



Marine tankers engage in 13th annual Tiger Competition

Pg 2

CHEVRON

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“WHERE MARINES ARE MADE”

FRIDAY, JUNE 12, 2015



Private First Class Cody F. Shepard (right), Fox Company, 2nd Recruit Training Battalion, leads a patrol down the Improvised Explosive Device lane during the Crucible at Marine Corps Base Camp Pendleton, Calif., June 2. Shepard, who graduates from recruit training today, will move on to the School of Infantry in Camp Pendleton, where he will go through Marine Combat Training and then pursue his military occupational specialty in avionics. He plans on making a career in the Marine Corps.

Marine joins Corps in search of brotherhood

STORY & PHOTO BY
CPL. TYLER VIGLIONE
Chevron staff

Growing up without a stable home could lead to a rough life. For one Marine, the adversity of that situation forced him to make difficult decisions to better his life and himself.

Private First Class Cody F. Shepard, Fox Company, 2nd Recruit Training Battalion, used his struggles in life to push him to join the Marine Corps in pursuit of brotherhood and a stable life.

Shepard grew up in Phoenix where he lived with his parents and his brother.

“Before I was six years old, I can’t remember a lot,” said Shepard. “My parents separated, and it resulted in my brother and me being in the care of Child Protective Services until I was released back to my mom. My brother was not allowed to come back home with us.”

He describes his life as difficult, not always having a place to stay or food to eat. He did not live in a structured home, had very few rules and almost no supervision at a young age.

“It was difficult living where I was living. I wasn’t the best child. I taught myself how to survive because no one else was going to help me,” said the 18-year-old Marine. “I lived in the ghetto, on the South side of Phoenix, it was a very dangerous and run down community.”

Years later, Shepard’s mother asked him if he would be interested in going to live with his aunt in hopes of giving him what she believed he was missing.

“I was about 10 when I moved in with my aunt,” said Shepard. “I had to learn every-

thing. I didn’t know manners, how to act, how to react to certain situations and my aunt helped me a lot. She gave me the world, as before her I had nothing. I lived on the streets and lived house to house with people I didn’t even know.”

He had no contact with his father during the time that he spent on his own. He had no knowledge of where he lived or what he did.

“I hadn’t seen my father in six years,” said Shepard. “One day he just showed up at my aunt’s house. I don’t even know how to explain it. It was awesome to finally be able to see my dad.”

After reuniting with his father at the age of 12, he wanted nothing more than to live and be with him again.

“I would constantly go to my dad’s house, which was right around the corner,” said Shepard. “After I begged enough, I was finally able to live with my dad, and honestly it was a culture shock.”

The private first class explains how it was difficult for him to adjust from being the only child in a house to a member of an actual family with brothers and sisters.

“We fought a lot,” said Shepard. “From 13 to just before I turned 18, it was a constant battle at home. It was still a lot better than being on my own.”

Shepard played football at Cortez High School in Phoenix, and it was there he joined the Navy Junior Reserve Officers Training Corps, which he described as “eye opening.”

“I made a lot of friends my first year of high school,” said Shepard. “After my fresh-

man year, my parents got better paying jobs in Payson, Ariz., so I had to switch schools. I transferred to Payson High School, and the first year was difficult. I didn’t know anybody. I started at a place where everyone liked me and ended up at a place where nobody knew me.”

Shepard started thinking about the Marine Corps in his first year of high school because one of his NJROTC instructors was a retired Marine Corps gunnery sergeant. He would often bring Marines into the school and have them run the physical training sessions. Shepard knew that being a Marine was what he truly wanted.

“I’ve always had a passion to be a United States Marine,” said Shepard. “Throughout high school, I kept my grades up and participated in sports to stay in shape.”

When it came time to enlist in the Marine Corps, Shepard excitedly left Payson and headed to Marine Corps Recruit Depot San Diego.

He proved himself to his drill instructors and was immediately selected to be a squad leader and eventually moved up to being the guide, the highest leadership position a recruit can hold while in training. He maintained his leadership role and graduated as guide for his platoon.

Following recruit training, Shepard will move on to the School of Infantry in Camp Pendleton, Calif., where he will go through Marine Combat Training. Upon completion of MCT, he will pursue his military occupational specialty in avionics. He plans on staying in the Marine Corps and making it a career.

BRIEFS

Flag Day LEGO event

The MCRD San Diego Museum will sponsor a LEGO craft event tomorrow for Flag Day. Come to the museum from 10 a.m. to noon, and help create a ‘Betsy Ross’ flag, one of the first American flags flown.

The flag creation is for children ages 4-12 (active duty and DoD civilian families).

Registration is required at www.corpshistory.org/registration.html.

