



Marines practice amphibious assault landing

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MARINE CORPS RECRUIT DEPOT SAN DIEGO



AND THE WESTERN RECRUITING REGION



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“WHERE MARINES ARE MADE”

FRIDAY, MAY 1, 2015



Private First Class Mark-Louie H. Taocta, platoon guide for Platoon 1007, Alpha Company, 1st Recruit Training Battalion, runs with ammunition cans during the Combat Fitness Test at Marine Corps Recruit Depot San Diego, April 9. Taocta and Alpha Company have completed recruit training and graduate during today's ceremony.

Marine adapts, overcomes challenges to earn title

STORY & PHOTO BY
SGT. BENJAMIN E. WOODLE
Chevron staff

When faced with a challenge, one has the option to stand still and be defeated or to push forward, adapt and overcome. One determined Marine, Pfc. Mark-Louie H. Taocta, Platoon 1007, Alpha Company, 1st Recruit Training Battalion, never stopped pushing forward through the obstacles of his life and the journey to earn the title United States Marine at Marine Corps Recruit Depot San Diego.

Taocta was born in the Bacolod, Philippines, and had two older brothers and one older sister. When he was four years old, his father left them to go to the United States. It wasn't until he came back nine years later that he learned why his father had really left.

“When my dad came back to the Philippines after nine years of not seeing him, I didn't really recognize him,” said 18-year-old Taocta. “He explained to me why he left. He said he left to find better work so he could send money back to us to better our education and to petition us to go to the United States after he himself became a citizen.”

At the age of 15, after finally getting approval, Taocta and his brothers and sister moved to Hercules, Calif., to start a new life. His mother decided to stay behind as his parents had divorced. Now in the United States, Taocta faced many challenges while adjusting to his new home.

“When I first came to Hercules, I didn't know any English,” said Taocta, who was recruited out of Recruiting Station San Jose, Calif. “It was a large language barrier for me because I couldn't talk to anyone. When I went to school, all I really knew then was yes, no or extremely basic responses. It was a big difference compared to how I used to live in the Philippines.”

Determined to learn all he could, Taocta

spent every day improving his English and knowledge of American culture.

“It was a struggle every day,” said Taocta. “I tried to catch up on everything, and I pick things up fast, so I started reading a lot of books, tried socializing with other people and asked them questions to learn the language and culture better. Within four years of being here, I could speak English fluently enough to carry a regular conversation with people.”

While getting accustomed to his new settings, Taocta's father told him about the United States Marine Corps and what it could offer him.

“When my dad was in the Philippines, he was a Philippine Marine Corps officer,” said Taocta. “When I came to the United States, it was one of the things he had mentioned to me. He said how he used to be a Philippine Marine and how hard it was.”

Taocta stated that hearing his dad talk about his time with the PMC had motivated him to join the United States Marine Corps.

“I've done my research about the Marine Corps, and it suits my personality in the way I want to live my life,” said Taocta. “I could potentially make it a career.”

Arriving at Marine Corps Recruit Depot San Diego for the first time, Taocta was ready to endure the 13-week challenge to earn the title Marine.

“Game on,” Taocta thought. “I thought, ‘this is it, there's no backing down now. I made this choice, and now I have to finish it.’ I was scared a little, but I was just as motivated to get through the training.”

During receiving week, it was discovered that Taocta had a medical condition that pulled him out of training and landed him in the Marine Rehabilitation Platoon for three months of observation.

Taocta stated that during his initial time at MRP he became sad thinking about back home and how his family was doing. He real-

ized it was going to be even longer before he saw them again and thought about quitting.

“It was hard for me at first, but then I started talking to other recruits who had been there longer than me and started to get motivated again,” said Taocta. “Some of them had permanent issues and wouldn't be able to return to training, so I thought how lucky I was that I could still go back. I just had to wait for my time. What really helped me keep going was my family. I couldn't go home not being a Marine. I was embarrassed with the thought of telling them that I quit. My dad encouraged me to keep pushing forward.”

While waiting to be released back to training, Taocta took advantage of learning from those who had been there longer than him.

“I talked to the guide and squad leaders at MRP and asked them how they did their jobs and how to lead a platoon,” said Taocta. “When it came time for me to go back to training with Alpha Company, I was instantly ready to become the guide.”

Cleared for duty, Taocta picked up with Alpha Company. Motivated and ready with a new arsenal of knowledge and skills, Taocta stood well above the rest of the recruits, which was recognized by the drill instructors who instantly made him the platoon guide.

