov. 3 with a 22-12 victory over the East Carteret High School Mariners. Above, Akile Jones, No. 23, takes the handoff and looks to turn the corner against the Mariner defense.



Photo by Jamie Cameron
Evan Jackson finishes first in the Sept. 18 1A Coastal Plains Conference cross country meet.



Photo by Jamie Cameron
Megan LeBlanc, Lejeune High School's No. 3 singles player, hits a backhand during a home match against Dixon Sept. 25.



Photo by Sailor Hasting
Devilpup goalie Jeffrey Berger stretches to make a save. The keeper notched a shutout on the road against Northside High School Sept. 3.

CHERRY POINT

Marines participate in Exercise Carolina Hornet 08

LANCE CPL. ALICIA R. GIRON
Marine Corps Air Station
Cherry Point

More than 200 Marines, sailors and civilians from across the globe participated in Exercise Carolina Hornet 2008 aboard the USNS Wright, recently.

The purpose of the operation was to fully test the USNS Wright as an aviation logistics ship, or T-AVB, in support of the 2nd Marine Aircraft Wing's deployed rotary and fixed wing aircraft, said to Lt. Col. Chuck M. Dunne, the commander of troops aboard the ship.

"Our mission is to provide robust, realistic and safe training for 2nd MAW in the conduct of T-AVB operations," said Dunne. The main element of the ship was made from four Marine aviation logistics squadrons, accompanied by Marine Aircraft Communications Group 28 and two Marine wing support squadrons.

This type of training exercise is conducted every other year on the East Coast, Dunne said.

The USNS Wright is one of two ships the Marine Corps uses in a T-AVB role. The USNS Curtis fills the T-AVB role for the West Coast and has its homeport in San Diego.

Exercise Carolina Hornet began at the USNS Wright's homeport in Baltimore, where about 30 Marines from the four MALS units came together and conducted practice drills loading and off-loading mobile maintenance facilities, or vans as they are often called, aboard the ship. The Marines practiced for more than a week and then sailed down the Atlantic Coast to the port of Morehead City, N.C.

Marines from the 2nd MAW, 3rd MAW and 2nd Marine Logistics Group began loading vans once the ship arrived to Morehead City.

"The loading phase is the most difficult unique part in teaching our Marines, from all military occupational specialties, to learn how to work the different equipment and loading of the ship," said Dunne.

The exercise consisted of

an eight-phase operation, and the loading portion of the operation was phase five.

"We have loaded 103 mobile maintenance facilities and additional support equipment on the T-AVB," said Chief Warrant Officer 4 Arthur L. Leblanc, the cargo load officer of the ship.

Marines, with the aid of soldiers from the Army's 824th Army Transport Command, conducted ship to objective maneuvers while at sea. In these simulations the Army used a separate boat to deliver aircraft related parts to the USNS Wright. A total of six ship to objective maneuver exercises occurred during Carolina Hornet.

"The purpose of a sea-based operation is to provide aviation logistics to aircraft ashore," said Charlie R. Doyle, the aviation planner aboard the ship. "The parts will come out, we fix them and after the parts are fixed, they go back to where they came from."

In addition to using the Army's tours for transporting equipment to and from the ship, Marines with Marine Heavy Helicopter Squadron



Photo by Lance Cpl. Alicia R. Giron

The USNS Wright sails down the Atlantic Coast during Exercise Carolina Hornet 2008.

461 delivered aircraft parts to 2nd MAW Marines during CH-08.

"Our purpose is to demonstrate bringing parts out to the ship," said Capt. Jed S. Fogle-song, an aviation advisor with Marine Light Attack Helicopter Squadron 269.

Approximately five flight operations occurred while aboard ship. The demonstrations were held to train Marines for future deployments, said Fogle-song.

The ship returned to port in Morehead City Aug. 13 and all equipment was re-

moved and returned to the parent units.

The majority of Marines departed the ship and went back to their unit's workplace. Marines who stayed on the ship sailed back to USNS Wright's homeport in Baltimore.