The event is limited to the first 65 children registered.

Children of all ages can come out during the event and participate in coloring activities, play with a collection of LEGO bricks and meet therapy dogs from Independent Therapy Dogs, International.

For information, call Joan Schwarz-Wetter at (619) 524-6038.

Gate 4 closure

The start date for renovation of Gate 4 has been moved to June 22. The gate will be closed to all vehicular and pedestrian traffic until construction is completed in December.

During Gate 4 renovation, operating hours of Gates 2 and 5 will be as follows:

Gate 2:

Open 5 a.m. to 10 p.m. seven days a week

Gate 5:

Open 24 hours

Auto skills workshop

There will be an auto skills workshop in the Auto Skills Center, Building 142, from 10 a.m. to 2:30 p.m. on June 20.

The topic for the workshop is brakes.

Those attending should dress comfortably for a hands-on garage classroom environment. No open-toed shoes will be permitted.

For information go to http://www.mccsmcrd.com/Downloads/CURRENT_EVENTS/15-Car-Classes.pdf

Father’s Day Barbecue

The Bay View Restaurant is scheduled to host a Father’s Day Barbecue Buffet June 21 from 11 a.m. until 2 p.m.

The menu features barbecue chicken, baby back ribs and gourmet hot dogs.

Cost is \$15.95 for adults and \$8.95 for children 5 to 11. Children under 5 dine for free.

For reservations call (619) 725-6388.

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 crew operating the M1A1 Abrams tank fires at a target during the 13th annual TIGERCOMP aboard Camp Lejeune, N.C., June 5. The best tank gunner crews from 1st Tank Battalion, 2nd Tank Battalion and 4th Tank Battalion competed for top honors and the McCard trophy bringing the entire tank community, including tank battalion veterans, together for an entertaining display of the tanks force and powerful capabilities.

Marine tankers prove mission readiness

STORY & PHOTOS BY
CPL. MICHELLE REIF
II Marine Expeditionary Force

CAMP LEJEUNE, N.C. – The turret of the tank traversed along the horizon, scanning the engagement area for potential threats, looking to destroy them faster than the previous crew. A voice suddenly buzzed in over the radio informing them of an approaching enemy tank.

The tank commander tersely instructs the loader and the gunner which ammunition to prepare. Their communication is brief but effective, each knowing the others thoughts and intentions. They are one cohesive team, the result of a significant amount of time spent training together.

Preparations made, the tank commander booms out the fire command. The cannon goes off with an earsplitting blast and fire erupts around the barrel.

The steel target tank didn't stand a chance.

The best tank gunner crews from 1st, 2nd and 4th Tank Battalions competed for top honors and the McCard trophy during the 13th annual Tiger Competition at Shooting Range-10 on Camp Lejeune, June 5. This competition brought the entire

tank community, including tank battalion veterans, together for an entertaining display of the force and powerful capabilities.

"We have a total of 202 tank crews in the entire Marine Corps," said Lt. Col. Robert J. Bodisch, the commanding officer of 2nd Tank Bn.

"Today, what we have are the absolute top three best crews.

"This demanding competition highlights excellence in the critical combat skills of tank gunnery and demonstrates the aggressiveness, dedication and utmost professionalism of the Marine tanker."

The crews, operating the M1A1 Main Battle Tank, armed with a M256 120mm cannon, and two machine guns, each go through a series of seven engagements downrange, explained Gunnery Sgt. Dennis Downes, the battalion master gunner for 2nd Tank Bn.

The engagements are offensive and defensive, some stationary and some conducted on the move. The targets included pop-up and moving targets, simulating enemy tanks, armored personnel carriers, heavy weapons and troops.

"This competition puts them through a course of fire which tests the full capabilities of the

tank and the crew," said Downes.

Not only is the crew tested on their ability to hit targets quickly, they are also assessed on their communication skills and ability to make timely decisions as a team. The competition aims to recreate a true combat situation to see each crew tried to the height of their abilities.

"It's very realistic," said Bodisch. "What you'll see is the tank crew go down range and they will get a series of threat briefings. Depending on the threat scenario, the tank crews have to understand what ammunition they are going to select. They are going to be graded on their fire commands, every word they say over that radio, and that really speaks to the efficiency of that crew and how they execute shooting the targets."

A major factor of what makes a team successful is their ability to understand one another and work together as a strong team, explained Lance Cpl. Ryan Foster, the loader representing 2nd Tank Bn. in the competition. The ability of the team to communicate can make or break them in this competition.

"It's vital for a tank crew to get along and know how one another acts," said Foster. "I think our chemistry works really well."

