



Company L shows stuff on the range

p. 4

MARINE CORPS RECRUIT DEPOT SAN DIEGO



AND THE WESTERN RECRUITING REGION



The literature that keeps recruits going

p. 8

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“WHERE MARINES ARE MADE”

FRIDAY, MARCH 30, 2012

Company G faces Crucible for Eagle, Globe, and Anchor

BY LANCE CPL. BRIDGET M. KEANE
Chevron staff

The Crucible is one of the final, most challenging steps that every recruit aboard Marine Corps Recruit Depot San Diego has to go through before receiving the Eagle, Globe and Anchor and becoming a Marine. Each recruit is pushed to his limit physically and mentally, and must rely on fellow recruits and all the training they've retained since Training Day 1.

The recruits of Company G, 2nd Recruit Training Battalion, embarked on The Crucible March 19 at Weapons and Field Training Battalion aboard Marine Corps Base Camp Pendleton.

The exhausting, 54-hour simulated field-training exercise tests the skills recruits have learned throughout recruit training by forcing them to hike to different obstacles with very little sleep and food.

Recruits are tested on their ability to perform as a leader, come together as a team to complete missions, and the application of leadership traits and core values.

“The Crucible is a culminating event for the recruits,” said drill instructor Staff Sgt. Ricky

Broadway, Co. G, 2nd RTBn. “They are pushed to their limits to see how they can perform with the lack of sleep.”

At each event, a different recruit is put in a leadership position and have the opportunity to demonstrate their communication skills and the 14 leadership traits that are emphasized throughout recruit training.

“We see a lot of them step up to be leaders,” said Broadway. “Putting them in that position allows them to open up more and builds that confidence they need to perform.”

Many recruits are quiet throughout boot camp and The Crucible is their chance to show what they've learned about leadership and if they can step up to take that role, said Broadway.

The recruits are then graded on their performance based on the Marine Corps core values of honor, courage and commitment. It takes a lot of courage to step up and be a good leader. Through this courage, the recruits build camaraderie and use teamwork to complete the assigned mission, said Broadway.

The obstacles and missions consist of real-life combat situations, such as evacuating casualties, re-supplying ammunition, movement under fire, an impro-



Lance Cpl. Bridget M. Keane

Recruit Tyler Jones, Platoon 2142, Company G, 2nd Recruit Training Battalion, executes the rear hand punch at the body sparring event at Weapons and Field Training Battalion, Marine Corps Base Camp Pendleton March 20. The recruits are participating in a 54-hour field training exercise known as The Crucible, which requires recruits to undergo food and sleep deprivation to simulate combat situations.

vised explosive device detecting simulation and hand-to-hand combat.

“High Iams Drive” body sparring is an event in which recruits to go head-to-head and execute techniques they've learned from

Marine Corps Martial Arts Program training. The event is based on the Medal of Honor citation for Sgt. Ross Lindsey Iams, who was awarded for his actions in Haiti in 1915. He fought enemy forces and battled them with

hand-to-hand techniques till the resistance was captured.

Each event at The Crucible is based on citations of the remarkable, heroic actions that Marines

see CRUCIBLE ▶ 2



Lance Cpl. Bridget M. Keane

Recruits of Company F, 2nd Recruit Training Battalion went through the “O-course”, an obstacle course that exhausts recruits mentally and physically, aboard Marine Corps Recruit Depot San Diego March 24. The course focuses on upper-body strength and has a series of elevated bars, logs, and walls that encourage recruits to try different methods to climb over.

Recruits meet o-course tests

BY LANCE CPL. BRIDGET M. KEANE
Chevron staff

Among the many challenges recruits endure throughout recruit training, the obstacle courses here at Marine Corps Recruit Depot San Diego have put many recruits to the test by pushing them both physically and mentally.

Recruits of Company F, 2nd Recruit Training Battalion, went

through the obstacle course for the third time March 24 aboard MCRD San Diego.

Every recruit must complete the obstacle course, also known as the “O-course”, which is an event that requires recruits to climb over walls and logs, pull themselves up over bars and to use their very last ounce of strength to climb a rope at the end.

see COURSE ▶ 2

Co. I recruits issued M-16A4 service rifle

BY CPL. ERIC QUINTANILLA
Chevron staff

Throughout their training, recruits have one piece of gear that is treasured above all others – their M-16A4 Service Rifle. Issued to them on Forming Day 5, their rifle is a constant reminder of what they came here to accomplish.

Recruits of Company I, 3rd Recruit Training Battalion, got their first taste of this feeling March 26, at the armory aboard Marine Corps Recruit Depot San Diego.

“Every Marine is a rifleman and they learn the basics here of how to maintain it and how to drill,” said Sgt. Christian Hutson, drill instructor, Co. I, 3rd RTBn.

They will learn more about it in second phase, when they start firing.”

From the drill field to the rifle range, the M-16A4 will serve many roles throughout recruit training.

Before any of these events though, recruits must learn the fundamentals of weapon ownership, starting with maintenance.

“They're taught to maintain functionality through cleaning and inspecting each part on a daily basis,” said Staff Sgt. Mike Chavez, drill instructor, Co. I, 3rd RTBn. “Recruits are made to take it apart to familiarize themselves with the inner components of the weapon.”

Although recruits work with their rifles almost

see ARMS ▶ 3



Cpl. Eric Quintanilla

Sgt. Christian Hutson, drill instructor, Company I, 3rd Recruit Training Battalion, teaches his recruits how to hold the weapon at “port arms” at the armory aboard Marine Corps Recruit Depot San Diego March 26. Recruits will primarily carry their weapon at “port arms” while marching to different events around MCRD.



Lance Cpl. Bridget M. Keane

The recruits of Company G, 2nd Recruit Training Battalion, battled each other during the Crucible's body sparring event at Weapons and Field Training Battalion, Marine Corps Base Camp Pendleton March 20. The Crucible is a 54-hour field training exercise which requires recruits to apply everything they have learned during recruit training to real-life combat situations. This is the final test recruits go through before receiving their Eagle, Globe and Anchor and becoming Marines.

CRUCIBLE ◀ 1

have been recognized throughout history.

"Reading the citations gives them (recruits) an understanding of what they're doing at each event," said Sgt. Ignacio Castellanos, martial arts instructor, field company, WFTBn. "Most of them have never been in a fight, and doing this puts them in a situation to take on an opponent and see what they can do."

Body sparring allows them to find themselves and builds confidence in their abilities, said Castellanos.

Exhausted and hungry, the recruits still maintained their combat mindset and fought against each other, proving their knowledge of MCMAP.

"Seeing how we perform in this event

shows us that we can continue the fight even though we're tired," said Recruit Barrett Cliett, Platoon 2142, Co. G, 2nd RTBn. "You can fight through it."

Throughout the training days before The Crucible, recruits are prepared mentally and physically to overcome each obstacle, but the unknown is what really keeps them on edge.

"You never really know what is going to happen next," said Cliett, a 21-year-old from Houston. "I tried to prepare myself mentally by having the motivation to earn my Eagle, Globe and Anchor."