Happy Holidays from The Globe



Welcome to the Year in Review! On the pages of the past 48 issues in 2008, the Globe Staff has strived each week to feature up-to-date Marine Corps news from around the world and Camp Lejeune. This week's 49th edition will bring together the year's highlights. The snapshots and accompanying stories on these pages will summarize the Corps' proudest moments of this year. From the gun lines of our many ranges to the front lines of the Global War on Terrorism we sought to feature what was most important — the Marines, sailors, and civilian Marines who, on a daily basis, worked hard and aspired to causes greater than themselves. We also highlighted the ones serving those who serve: family members and local citizens of Jacksonville who have extended a helping hand when we've needed it most. Covering these stories, we have witnessed the best of Camp Lejeune — its many significant contributions to the local community and its impact on world events. We are proud to put our personal stamp on the history of this base and hope you enjoy this visual retrospective. To read the full stories, visit www.marines.mil. It has been a great year for the Marine Corps and we wish happy holidays to all of you around 'The Globe.' Merry Christmas, Happy New Year, and Semper Fidelis.

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2008 A YEAR OF MANY SEASONS



Heather M. Owens



Erma Cooke



Lance Cpl. Ryan Turnage



Lance Cpl. Randall Little

Top left, Born at Naval Hospital Camp Lejeune at 3:01 a.m., Emmanuella Nana Abena Abosi was Onslow County's first baby of the year. Her parents are Staff Sgt. Veronica Abosi and her husband Emmanuel. Middle, More than 600 people gathered on Onslow Beach Jan. 12 to either jump into the ocean or observe those who did. A fundraiser for Onslow County Special Olympics, the Polar Bear Plunge raised more than \$26,000 for area Special Olympians. Bottom, More than 50,000 people, including service members and their families from Camp Lejeune, participated in Raleigh's "Salute to Our Troops," April 26. Right, During May, the Carolina Living section featured the "Ghost Doctors," a group formed by three Navy corpsmen and a military spouse who investigate paranormal activity. From left to right, they are Petty Officer 3rd Class Patrick Flynn, his wife Leticia Flynn, Petty Officer 3rd Class Immel Somarriba and Seaman Brian Andrade.

HEATHER M. OWENS

Carolina Living editor

It has been written, both in historical documents and popular culture songs, that every action under the sun has its season. There are times for play and relaxation and times to get the job done. There are moments meant to remember and honor and moments meant to make memories.

In this way, the men, women and children of Marine Corps Base Camp Lejeune have had a full year of changing "seasons" during 2008.

One of the first events The Globe featured was the birth of the year's first baby. Emmanuella Nana Abena Abosi came into the world at 3:01 a.m. Jan. 1, bringing great joy to her parents, Staff Sgt. Veronica Abosi and her husband Emmanuel.

January brought another special event to Camp Lejeune. Exuberant crowds gathered on Onslow Beach for the Polar Bear Plunge. Many units and teams donned

costumes to show their pride. U.S. Marine Forces, Special Operations Command was honored for bringing the most participants. At the end of the day, all of that enthusiasm raised a great deal of money for the Special Olympics of Onslow County.

During March, StoryCorps, a project of the Library of Congress' American Folklife Center, parked its mobile recording booth in the Marine Corps Exchange parking lot. Camp Lejeune's military members and civilians had the opportunity to tell their stories. Several people from Camp Lejeune had clips of their interviews aired on Public Radio East, and countless others added their interviews to the Library of Congress' archives.

All year, Marines and sailors have been getting the job done. Many have deployed in support of the Global War on Terrorism. While one family had the stoic task of seeing a service member off, just a week later another family would be joyfully welcoming their warrior home.

During May, the Navy Nurse Corps celebrated 100 years of its healing touch, and during June, Navy corpsmen observed the 110th birthday of their profession.

October brought with it the 25th anniversary of the barracks bombing in Beirut, Lebanon. Visitors from all over poured into Jacksonville and visited its many Marine installations, monuments and ceremonies to remember, grieve and honor. Additional anniversary coverage may be found on page 2D.

Of course, the Marine Corps celebrated its birthday Nov. 10. Area Marines observed the birthday with balls held up and down the coast, from New Bern to Myrtle Beach. Spouses of deployed Marines celebrated with a special ball at the Tarawa Terrace Community Center Nov. 8.

As the year comes to a close, the Marine and civilian staff of The Globe wish you and yours a happy and productive new year. May 2009, and all its many moments and seasons, bring even greater amounts of personal fulfillment and professional success.