“He instantly struck me as a leader,” said Staff Sgt. Jason. J. Gutierrez, senior drill instructor. “He was knowledgeable and willing to help the other recruits in the things that he knew. The other recruits instantly looked up to him because he knew what was going on. After noticing these things, we knew making him guide would also help the drill instructors out in our daily tasks.”

Earning the title Marine, Taocta continues his journey to Infantry Training Battalion at the School of Infantry at Camp Pendleton, Calif., where he will train to become an infantry machine gunner. But first, he will enjoy his ten days of leave with his family he has wanted so long to see.

BRIEFS

Golf Tournament

Sign up for the Commanding General's Golf Tournament today.

The tournament will be held at the Admiral Baker Golf Course in the Mission Gorge area, on May 6. Check-in begins at 8 a.m., with tournament play starting at 10.

Fees are \$80 for a single and \$320 for a foursome. The event includes 18 holes of golf, refreshments throughout the course, dinner and a goodie bag.

Register online at MCC-SMCRD.COM, at the MCRD Marine Corps Exchange Mall cash office, or at the Semper Fit Offices, Building 5W.

For information and to register go to http://mccsmcrd.com/Downloads/GolfTournament/15_MCCS_MCRD_San_Diego_Golf_Tournament_Entry_Form_Flyer.pdf

Brown bag lunch seminar

The Personal & Professional Development team will host a Brown Bag Lunch Financial Seminar in the P&PD classroom, Building 14, May 20 from 11:30 a.m. until 1 p.m.

The seminar will address: “Personal & Financial Goals for Marines and Families – Are they Important?”

For information and to register call Mike McIsaac at (619) 524-5728 or 1204.

Interview Skills

The Personal & Professional Development team offers an Interview Skills Workshop May 21 from 9 to 11 a.m., in Building 14.

This event will help reduce the stress of job interviews by ensuring preparedness.

Learn winning interview techniques that will give an edge over the competition including how to market yourself and your skills, dressing for success and how the interview process works.

For information and to register call Mina Threat at (619) 524-1283 or James Stewart at (619) 524-0035.

Mayweather vs Pacquiao

The depot's recreation center offers a large screen viewing experience of the Mayweather vs Pacquiao fight tomorrow at 6 p.m.

Watch the much-anticipated boxing event on 25 large flat screen televisions and the 200" projection screen.

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.



A Marine with 3rd Platoon, Alpha Company, 2nd Assault Amphibian Battalion, drives an amphibious assault vehicle to the multipurpose amphibious assault ship USS Kearsarge (LHD-3) off the coast of Camp Lejeune, N.C., April 12, 2015. The platoon used amphibious assault vehicles to transport Marines from 1st Battalion, 6th Marine Regiment in support of a ship-to-shore exercise.

2nd AA Battalion conducts ship-to-shore exercise

STORY & PHOTOS BY
CPL. KIRSTIN
MERRIMARAHAJARA
II Marine Expeditionary Force

MARINE CORPS BASE CAMP LEJEUNE, N.C. – “My AMTRAC and I are the defenders of our country. We are the masters of gunnery. We are the saviors from the ocean.” Marines from 2nd Assault Amphibian Battalion, 2nd Marine Division know these lines well because it comes from their AMTRAC creed.

An AMTRAC (Amphibious Tractor) is an assault amphibious vehicle used to provide the necessary transportation of troops from land to sea, and vice versa. Not only do AAV operators bring Marines where they need to go, but they can also fight alongside their brothers-in-arms.

“My job is very important; I know that for a fact,” said Lance Cpl. Jorge De Jesus, an AAV operator with Company A, 2nd AA Bn., and a Bronx, New York native. “I transport troops, I’m able to shoot, move and communicate, and I take the fight closer than what other people can.”

As a department of the Navy, the Marine Corps and its sister-

service work closely together, especially when it comes to amphibious operations.

Members of 2nd AA Bn. embarked on the multipurpose amphibious assault ship USS Kearsarge (LHD-3), April 12, 2015. Sailors aboard the ship guided the AAV operators through the well-deck of the ship as part of a joint operations access exercise. The ship hosted the 2nd AA Bn. Marines for one night, until they transported Marines from 1st Battalion, 6th Marine Regiment to a training area at Marine Corps Base Camp Lejeune, N.C.