Every Marine Corps value the recruits have learned in boot camp is brought out in The Crucible, said Cliett, but teamwork was stressed from the very beginning of recruit training.

COURSE ◀ 1

"The course focuses mainly on upper-body strength and techniques," said Staff Sgt. Carlos Garcia, senior drill instructor, Co. F, 2nd RTBn. "There are different techniques to use to complete the obstacles and master the course."

The course has a series of elevated bars and logs, as well as walls that allow recruits to try different methods to climb over them.

"Going through this course helps the recruits build endurance, technique and confidence," said Garcia.

Before the actual course begins, recruits sprint 880 yards around the course. This is done to exhaust them, and show them that they can complete the course even when they are physically drained. They also run in place at the beginning, watching as the other recruits attempt to overcome the first obstacle and wait their turn to challenge the course.

"The first obstacle is always the toughest for me," said Recruit Eric Flores, Platoon 2134, Co. F, 2nd RTBn. "But once I get over it, I can get through the rest of the course without a problem."

Hurling themselves over logs and pulling themselves over bars, recruits learn how to keep a low profile as they climb over obstacles.

"Keeping a low profile is crucial when climbing over walls in a combat situation," said Recruit Cody Newell, Platoon 2133, Co. F, 2nd RTBn. "This course simulates what it could be like in an urban environment."

The course challenges recruits mentally while navigating through the obstacles, because you need to be able to react quickly and make a choice without thinking, said Newell.

At the end of the course, recruits must dig deep and use whatever strength they have left to pull themselves to the top of the towering ropes.

"By this time, the recruits are so worn out from the course it makes it difficult to pull themselves up," said Garcia. "They use all their strength trying to finish as fast as they can and they don't think about how to use the techniques."

Climbing the ropes doesn't come easy to every recruit. Knowing the proper technique and how to apply it makes it easier and faster to climb to the top, explained Garcia.

"The first time we did the 'O-course', my biggest challenge was climbing the rope," said Newell. "It was easier this time because I've built my strength up and learned how to master the technique."

As they reach the top of the rope, recruits yell out their name, platoon number and senior drill instructor's name before they slowly slide back down to the wood chipped-covered surface so they can finish the last activity.

The recruits then run to a drill instructor who eagerly instructs them to execute "buddy drags", which is when a recruit simulating a casualty is dragged by another recruit. When they reach a certain point on the field, the recruits switch places and execute a "fireman's carry" back to their platoon.

"The platoon lacked cohesion in the beginning of boot camp but we've worked together as a team to accomplish our missions," said Cliett.

The only thing standing between recruits earning the Eagle, Globe and Anchor is finishing the Crucible.

"This is the transition from recruit to Marine," said Broadway. "We want to see what they've learned and see if they can put it all together."

Tired and unaware of what challenge they'd overcome next, the recruits trekked on throughout the day to face each obstacle with confidence and teamwork.

"As food and sleep becomes less, we'll definitely be put to the test," said Cliett. "We'll never give up."

"This prepares the recruits for real combat situations when evacuating casualties," said Garcia. "Even though they're tired, they can still perform."

This is the recruit's third time doing the "O-course" and each time they run through it, they learn to master a technique that makes it easier for them to complete, said Garcia.

Recruits go through the "O-course" each phase in recruit training. This allows them to see what they've learned from their first experience and how much stronger they've become.

It also prepares them for future obstacles that they will face in recruit training, such as The Crucible, a culminating event that tests recruits on all that they have learned.

Although they learn techniques, each recruit also gains confidence as they overcome their own personal challenges throughout the course.

"The 'O-course' is physically challenging for me," said Newell. "I feel stronger and more confident every time I get to the top of the rope."

However, Flores found the course more challenging in the mental aspect.

"Deciding on which route you will go to get over the obstacles while moving fast puts you in a combat mindset," said Flores. "You really see how far you can push yourself."

Whatever obstacles the recruits have faced and mastered on the "O-course", they walked away from the experience with more confidence, a trait that's instilled in recruits as they become Marines.

BRIEFS

Clean Up Day on the Bay

MCRD's Boathouse will host the 17th Annual Clean-up Day on the Bay tomorrow from 10 a.m. to 2 p.m.

Volunteers are needed to help clean up the shoreline and the surface waters at the Boathouse. In appreciation of your commitment to the community and the ecology of San Diego Bay, all volunteers will receive refreshments, a barbecue lunch and a gift.

For more information, call (619) 524-5269.

Navy-Marine Corps Relief Society Active Duty Fund Drive

The Active Duty Fund Drive in support of the Navy-Marine Corps Relief Society for 2012 is in process. Participation can be made electronically via Marine OnLine. This new, streamlined method of contributing saves trees and protects Personal Identifiable Information since there are no hard copy paper trails of contribution forms passing from one Marine to another, or left unprotected on desks.

To donate log into Marine Online and click on resources and the "Navy Marine Corps Relief Society.

Universal City Walk Trip and Indoor Skydiving

The Single Marine Program is sponsoring a Walking Trip to Universal City on April 14. There are three different packages available to choose from:

- Pkge. A (Best of Both) - \$60
Includes:
Indoor skydiving @ iFLY Hollywood
Universal Studios
Universal City Walk
Round trip transportation
- Pkge. B (Universal Studios) - \$40
Includes:
Universal Studios
Universal City Walk
Round trip transportation
- Pkge. C (Indoor Skydiving) - \$20
Includes:
Indoor skydiving @ iFLY Hollywood
Universal City Walk
Round trip transportation

The Universal City walk offers more than 50 places to eat and shop, an IMAX theatre and a wonderful night life.

Indoor skydiving at iFLY Hollywood includes approximately 2 flights per person, training session, flight gear, hands on personal assistance from an instructor and personalized flight certificate.

Universal Studios park hours on Saturday, 14 April 2012 will be 9 a.m. to 8 p.m. It's a \$77 value (and buy one day, get 12 months free (blackout dates apply)).

Participants must present valid military ID at the gate. The event is open to single or unaccompanied service members aboard MCRD, San Diego only.

Space is limited so sign-up today. A down payment is required and full payment must be received by April 11.

For more information, contact Diana Vuong at 619-524-8083 or vuongd@usmc-mccs.org

Send briefs to:

rdsd_pao@usmc.mil. The Chevron staff reserves the right to publish only those briefs that comply with Department of Defense regulations and the standards of the U.S. Government.

Around the depot

This week the Chevron asks: "How are you spending your tax refund?"



"I bought a MacBook Pro with my tax refund." Petty Officer 2nd Class Joy Lewis, hospital corpsman, Branch Medical Clinic



"I plan on saving my tax refund to buy a motorcycle once I pay off my car." Cpl. Ethan McDaniel, administrative clerk, Service Company, Headquarters and Service Battalion



"I plan on putting my tax refund in my mutual funds, because I don't need to spend it." Sgt. Luis Marcenco, drill instructor, Company L, 3rd Recruit Training Battalion

Depot exercise emphasizes preparedness

BY LANCE CPL. CRYSTAL DRUERY
Chevron staff

If Marine Corps Recruit Depot San Diego experienced a natural disaster or terrorist threat on base, would the depot be ready to respond?