YEAR OF ACHIEVEMENT

Lejeune service members display excellence in 2008

MARINES CONDUCT FIRST MARSOC HRST MASTERS COURSE

Photo by Cpl. Richard Blumenstein
MARINE CORPS BASE CAMP PENDLETON, Calif. — An operator with 1st Marine Special Operations Battalion, U.S. Marine Corps Forces, Special Operations Command, rappels out a CH-46 Sea Knight at Camp Margarita, aboard Camp Pendleton, Nov. 4. The operator took part in the first ever MARSOC Helicopter Rope Suspension Training Masters course, which ran from Oct. 27, to Nov. 7.



II MEF MARINES TAKE PART IN GREAT WHITE FLEET IN NYC

Photo by Sgt. Ryan Blaich
NEW YORK — The USS Nassau sailed into Manhattan's Pier 88 Oct. 11 to commemorate the 100th anniversary of President Theodore Roosevelt's Great White Fleet. Onboard Nassau were more than 60 Marines from the North Carolina area, including Marine Corps Air Stations New River and Cherry Point and Marine Corps Base Camp Lejeune.



SOTG DROPS MARINES INTO TRAINING

Photo by Lance Cpl. Brian Lewis
A mortarman with Weapons Company, 2nd Battalion, 6th Marine Regiment, 2nd Marine Division, II Marine Expeditionary Force, descends a tower March 26 during rappe training. The training is part of the Assault Climbers Course taught by the Special Operations Training Group to prepare Marines to deploy with a Marine Expeditionary Unit.



MOUNTAIN WARFARE TRAINING PREPARES MARINES

Photo by Cpl. Thomas J. Hermesman
The warfighters in 2nd Battalion, 8th Marine Regiment, 2nd Marine Division were on the move Oct. 23. The battalion traveled to Fort A. P. Hill, Va., a U. S. Army post, to conduct some of their pre-deployment training. While in Virginia, the five companies in the battalion participated in five different types of live fire range training.



Marines, sailors continuing mission aboard Lejeune

LANCE CPL. JOSEPH M. DAY
Marine Corps Base

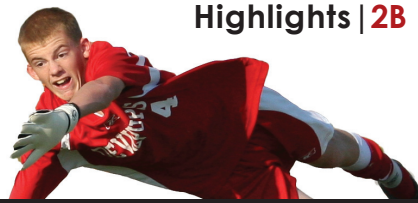
Marines and sailors showed unwavering dedication and excellence as they trained aboard Camp Lejeune in 2008. Camp Lejeune is the largest training facility on the east coast. Inside Lejeune is dedicated to highlighting and featuring the Marines and sailors who work hard and train aboard this facility. For the past 67 years Camp Lejeune has prepared Marines and sailors of Marine Special Operations Command, 2nd Marine Logistics Group, 2nd Marine Division, II Marine

Expeditionary Force for battle in every climb and place. Consisting of over 240 square miles, the base provides all the terrain and facilities for the units to ready themselves for the Global War on Terrorism and any other challenge that may face the nation in the days to come. These pages feature the men and women from across the country, working to keep America safe. These men and women train year round in preparation for world wide deployment. Camp Lejeune has been a pivotal part of this training and will be in the upcoming years. From all of us at the Globe, Semper Fidelis and have happy holiday season.



II MEF CHANGES HANDS

Photo by Lance Cpl. Katie Mathison
Lt. Gen. Keith Stalder, right, the commanding general of II Marine Expeditionary Force, relinquished command to Lt. Gen. Dennis Hejlik in a ceremony July 25.