“We’re both helping each other out,” said De Jesus. “They need qualification for their ground guides, and we need the qualification to get on ship and know what we need to do during [Marine Expeditionary Brigade] floats and [Marine Expeditionary Units]. The relationship between the two services is crucial.”

After securing their vehicles in the well deck of the USS Kearsarge, the Marines performed proactive maintenance on their vehicles by changing oil and fixing small problems while on ship. Operators and

mechanics of AAVs know that taking care of the vehicles is a huge part of achieving mission accomplishment, especially since one hour of operating an AAV

requires eight hours of maintenance.

Despite the long hours it may take to maintain an amphibious vehicle, many Marines feel a sense of pride in the im-

portant role they play for the Marine Corps.

“It’s a rewarding feeling knowing that you actually make a difference in the fight,” said De Jesus. “Sometimes

[our job requires] long hours, but at the end of the day... when you plan something and it comes together, the hours don’t really matter anymore. I love what I do.”



An amphibious assault vehicle splashes into the Atlantic Ocean during a joint Operations access exercise.

CHEVRON

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1st RECRUIT TRAINING BATTALION

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* Indicates Meritorious Promotion

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 Pvt. D. C. Young



Recruit Edward C. Brookman, Charlie Company, 1st Recruit Training Battalion, sights in on his target during Grass Week at Edson Range, Marine Corps Base Camp Pendleton, Calif., April 14. During Grass Week instructors correct recruits on their positions and give tips on how they can be more comfortable. White barrels with targets painted on them simulate targets recruits will see at each firing line.

Grass Week training teaches marksmanship fundamentals

STORY & PHOTOS BY
CPL. TYLER VIGLIONE
Chevron staff

In their second phase of training, recruits at Marine Corps Recruit Depot San Diego take an hour drive north to spend two weeks at Edson Range aboard Marine Corps Base Camp Pendleton, Calif.

There, the fundamentals of basic marksmanship are taught, and the M16-A4 Service Rifle that recruits were issued in the beginning of training finally serves a greater purpose.

Recruits of Charlie Company, 1st Recruit Training Battalion, spent a week learning how to properly fire the rifle during Grass Week on Edson Range beginning April 13.

Learning to fire the weapon is a graduation requirement, and recruits must learn basic marksmanship skills and qualify through the same course of fire that Marines conduct annually.

"The purpose of Grass Week is to instill the basic fundamentals of shooting in the recruits," said Sgt. Jon E. Austin, drill instructor. "Some of them think they know how to fire a weapon properly, but this week is to strip them of their bad habits and teach them the Marine Corps' way."

Grass Week consists of marksmanship classes that teach recruits rifle safety rules, how to hold the weapon and other fundamentals, explained Austin, a 28-year-old Indianapolis native.

"The first thing we drill in their head from day one is safety," said Austin. "Instead of them just repeating the rules back to me, I explain every aspect of the rule and why it's important."

According to Austin, once

the recruits become familiar with the fundamentals, they are expected to apply them when they are snapping in and at the Indoor Simulated Marksmanship Trainer.

Snapping in allows recruits to build muscle memory in each of the four shooting positions, and begin to apply what they've learned. White drums with targets painted on them simulate the actual targets that recruits will see at various firing lines.

During this time, instructors correct recruits on their positions and give them tips on how they can be more comfortable.

"Making the positions comfortable was probably the most difficult thing for me," said Recruit Tanner R. Logan. "At first it didn't feel right, but as I snapped in more it became a little better."

Once the recruits have a basic understanding of what they will be expected to do, they will

move to the ISMT where they're able to practice the process of shot delivery.

The ISMT is simulated course of fire that allows recruits to fire from the different yard lines, shoot in the different positions and become familiar with the firing commands.

"I feel like the ISMT will help me because I can see where my shot will actually be hitting as opposed to just sighting in and pulling the trigger," said

Logan, a native of Panpa, Texas.

The following week, the recruits of Charlie Company will attack targets at the live fire range. This is where they'll be able to make use of what they've learned and qualify for their marksmanship badges.

"I think I'll be ready to get on the range and fire," said Logan. "We have already learned so much in the last two days, I think I will be more than ready."



Recruits of Charlie Company, 1st Recruit Training Battalion, learn the proper prone position during a class at Edson Range. Recruits spent a week learning and practicing the fundamentals of marksmanship, ensuring they are confident for the live-fire qualification. Once the recruits become familiar with the fundamentals, they are expected to apply them through snapping in and at the Indoor Simulated Marksmanship Trainer.