To ensure preparedness in case of an emergency, MCRD participated in training March 19-22 called Solid Curtain/Citadel Shield Exercise. By conducting this exercise, personnel aboard the depot were able to evaluate their emergency response plans, policies and procedures.

"This was a Navy exercise done all across Marine Corps installations," said Capt. Rich Vallee, Security Augmentation Force and Ground Security Force Officer-in-Charge. "Though we played a small role in this exercise, we took advantage of it by using our barrier plans and making sure they were consistent."

The depot was put on Force Protection Condition Charlie for the exercise, this is when there's a local threat to the base but not directly.

"By having the base on FPCON Charlie permits our law enforcement to have the help of SAF and GSF," said Staff Sgt. William Rapier, watch commander, Provost Marshall's Office, Headquarters and Service Battalion. "This allows the perpetrator to see this base is heavily guarded and a hard target."

During the exercise, SAF



STAFF SGT. LEONARD F. LANGSTON

Lance Cpl. Jesus A. Palma, left, and Lance Cpl. Cora M. McLeod, both of the depot's Headquarters Co., move through a pair of hedgehog vehicle traps while on patrol in and around Building 31 during Exercise Solid Curtain/Citadel Shield March 22. The exercise was held March 19-22 throughout Navy Region Southwest and across all Marine Corps installations.

and GSF First Platoon was set in place at the only gate allowing vehicles enter base. Their job was to enforce barrier plans and physically search each vehicle that came on the depot.

"We ended up searching fifteen hundred cars by the end of the exercise," said Sgt. Omar Askew, SAF and GSF Platoon one platoon sergeant.

Second Platoon's job was to enforce the parking plan. There were only 11 designated parking areas aboard the depot, all filled except two. One of the main purposes of the parking restrictions and barriers Rapier said was to keep the recruits safe. None of the parking around the parade deck or near recruit

training was open.

By having the base practice what they may have to carry out gives them a basic understanding of what's expected.

"This exercise definitely made me more aware and made me understand what to look for if we ever had an emergency," said Pfc. Josh Franco, SAF and GSF First Platoon. "I'm now aware that a situation could actually happen and we have to react."

When the base goes into FPCON Charlie Col. Wayne Sinclair becomes the director of station security. A phone line was then dedicated to Incident Command System can have a command center and receive intelligence from EOC and

control security, said Vallee.

Scenarios were developed and put in play during the training exercise. These scenarios were meant to provide personnel types of incidence that a first responder could have to react to in a time of an emergency.

"When we got the exercise set up, things presented themselves that we didn't anticipate," said Vallee. "We realized there wasn't enough communication so all personnel understood there was an exercise going on."

With this being the first exercise the depot has done with barriers like this, it is learning and developing improvements.

"Overall the exercise was a complete success," said Vallee.



Cpl. Matthew S. Lemieux

Relief and Appointment

Sgt. Maj. Terry W. Petersen, left, the outgoing sergeant major, Support Battalion, congratulates the man assuming his job, 1st Sgt. Terry E. Harrelson, during their Relief and Appointment Ceremony March 19, 2012. The ceremony took place on the depot's Shepherd Memorial Drill Field.

ARMS ◀ 1

every day, they don't get to begin firing until week six at Weapons and Field Training Battalion, Camp Pendleton, Calif. Until then, the focus is on drill movements to prepare for initial and final drill.

"Back in the day, all combat formations were drill movements," said Hutson. "We use drill now to instill discipline and ensure instant obedience to orders."

Initial and final drill are graduation requirements for recruits aboard MCRD. These events test the platoon's ability to move together and ensure they are listening to their

drill instructor's commands.

"They are going to take (the rifles) everywhere they go to get used to the weight, so it becomes muscle memory for them," said Hutson, 25, a Brooklyn, N.Y. native. "A lot of them have never fired before, so they need to get comfortable with a weapon."

Recruits must know where their weapon is at all times and will carry it with them when marching to and from their daily activities. While at chow or in class the recruits will stack them outside to be picked up when finished.

"We are being taught to be riflemen," said recruit Anthony Green, Platoon 3215, Co. I, 3rd RTBn. "They first have to teach us how to

handle the rifles."

Each weapon has a unique serial number the recruit must memorize to ensure they are always carrying their own rifle.

"They have to respect the weapon, treat it as though it is their best friend, because in combat it is," said Chavez. "It is their life saver."

When they are not training with the rifles they are locked up in the squad bays. Each rifle has two locks, one from the recruit and one from the drill instructor to ensure everyone's safety.

Company I started their first week of training and is scheduled to graduate June 15.

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Lance Cpl. Crystal Druey

While recruits are not using their M-16A4 service rifles they stack them together. Company L used their rifles during training week six to fire down range on Delta Range, Edson Range, Weapons and Field Training Battalion, Marine Corps Base Camp Pendleton. Primary Marksmanship Instructors teach the recruits how to properly apply the basic fundamentals or marksmanship while they are aboard the range.



Lance Cpl. Crystal Druey

Recruit Cristos Diaz, Platoon 3254, Company L, 3rd Recruit Training Battalion, shoots from the prone position on Delta Range, Edson Range, Weapons and Field Training Battalion, Marine Corps Base Camp Pendleton March 20. Campbell was guided on shooting techniques by Cpl. Edgar Alvarez, primary marksmanship instructors, Edson Range, Weapons and Field Training Battalion, Marine Corps Base Camp Pendleton to help ensure Campbell and the other Co. L recruits understood how to properly use the M-16A4 service rifle.



Lance Cpl. Crystal Druey

Primary marksmanship instructors guide Company L recruits on the fundamentals of Marine Corps marksmanship March 20 on Delta Range, Edson Range, Weapons and Field Training Battalion, Marine Corps Base Camp Pendleton. The week prior PMIs taught the recruits classes that educated them on Marine Corps Marksmanship knowledge and allowed Co. L time to practice what they learned by aiming in on targets.



Lance Cpl. Crystal Druey

Brass flew while earplugs deadened the deafening noise of rifle fire March 20 as Company L, 3rd Recruit Training Battalion, began their week on Delta Range, Edson Range, Weapons and Field Training Battalion, Marine Corps Base Camp Pendleton.



Lance Cpl. Crystal Druey

Co. L apply Marine Corps marksmanship skills

BY LANCE CPL. CRYSTAL DRUEY
Chevron staff

Brass flies while earplugs deaden the deafening noise of rifle fire as Company L, 3rd Recruit Training Battalion, begins their week on the rifle range.

After a week spent learning the fundamentals, Co. L started sending rounds down range in hopes to earn the title rifleman, one of the many training requirements to become a Marine while at Marine Corps Recruit Depot San Diego.

The recruits were guided on shooting techniques by primary marksmanship instructors March 20 on Delta Range. The PMIs helped enforce the fundamentals of Marine Corps marksmanship to help the recruits of Co. L better understand how to use the M-16 A4 service rifle.