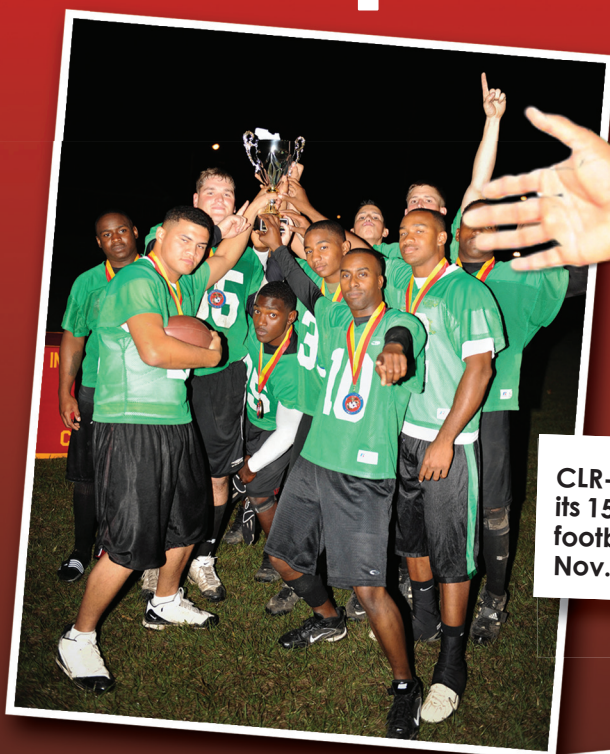


LEJEUNE'S CHAMPIONS

Year in sports starts on base



Joey Murillo (in blue) fends off Luis Ramirez for a 50-50 ball during Installation Personnel Administrative Center's 2-1 win over Supply Battalion. It was the Arsenal team that finished its undefeated season by dominating New River, 1-0 during the Camp Lejeune Intramural Soccer Championship Oct. 16



CLR-27 Team 2 celebrates its 15-12 victory and the flag football champion's trophy, Nov. 13



Headquarters and Support Battalion quarterback, Sanford James, left, makes contact with the Camp Johnson defense Dec. 9. The Raiders finished the season undefeated for the second straight year to claim the Camp Lejeune intramural tackle football title, 14-9.



For the third summer running, a team from II Marine Expeditionary Force took home the Camp Lejeune summer basketball tournament. Head coach Billy Holmes' II MEF team went undefeated during the weeklong tournament, capping off its run with a definitive 68-54 win Aug. 19 over the Hired Gunz. In the photo, Horton Norrell of II MEF Gold controls the ball as Hired Gunz defender Michael Bonner closes in.

Intramural champions celebrate

Story and photos
JAMIE CAMERON
Assistant Managing editor

When it comes to sports, the Marines and sailors aboard Camp Lejeune take their athletics seriously. The evidence lies in the strength of the Marine Corps Community Services Intramural Sports programs.

Teams from units across Camp Lejeune, Marine Corps Air Stations New River and Cherry Point, Camp Johnson and even reserve Marines participated in a wide variety of sports leagues in 2008.

Winter and summer basketball fell once again under the dominance of II Marine Expeditionary Force, with several players eventually selected to play on the All-Marine Basketball Team.

In softball, the Gators of 2nd

Assault Amphibian Battalion hoisted the championship trophy after battling a tough Marine Corps Special Operations Command team over the course of the long summer season.

The season ended on the football field, where Headquarters and Support Battalion continued its reign over the rest of the league for the second year running. The Raiders went undefeated to claim the tackle championship. In flag football, Combat Logistics Regiment 27 proved itself as the cream of the crop.

Even as the base prepares to shut down to celebrate the holiday season, intramural basketball and indoor soccer leagues are ready to begin. Even now, the intramural seasons for basketball and indoor soccer leagues are ready to begin. At Camp Lejeune, the year in sports never truly ends.

RETURNS FROM IA

his Marines as a text-book case-study in Marine counterinsurgent operations.

"The tenants of a successful counterinsurgency are clear, hold and build. You can't just clear. If you don't hold, the insurgents come back and if you don't build then you really aren't making the place any better. You need to make the place better so the people can see the value of choosing government rule vice accepting insurgent intimidation," said Petronzio, part of the 24th MEU's brain trust that will stay behind in Afghanistan to help incoming Marine units transition to the unique challenges of the area.

As he discusses the counterinsurgent strategy, it seems to be at the very least a subconscious explanation to one of the most famous phrases from their deployment. The planned first fight with the Taliban was to be an aerial raid, rivaling any previous airborne insertion dating back to Vietnam. The Marines of Battalion Landing Team 1st Battalion 6th Marine Regiment packed lightly for their mission, counting on returning to base in seven to 10 days for another assignment in the volatile South, instead they stayed.

Taliban fighters flowed into the area resupplying and reinforcing those already well-equipped and aiming in on the Marines.