"If the recruits don't understand the fundamentals, then they won't be able to apply them," said Sgt. Daniel Mullis, PMI, Edson Range, Weapons and Field Training Battalion, Marine Corps Base Camp Pendleton.

It's important the recruits receive plenty of practice and

knowledge on their M-16 A4 service rifle, explained Sgt. Alanser Uruo, senior drill instructor, Platoon 3254, Company L, 2nd RTBn.

"Having all of this hands-on training builds up the recruits confidence. Most of them have never used a weapon," said Uruo.

The week prior, recruits of Co. L had grass week, where they were put through many classes that educated them on Marine Corps Marksmanship knowledge and allowed them time to practice what they learned by aiming in on targets.

"The PMI's have given us a lot of helpful knowledge and tips that we've been able to apply on the range," said Recruit Chris Sell, Platoon 3254, Company L, 2nd Recruit Training Battalion.

Mullis said he was impressed with Sell's shooting so far. Most of Sell's shots had been in the four and five area, five being the highest score.

"He's a good example of someone taking the knowledge we provide and applying it,"

said Mullis.

For any Marine to earn a Marine Corps marksmanship qualification badge they must complete tables one and two. Table one consists of shooting an overall score of 180 or higher from the 200-, 300- and 500-yard lines. Marines must learn these skills and be proficient at it in case there comes a time they're required to use their M-16 A4 service rifle.

"This is the weapon the recruits will take into combat. It's important that they learn how to use it properly," said Uruo.

From the 200-yard line the recruits shot 20 rounds in the sitting, kneeling and standing position for 25-minutes, followed by shooting 10 rounds in 60-seconds while

sitting. The recruits then moved to the 300 yard line and shot five rounds while sitting and 10 rounds in 60-second while in the prone. Finally the recruit's shot 10 rounds from the 500 yard line while in the prone with a 10-minutes time frame.

"I feel so far I've been able to shoot well because the PMIs always tell me to relax, where to put my hands on the weapon and to slowly and easily squeeze the trigger," said Sell. "The trigger pull has been the most helpful."

After practicing during the beginning of the week, the recruits pre-qualify then qualify before week six is over. Table two is next, which requires recruits to engage moving targets.

Table one and two scores are composited together earning the recruits a marksman, sharpshooter or an expert badge. A marksman requires a score between 250-279, sharpshooter 280-304 and expert badge requires a score between 305-350.

"This training is where it all starts. It lays down the ground rules and gives the recruits a baseline for combat," said Mullis.



Lance Cpl. Crystal Druey

Recruit Cristos Diaz, Platoon 3254, Company L, 3rd Recruit Training Battalion, shoots his M-16A4 service rifle on Delta Range, Edson Range, Weapons and Field Training Battalion, Marine Corps Base Camp Pendleton March 20. Campbell was guided on shooting techniques by Cpl. Edgar Alvarez, primary marksmanship instructors, Edson Range, Weapons and Field Training Battalion, Marine Corps Base Camp Pendleton to help enforce the fundamentals of Marine Corps marksmanship. PMI's ensured Co. L recruits understood how to properly use the M-16A4 service rifle.

All-American recruit earns his Marine Corps title

BY LANCE CPL. CRYSTAL DRUERY
Chevron staff

Everyone who earns the title "Marine" does it for a different reason. For Recruit Colten C. Sponseller, platoon 2142, Company G, 2nd Recruit Training Battalion, the Marine Corps is one of the many stepping stones toward his dream of becoming a senator. Sponseller said he believes the Marine Corps can help him reach his dream by giving him an experience he wouldn't get anywhere else.

The Midland, Mich. native comes from a strong religious family of six. His father, a former Marine, and mother instilled patriotism and a love for the country while growing up. This encouraged him to take part in government relations, which he is now working toward in college.

At an early age, Sponseller joined the Boy Scouts of America. He dedicated himself until he was 18 and earned the title of Eagle Scout, the highest rank in Scouting.

"(The Boy Scouts of America) planted a seed of patriotism and a sense of duty," said Sponseller.

After graduating high school, Sponseller volunteered two years with his church's missionary program in Europe. While abroad, he gained a new respect for his own culture.

"I learned to appreciate and value my own country and culture as I experienced the differences other places had to offer," said 22-year-old Sponseller.

Upon returning home he began attending Utah Valley University, majoring in international relations. He said was then selected to take the Foreign Service Officer's

exam, the first step in becoming a foreign officer for the U.S. Department of State. With a desire to first pursue a more hands-on learning experience and give back to his country, Sponseller enlisted in the Marine Corps Reserves for six years, which will allow him to continue attending college.

"I wasn't really prepared for training the way I thought I'd be," said Sponseller. "I've been in many leadership roles, but since (I've been) at recruit training I've learned how to accept the leadership of others. I have to do my best so no one else has to pay for my mistakes."

With his mother always being a positive example of working hard and devoting herself to any task, and a father who taught him to finish what he started, Sponseller came to recruit training with a dedicated mindset. He made this clear to his fellow recruits early on.

"We became close friends when he invited me to his religious services on Sundays," said recruit Cameron Hutchison, Plt. 2142, Co. G, 2nd RTBn. "He's become someone I can trust and confide in."

Sponseller took on the role of prayer leader during recruit training. He has devoted his time to helping others.

"We don't know how he does it, but every night he finds a scripture related to what happened that day to keep us all going and motivated," said Hutchison.

Each recruit gains confidence and matures during training. Sponseller excelled in leadership skills. His senior drill instructor admitted he didn't notice Sponseller right away because he wasn't a recruit that needed much help, but excelled and



Lance Cpl. Crystal Druery

Recruit Colten C. Sponseller, platoon 2142, Company G, 2nd Recruit Training Battalion, applies camouflage paint to his face March 20 during the Crucible (the final test recruits go through before becoming Marines) at Camp Pendleton, Calif. Sponseller came to recruit training hoping to gain experiences that would help guide him toward his dream of becoming a U.S. senator. He has enlisted in the United States Marine Corps Reserves for six years and plans to finish his international relations degree at Utah Valley University.

helped other recruits to do the same.

"He's more mature than most of his fellow recruits," said Staff Sgt. Jonathon Arellano, senior drill instructor, Plt. 2142, Co. G, 2nd RTBn. "During second phase I started to notice him more. He took it upon himself to help other recruits whenever he could."

Sponseller hopes to share his beliefs and views with his fellow Marines by helping them in any way he can.

"My intention while in the Marine Corps is to be a leader and have a positive effect on my unit and the whole Marine Corps," said Sponseller.

While he is still young, he

hopes his experiences pave a path in the direction of his dream of being a senator. He plans to re-apply for the Foreign Service Officer's exam and finish his degree in international relations.

"You never know what's down the road," said Sponseller, who graduates today.

Sgt. Maj. Irene O'Neal

Parade Reviewing Officer

Sgt. Maj. Irene O'Neal, sergeant major of Marine Aircraft Group 13, 3rd Marine Aircraft Wing, Marine Force Pacific, Yuma, Ariz., joined the Marine Corps in July 1985. She graduated from Marine Corps Recruit Depot Parris Island, S.C., in September 1985.

Upon graduation O'Neal attended MOS School at Fort Lee, Va., as a bulk fuel specialist, where she was meritoriously promoted to private first class. She was transferred to 7th Engineer Support Battalion, 1st Force Service Support Group, Camp Pendleton, Calif.

O'Neal remained with 7th ESB until November 1989, during which time she was meritoriously promoted to lance corporal, corporal, and sergeant, and made a lateral move to the Imagery Interpretation, Intelligence Field.

Upon graduation from Intelligence School, Good Fellow Air Force Base, Texas in May 1990, O'Neal reported to Marine Wing Support Squadron 3, Marine Corps Air Station, El Toro, Calif., where she served as an imagery interpreter. She remained at El Toro for two years and deployed to the Persian Gulf War in 1991.

In 1992 O'Neal transferred to Okinawa, Japan, where she served with 1st Surveillance Reconnaissance Intelligence Group (SRIG).

Upon completion of her tour, O'Neal returned to El Toro for duty with Marine Wing Headquarters Squadron 3 as an Imagery Interpreter.

In 1994 O'Neal's unit was relocated to

Camp Pendleton and attached to Marine Corps Base. She later received permanent change of assignment orders to Marine Corps Imagery Interpretation Unit (MCISU), Camp Pendleton.

In 1996 O'Neal volunteered for drill instructor duty and was transferred to Parris Island and graduated from Drill Instructor School in September. During her tour on Parris Island, O'Neal served as a drill instructor, senior drill instructor, series gunnery sergeant, Battalion operations chief, and Headquarters Company first sergeant.

In 1998 O'Neal was transferred to 3rd Intelligence Battalion, Marine Headquarters Group, Okinawa, and served as the senior noncommissioned officer in charge of the Imagery Interpretation Platoon until she was selected to first sergeant in 2000.

From June 2000 thru July 2002, O'Neal served as first sergeant for Truck Company and Communications Company, 3rd Marine Division. She transferred to 7th Engineer Support Battalion, 1st Force Service Support Group in July 2002, and served as first sergeant for Bravo and Support Company. She also deployed in support of Operation Iraqi Freedom-I during this assignment.

In February 2003, O'Neal changed duties to assume the role of Remain Behind Element (RBE) sergeant major for 7th Engineer Support Battalion and deployed as the battalion sergeant major for Combat Service Support Battalion-1 for Operation Iraqi Freedom II-II. Upon returning from deployment in 2005, she was assigned to 1st Supply Battalion, Combat Logistics Regiment-15. She was promoted to sergeant major in January 2006.

In January 2007, O'Neal was transferred to Marine Helicopter Training

Squadron-164, Marine Aircraft Group 39, 3rd Marine Aircraft Wing. In April 2008 she was reassigned to Marine Aviation Logistics Squadron 39 and, in June 2010, she was transferred to Marine Aircraft Group 13, 3rd Marine Aircraft Wing to assume the duties as group sergeant major.

O'Neal's personal awards include the Meritorious Service Medal with two gold stars in lieu of third award, Navy and Marine Corps Commendation Medal with three gold stars in lieu of fourth award, the Air Force Achievement Medal and the Combat Action Ribbon.

Congratulations on becoming part of the finest, a United States Marine! You have accomplished so much over the last weeks of recruit training and you can proudly hold up your head with pride on earning your Eagle, Globe, and Anchor. Many have wished they could be in your shoes today but you alone have earned the title "Marine". Your family and friends should be very proud. We all expect great things from each of you as you join the ranks of many great warriors that have preceded you and I know that you will continue to make everyone proud.





Platoon 2145
COMPANY HONOR MAN
 Lance Cpl. J. A. Mansfield
 Brooklyn Park, Minn.
 Recruited by
 Sgt. B. C. Stott

Platoon 2141
SERIES HONOR MAN
 Lance Cpl. J. C. Piotrowski
 Sacramento, Calif.
 Recruited by
 Gunnery Sgt. T. Alexander

Platoon 2142
PLATOON HONOR MAN
 Pfc. J. R. Collins
 Arlington, Texas
 Recruited by
 Staff Sgt. D. L. Brooks

Platoon 2146
PLATOON HONOR MAN
 Pfc. B. L. Battiste
 Plano, Texas
 Recruited by
 Sgt. M. Bales

Platoon 2147
PLATOON HONOR MAN
 Pfc. E. A. Vides
 Mira Loma, Calif.
 Recruited by
 Staff Sgt. A. M. Saad

Platoon 2141
HIGH SHOOTER (339)
 Pfc. C. B. Felmeý
 Damascus, Ore.
 Marksmanship Instructor
 Sgt. D. E. Mullis

Platoon 2147
HIGH PFT (300)
 Pfc. J. D. Castro
 Salinas, Calif.
 Recruited by
 Staff Sgt. D. Crespo



GOLF COMPANY

2nd RECRUIT TRAINING BATTALION

Commanding Officer
 Sergeant Major
 Battalion Drill Master

Lt. Col. R. L. Hairston
 Sgt. Maj. P. A. Siaw
 Staff Sgt. R. E. Jackson



COMPANY G Commanding Officer Capt. S. L. Sandoval Company First Sergeant 1st Sgt. R. C. Ixtlahuac	SERIES 2141 Series Commander Capt. M. J. Standarfer Chief Drill Instructor Staff Sgt. G. C. Guevarra	PLATOON 2141 Senior Drill Instructor Sgt. J. A. Felix Drill Instructors Sgt. J. A. Greidanus Sgt. J. Lugo Jr. Sgt. J. J. Stepp	PLATOON 2142 Senior Drill Instructor Staff Sgt. J. A. Arellano Drill Instructors Staff Sgt. R. L. Broadway Staff Sgt. C. O. Harris Sgt. M. A. Garcia
	SERIES 2145 Series Commander Capt. Robert K. Gallati Chief Drill Instructor Staff Sgt. A. Glenn II	PLATOON 2145 Senior Drill Instructor Sgt. J. A. Onello Drill Instructors Sgt. D. A. Ammeter Sgt. J. P. LeBlanc Sgt. D. C. Wald	PLATOON 2146 Senior Drill Instructor Sgt. D. C. Downing Drill Instructors Sgt. B. W. Havenar Sgt. C. A. Sanchez Sgt. R. A. Velasquez