"We were told that there were insurgents in the area just south of the British southernmost forward operating base (Delhi) and that they would fight us for a few days should we try to move through the area. As we moved to secure the route the insurgents did fight us, but not for a few days. They fought us daily for more than a month," said the 24th MEU commander.

The increased resistance caused a reexamination of plans. If the 24th MEU moved on after clearing their way through Garmsir, the Taliban



Maj. Cliff Carpenter, Supply officer, 24th Marine Expeditionary Unit, shares a laugh with his daughter during the 24th MEU homecoming.

would obviously attempt to take back their precious gateway into Afghanistan.

The Marines stayed and transitioned from quick reaction raiders to counter insurgent specialists, and over the next few months focused the full spectrum of the 24th MEU in the Garmsir city-district. Taliban fighters battled Marines for 35 days in more than 170 engagements. The death knell for the Taliban came May 28 when the Marines of Weapons Company and Co. C, both of BLT, 1st Battalion, 6th Marine Regiment, captured Fort Jugroom, a former British stronghold turned Taliban headquarters. Meanwhile Co. A reclaimed the once Taliban-controlled Amir Agar Bazaar.

In keeping with counterinsurgency doctrine, Marines held their ground. Just a few days after the Battle for Jugroom, the Marines of Co. A, met with village elders in a shura, the

first such gathering of local elders in three years. During their shura and in subsequent meetings with locals, the Marines invited people to return without fear of the Taliban. For many, it was the first time they could safely bring their family home since the Taliban forced them out years ago. Petronzio felt the Marines needed to stay in the area to reinforce the sense of security to a population that hadn't seen international troops since the Soviet occupation decades earlier.

"Another factor was the concern about giving the insurgents a false victory by enabling them to claim they had run us off if we vacated the area a soon as we pushed further south. Also, as we secured the routes through the district center, Afghan citizens who had been displaced by the insurgents began to return to their homes. It would not have boded well for them had we left just as they were returning

met 1,082 locals and paid them a total of \$785,000.

Throughout the city Afghan National Forces began joining Marines on daily patrols and security exercises and shortly after British forces were walking side-by-side with their American allies. They hunted for improvised explosive devices and other weapons caches, finding 86 unexploded ordnances and 26 weapons stockpiles. The Marines official handed control of the city-district back to the British, Sept. 8 the country previously tasked by NATO for securing Garmsir and the rest of Helmand province.

The Marines spent the better part of September and October cleaning and packing all of their gear in preparation for the trip home from one of the largest Afghanistan bases. Frustratingly tiny sand particles had to be washed from each vehicle, weapon system and piece of equipment before the Marines could board planes and head home. The trip itself was an exercise in endurance for the traveling Marines as they spent days split between flights and layovers at airports along the way.

The Marines landed and loaded busses for the final leg of their journey home. They exited the busses to the screams and cries of their much-missed loved ones. Their arrival home moves their actions in Afghanistan from front page news into historic context.

"Al Anbar has come to signify the Marines success in Iraq, and I believe Helmand province and Garmsir will show the world what impact the Marines can have in Afghanistan," said Hayes.

"I'm proud of what these Marines have accomplished. They lived in some of the most undesirable locations and conditions imaginable in Garmsir. Seeing the warm welcome they received from their friends and family was a well-deserved end to a demanding deployment."



The first 24th MEU Marines depart the plane at Marine Corps Air Station Cherry Point after a seven-month deployment to Afghanistan.

to an area they thought we had secured and they thought we would remain in to sustain the security," said Petronzio.

The 24th MEU began the last block of the three-stage counterinsurgent doctrine on June 23 when the Alpha Bat-

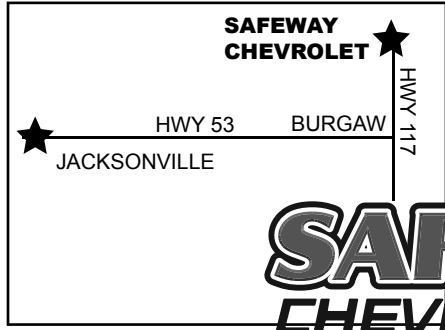
tery sent Marines from their six-cannon gun line to Forward Operating Base Delhi. There they opened a civil military operations center where Marines doled out cash payments for battle damage. By the time Marines closed the center they had

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