* Indicates Meritorious Promotion

- PLATOON 2141**
 Pfc. D. Aguilar
 Pfc. S. W. Alvar
 Pvt. J. D. Alvarado
 Pfc. J. L. Connelly
 Pvt. W. J. Cowan
 Pfc. D. P. Creppel
 Pvt. J. J. De La Cruz-Seaborg
 Pvt. C. J. Edie
 Pfc. C. B. Felmeý
 Pvt. B. W. Humphrey
 Pvt. N. D. Joczbsz
 Pvt. K. M. Jerzykowski
 Pvt. T. D. Johnosn
 Pvt. Z. L. Johnson
 Pvt. K. C. Jones
 Pvt. W. H. Jones
 Pfc. L. J. Kelly
 Pfc. C. R. Kiff
 Pvt. M. M. Killpack
 Pvt. D. R. Kitrel
 *Pfc. K. J. Koehler
 Pfc. W. J. Koumrian
 Pvt. J. W. Lacy
 Pvt. J. P. Laija Jr.
 *Pfc. B. M. Lindsey
 Pvt. J. D. Maguire
 Pvt. B. A. McClindon
 Pvt. D. I. McNeil
 Pvt. A. R. Mendoza
 Pvt. O. Molina
 Pfc. D. J. Morrow
 Pfc. P. C. Nguyen
 Pfc. T. T. Nguyen
 Pvt. K. A. Nichols
 Pvt. J. D. Oropeza
 Pvt. M. L. Penn
 *Pvt. E. R. Perez
 Pvt. A. E. Pfeiffer
 *Lance Cpl. J. C. Piotrowski
 Pfc. M. L. Poovey
 Pvt. T. A. Poston
 Pfc. N. L. Powell
 Pfc. R. J. Rainer
 Pfc. A. S. Reginato
 Pfc. R. J. Reginato
 Pfc. J. B. Robertson
 Pfc. M. J. Robustelli
 Pvt. J. D. Rodriguez
 Pvt. M. J. Roman
 Pvt. R. Ruiz Jr.
 Pfc. W. R. Rutledge
 Pvt. R. Saavedra-Macias
 Pvt. I. S. Salgado
 Pvt. J. Salgado-Valdes
 Pfc. J. S. Sanders
 Pfc. E. J. Schlueter
 Pvt. N. R. Schrage
 Pvt. G. L. Simmons
 Pvt. J. J. Sirtout IV
 Pvt. D. C. Slack
 Pfc. S. T. Smith
 Pfc. M. R. Snell
 Pfc. C. H. Sowel

- Pvt. B. J. Spracklin
 Pvt. D. L. Stafford
 Pvt. K. S. Thao
 Pvt. N. C. Thebeau
 Pvt. T. K. Tidwell
 Pvt. O. A. Urbina
 Pfc. A. Villalobos
 *Pfc. J. A. Villarreal
 Pvt. A. J. Waderich
 Pvt. D. D. Watson III
 *Pfc. A. J. Whitmire
 Pvt. C. L. Wilkinson
 Pvt. F. A. Ybarra
 Pvt. T. J. Zeck
- PLATOON 2142**
 Pvt. A. Almeida
 Pfc. O. Alvarez
 Pfc. A. Alvarez-Carrion
 Pvt. R. Anguiano Jr.
 Pvt. B. L. Appling Jr.
 Pfc. A. J. Araki
 Pfc. J. M. Bancroft
 Pfc. P. A. Berg
 Pvt. J. A. Bishop
 Pfc. J. L. Bradley
 Pfc. L. R. Brake
 Pvt. T. R. Branson
 Pfc. C. H. Bryant
 Pvt. K. P. Bursley
 Pvt. M. J. Cannon
 Pfc. C. J. Careta
 Pvt. J. Carlson
 Pfc. J. M. Charron
 Pvt. J. C. Chavez
 Pvt. S. J. Chavez
 Pfc. L. M. Chevez
 Pfc. G. A. Chilton
 *Pfc. H. L. Clark
 *Pfc. B. K. Cliett
 Pvt. N. W. Collier
 *Pfc. J. R. Collins
 Pvt. J. K. Cook
 Pvt. R. G. DeLeon
 Pfc. E. W. Deng
 Pvt. J. Deras
 Pvt. G. A. Derow
 Pvt. W. P. DeVille
 Pvt. J. D. Dicskon
 Pfc. C. A. Dirksen
 Pvt. S. Ellis
 Pvt. K. J. Ensrud
 Pvt. G. E. Evans
 Pvt. R. E. Evans
 Pvt. D. C. Favors
 Pfc. J. Finalet
 Pfc. D. L. Fishinghawk
 Pfc. J. D. Garibay-Rivera
 *Pfc. D. J. Geiger
 Pfc. S. Gogna
 Pvt. A. Gomez
 Pvt. J. Gomez
 Pvt. A. P. Gonzalez
 Pvt. C. Gonzalez
 Pvt. K. W. Gore

- Pfc. A. C. Guerra
 *Pfc. J. L. Gullman
 Pvt. C. D. Hallinan
 Pfc. B. O. Harsha
 Pfc. C. J. Hayes
 Pvt. J. J. Henderson
 Pvt. J. M. Hennagir
 Pvt. D. J. Herring
 Pvt. J. R. Herring
 Pfc. C. M. Hutchinson
 Pvt. D. D. Ireland
 Pvt. O. Jimenez Jr.
 Pfc. J. C. Johnson
 Pvt. B. T. Jones
 Pvt. T. W. Jones
 Pvt. M. Y. Kim
 Pfc. J. M. Klipp
 Pvt. C. D. Kortuem
 Pvt. J. W. Kotara
 Pfc. A. R. Kotecki
 Pvt. J. Lee
 Pvt. J. E. Leonard
 Pvt. I. R. McCallum
 Pvt. Z. T. Myers
 Pvt. A. J. Rich
 Pvt. A. L. Smith
 Pfc. C. C. Sponseller
 Pfc. S. J. Telfer
- PLATOON 2145**
 *Pfc. J. K. Arvanis
 Pvt. L. J. Asfeld
 Pfc. E. M. Ashton
 *Pfc. D. S. Baldwin
 Pvt. A. Barbosa
 Pvt. J. D. Barnedt
 Pvt. C. R. Barnett
 Pfc. T. J. Bina III
 Pvt. J. A. Broschardt
 Pvt. C. S. Carneau
 Pfc. A. A. Castaneda
 Pvt. E. P. Chavira
 Pvt. T. J. Cline
 Pfc. J. E. Conner
 Pfc. C. J. Cullen
 Pvt. C. L. Cunningham
 Pfc. T. O. Custer
 Pvt. Z. H. David
 Pfc. J. S. DeFily
 Pfc. A. C. Denecke
 *Pfc. K. P. Drake
 Pvt. B. D. Gallagher
 Pvt. M. J. Garner
 *Pfc. R. T. Gleason
 Pvt. J. E. Gonzales
 Pvt. J. M. Green III
 Pvt. D. S. Gunter
 Pvt. J. W. Hall
 Pfc. T. A. Hanson
 Pvt. A. Hernandez
 Pvt. D. Hernandez
 Pvt. W. D. Hubbard
 Pvt. T. W. Jeggliie
 Pvt. J. T. Kueber
 Pvt. R. G. Lancaster

- Pvt. J. A. Lawson
 Pvt. K. W. Lazzzerini
 Pvt. V. J. Levy
 *Pfc. T. D. Luehrs
 Pvt. T. J. Mahaffa
 *Lance Cpl. J. A. Mansfield
 Pvt. E. Marquez-De La Torre
 Pvt. C. R. Martinez Jr.
 Pfc. J. M. Martin-Vegue
 Pvt. G. D. Maxey
 Pvt. B. L. Meadows
 Pfc. S. A. Merk
 Pvt. K. K. Miller
 Pfc. D. R. Minarich
 Pvt. N. J. Moore
 Pfc. A. J. Morales
 Pvt. N. A. Nash
 Pfc. S. B. Nguyen
 Pfc. R. F. Obeji
 Pfc. I. Ortiz
 Pvt. C. C. Peiffer
 Pvt. J. A. Pena
 Pfc. R. T. Pengilly
 Pvt. M. T. Pienkowski
 Pvt. G. T. Pummell
 Pfc. R. M. Radkiewicz
 Pfc. G. M. Rager
 Pvt. D. L. Ramirez
 Pfc. J. A. Rasmussen
 Pvt. C. N. Rivera
 Pvt. C. E. Siordia-Gallardo
 Pfc. M. Smith
 Pvt. O. A. Sotelo
 Pfc. I. T. Spencer
- PLATOON 2146**
 Pvt. A. G. Baton
 *Pfc. B. L. Battiste
 Pfc. P. J. Bennett
 Pfc. J. M. Buhner
 Pfc. C. P. Chai
 Pvt. K. N. Charania
 Pvt. T. J. Charnley
 Pvt. J. K. Clements
 Pfc. J. De La Torre
 Pvt. A. M. De Leon
 Pvt. T. T. De Leon
 Pvt. J. M. Duggan
 Pvt. M. L. Dunkle
 Pfc. B. M. Edwards Jr.
 Pfc. W. S. Egleston
 Pfc. M. C. Engel
 Pvt. A. Escriba-Esquivel
 Pvt. D. L. Feldman
 Pvt. C. H. Figueroa
 Pvt. M. W. Fowler
 Pfc. B. C. Fuson
 Pfc. J. E. Garcia
 *Pfc. J. A. Gomez
 Pvt. N. T. Gresham
 Pfc. J. M. Griffin
 Pvt. Z. M. Hagberg
 Pvt. E. Hasanbegovic
 Pvt. D. C. Hayward
 Pvt. K. C. Hazlett
 Pvt. K. A. Hickman

- Pvt. A. T. Huntington
 *Pfc. A. Islam
 Pvt. J. Kekua
 Pvt. M. S. Kiefer
 Pvt. D. M. Martelly
 *Pfc. B. C. Matthews
 *Pfc. S. T. McKinney
 Pvt. A. C. Middleton
 Pvt. R. D. Morrison
 Pvt. A. C. O'Neal
 Pvt. J. A. Palacios
 Pvt. R. J. Rashid
 Pfc. A. G. Real
 Pvt. I. G. Redmond
 Pfc. R. T. Robertson
 Pvt. J. A. Rooks
 Pvt. R. W. Rystrom
 Pvt. C. W. Saenz
 Pfc. J. E. Sanchez
 Pfc. J. O. Sanchez
 Pvt. S. E. Sanchez
 Pvt. S. M. Scherer
 Pvt. E. J. Schmitz
 Pvt. I. M. Scrimsher
 Pvt. A. M. Senn
 Pvt. B. C. Simpson
 Pvt. M. S. Sparks
 Pfc. C. M. Stephenson
 Pvt. R. D. Strange III
 Pvt. D. V. Swayne III
 Pvt. S. C. Talley
 Pvt. J. A. Teske
 Pvt. I. B. Tomac
 Pfc. A. R. Underwood
 Pvt. M. G. Van De Venter
 Pvt. J. R. Van Thiel
 Pfc. G. S. Vergara
 Pvt. M. A. Villanueva
 Pfc. D. J. Vosburgh
 Pvt. J. D. Voss
 Pvt. A. J. Weber
 Pfc. A. W. West
 Pfc. B. C. Williams
 Pvt. B. M. Williams
- PLATOON 2147**
 Pvt. M. A. Acosta
 Pvt. G. J. Adame
 Pfc. A. M. Aden
 *Pfc. A. Alcazar-Vargas
 Pvt. A. C. Alvarado
 Pfc. D. C. Ashton
 Pfc. S. M. Avitia
 Pvt. R. L. Baldwin
 Pvt. J. R. Bavuso
 Pvt. S. M. Blake
 Pfc. B. K. Borowski
 Pvt. T. C. Britt
 Pvt. D. D. Buczkowski
 Pfc. J. N. Bullman
 Pfc. J. A. Cain
 Pfc. W. J. Callanan
 Pvt. J. D. Carter
 Pfc. J. D. Castro
 Pfc. M. R. Chambers

- Pfc. A. S. Chapman
 Pfc. D. A. Chapman
 Pfc. B. J. Cochran
 Pvt. P. E. Coleman
 Pfc. B. M. Jones
 Pvt. J. Lerma-Valdez
 *Pfc. J. R. Longoria
 Pvt. A. B. Lopez
 Pvt. D. E. Lopez
 Pvt. R. A. Lozano-Silvas
 Pvt. J. A. Maloy
 Pvt. K. Martinez
 Pvt. R. J. Matthews-Tveit
 Pvt. R. A. McCoy
 Pvt. S. P. McFarland
 Pfc. C. McIntyre
 Pvt. C. W. Miculka
 Pfc. J. M. Millette
 Pvt. B. M. Moorehead
 Pvt. P. J. Morales
 Pfc. M. P. Tan
 Pvt. P. C. Murphy
 Pvt. J. M. Newport
 Pvt. M. V. Nguyen
 Pfc. K. P. Patterson
 Pvt. T. D. Peet
 Pfc. C. R. Perguson
 Pfc. C. M. Placido
 Pvt. S. J. Pottorff
 Pvt. K. Ramirez
 Pvt. J. Ruiz-Jimenez,
 Pvt. J. Salinas
 Pvt. M. T. Scott
 Pvt. M. G. Smith
 Pvt. J. A. Solis
 Pvt. S. R. Sollars Jr.
 Pvt. D. R. Stanford
 Pfc. T. J. Stoltz
 Pfc. D. J. Vosburgh
 Pvt. J. D. Voss
 Pvt. A. J. Weber
 Pfc. A. W. West
 Pfc. B. C. Williams
 Pvt. B. M. Williams

Words from family, friends motivate recruits

BY LANCE CPL. CRYSTAL DRUERY
Chevron staff

During the 12 weeks aboard Marine Corps Recruit Depot San Diego recruits look for motivation to push through each training day. Most recruits find strength and support through letters they receive during mail call.

Many recruits delight in words of encouragement they receive in letters from family and friends.

"Letters are a connection with the outside world," said Recruit Nathan Eckerdt, Platoon 3226, Company K, 3rd Recruit Training Battalion. "Being here at recruit training can make it kind of easy to forget there's another world."

Estranged from their lives and thrown into a completely new world, caring words from loved ones are sometimes all recruits need to make it through each challenging day of recruit training.

"The recruits will move faster to get things done when they know they're about to get mail," said Staff Sgt. Robert Griffith, senior drill instructor, Co. K, 3rd RTBn. "The letters can definitely affect them throughout training."

Drill instructors pick up recruit mail Monday through Saturday. Every evening, the recruits are then gathered around one of their drill instructors to receive mail. The senior holds a father figure role to recruits while they are in training so Griffith makes sure to always be the one to pass out his platoon's mail.

"Recruit Mendeola," shouts Griffith, as he calls off the name written on an envelope.

"Mail received, aye sir," Recruit Kevin Mendeola, Plt. 3226, Co. K, 3rd RTBn., shouts as he puts one hand under the envelope addressed to him and his other hand slaps the top. This is the only acceptable way for recruits to receive their mail.

Thirty-minutes later, after hygiene time, recruits are allowed to open up their letters and write back to their loved ones during "square away time". During this time, recruits can fix uniform items, read

or write letters and study Marine Corps knowledge.

Mendeola received a letter from his mother who he said writes him the most. The evening of March 8 he decided to spend his free time reading his mother's letter, cherishing every word written across the paper.

"Her letters keep me smiling throughout the day," said Mendeola, a Houston native. "My mom is a single mother. She's worked hard to give my sister and me what we have. They're the reason I'm here today," said Mendeola, who joined to show his mother she raised a good man.

Many recruits like to share the experiences they've had aboard the depot with their friends and family through their letters. Recruit Sam Kruse, Co. K, 3rd RTBn., said he enjoys telling them about his experience because recruit training is something he feels he's excelling in and is learning new skills.

For some recruits, these letters are a way to connect with family members on a new level. Eckerdt said he enjoyed letters from his father the most because it's the most communication they've ever had.

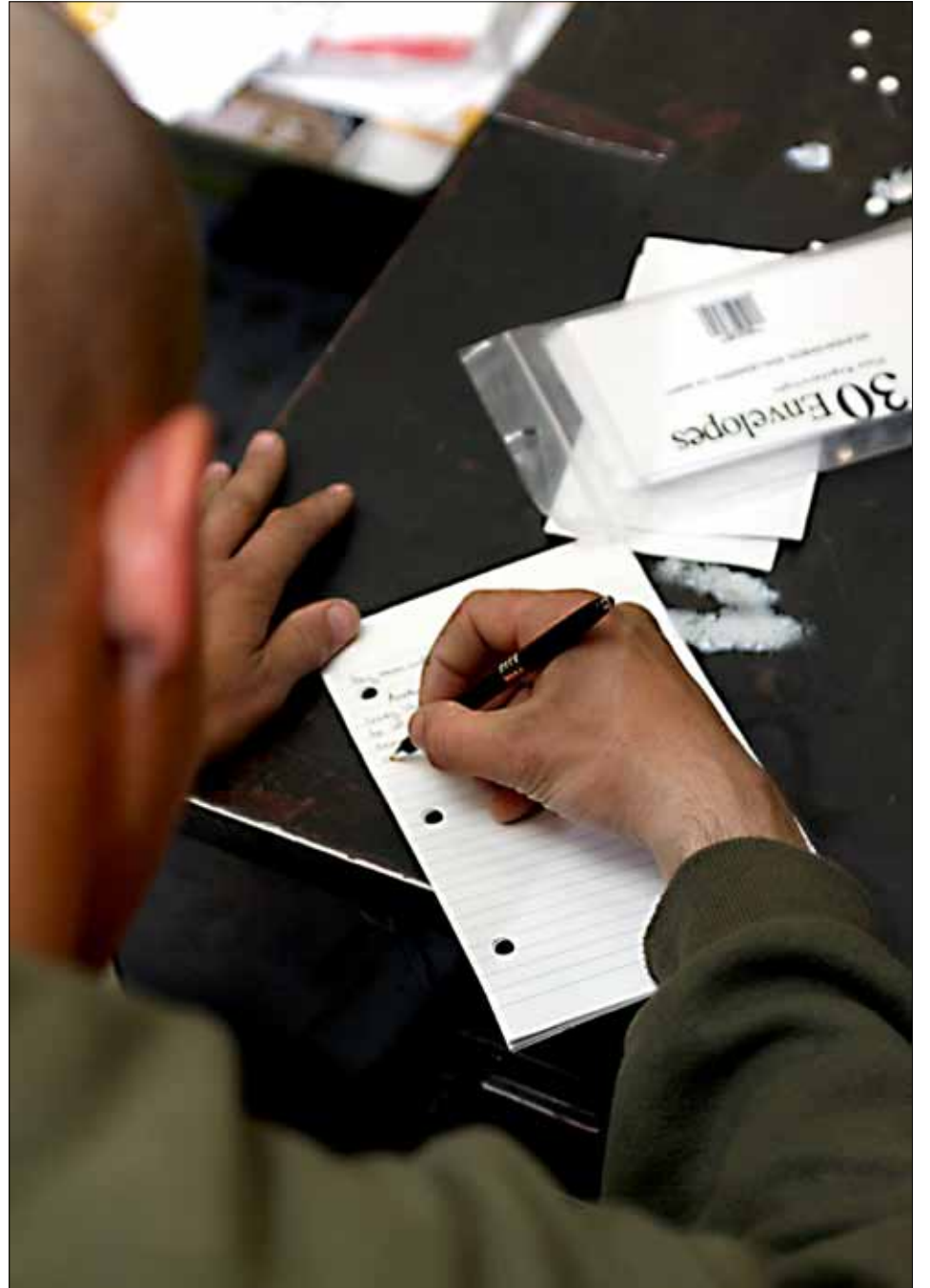
"His letters are always very encouraging," said Eckerdt, a Billings, Mont. native. "My dad's never been good with words (verbally). Letters are a good way to connect with him."

Receiving mail during the beginning of recruit training is difficult for some recruits because it can make them homesick.

"Nathan has already lived on his own for the past six years," said Jenny Eckerdt, recruit Eckerdt's mother. "So we were all surprised just how much we missed him being away at recruit training. But the letters help. We really look forward to receiving them each week so we know he's okay and progressing."

As the recruits adjust to their training environment the letters give them more reasons to finish what they have started.

"Without mail the feelings of isolation would be a lot worse," said Eckerdt, Plt. 3226 guide. "It's nice to know your family's proud of you and thinking about you."



Lance Cpl. Crystal Druery

Recruit Nathan Eckerdt, Platoon 3226, Company K, 3rd Recruit Training Battalion, writes a letter to his family and friends March 8 during his "square away time" aboard Marine Corps Recruit Depot San Diego. Many recruits like to share the experiences they've had aboard the depot with their friends and family through letters since it's their only form of communication with the outside world while they are training.



Lance Cpl. Crystal Druery

Staff Sgt. Robert Griffith, senior drill instructor, Company K, 3rd Recruit Training Battalion, passes out letters to platoon 3226 during mail call March 8 aboard Marine Corps Recruit Depot San Diego. During 12 weeks of recruit training aboard the depot, recruits rely on letters from family and friends for motivation to push through each training day.