Foster also spoke about the incredible support his crew received from the other tankers in the battalion. Also present encouraging the crews were family members and veterans from the Marine Corps Tankers Association. The veterans proudly boasted about their days as tankers and good-naturedly rooted for the crew from their former battalions.

Another rewarding aspect of the TIGERCOMP was the opportunity for the Marines to meet and interact with tankers from all across the Corps. It is the only competition of its kind that allows all of the units to compete head-to-head without regard to active or reserve status, said Bodisch.

"I believe that this competition has brought the full tank community together as a team because we have Marines from 1st Tank Bn. that are getting to know the Marines from 2nd Tank Battalion along with Marines from 4th Tank Bn. that we don't get to work with all the time. It's good for the crews to get together and make contacts and see what the other crews are doing," said Downes.

In the end, however, there could only be one winner.

The crews gathered in formation in sight of the coveted McCa-

rd trophy. The trophy is named after Gunnery Sgt. Robert H. McCard, who posthumously received the Medal of Honor for his heroic actions during the Battle for Saipan on June 16, 1944. The winning crew will hold this trophy, along with the associated bragging rights, until next year's competition.

The suspense rose as 1st Tank Bn. was proclaimed the 3rd place winner. The trophy gleamed tauntingly in the sunlight.

"Finishing in second place," the announcer reads, "is the crew from 4th Tank Bn."

Left standing was the 13th annual TIGERCOMP champion crew representing 2nd Tank Bn. Tank Commander Staff Sgt. Joseph Lowery, Gunner Cpl. Charles Smith III, Loader Lance Cpl. Ryan Foster and Driver Lance Cpl. Keondre Mitchell stepped forward to receive medals, Navy, Marine Corps Achievement Medals and the McCard trophy.

"TIGERCOMP recognizes and rewards excellence in small unit teamwork, leadership and tank gunnery," said Bodisch. "Consistent with our heritage as riflemen, it is the ability to put steel on target that is the foundation of combat readiness for Marine tank units."

CHEVRON

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Platoon 2134 PLATOON HONOR MAN Pfc. C. F. Shepard Payson, Ariz. Recruited by Staff Sgt. T. B. Barg
Platoon 2134 HIGH SHOOTER (335) Pvt. R. M. Tato San Diego Marksman Instructor Staff Sgt. M. B. Ta
Platoon 2134 HIGH PFT (300) Pfc. R. K. Wiebe Lawrence, Kan. Recruited by Sgt. A. D. Rupp



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2nd RECRUIT TRAINING BATTALION

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 Sergeant Major
 Battalion Drill Master

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 Sgt. Maj. A. Osinowo
 Staff Sgt. J. W. Flesher



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* Indicates Meritorious Promotion

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- Pvt. S. D. Carpenter
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- Pvt. J. I. Morales
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- Pvt. J. K. Rietman
- Pvt. B. J. Rodgers
- Pfc. D. E. Rogers
- *Lance Cpl. A. O. Sybian
- Pvt. A. J. Sura
- Pfc. A. J. Thompson
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- Pfc. L. Z. Williams
- Pvt. T. C. Winther
- *Pfc. G. L. Wolf
- Pfc. K. J. Wonder
- Pvt. M. C. Woodring



Recruit David E. Rogers (left) and Recruit Jason T. Johnson, Fox Company, 2nd Recruit Training Battalion, exchange punches during a body sparring exercise at Marine Corps Base Camp Pendleton, June 2. Rogers is a Humboldt County, Calif., native and was recruited out of Recruiting Station San Francisco. Johnson is a Nacogdoches, Texas, native, and was recruited out of Recruiting Station Houston. The depot is responsible for training more than 16,000 recruits annually. Company F graduates from Marine Corps recruit training today.

Body sparring brings fight out of recruits

STORY & PHOTOS BY
SGT. WALTER D. MARINO II
Chevron staff

During Fox Company's first day of the Crucible, recruits were a little weary from the physical demands, but nevertheless fought with speed and intensity in a body sparring exercise at Marine Corps Base Camp Pendleton, June 2.

Before sparring, recruits warmed up with squats, jumping jacks and by throwing punches. After getting the blood flowing, recruits lined up and paired according to their size. While some were extremely nervous, some recruits showed no signs of nervousness.

"I feel pretty confident, I used to box back at home," said Recruit Jason T. Johnson, Fox Company, 2nd Recruit Training Battalion. "It doesn't matter if I win or lose. It matters if I give it my all. This whole Crucible is to better me as a person, so everything I do here I'm going to give my all."

Johnson, a Nacogdoches,

Texas, native, added he knows the exercise is meant to prepare them for fighting the enemy and therefore is extremely important.

"The enemy won't take it lightly on us. So I will not give my opponent any mercy at all," said Johnson. "He's the enemy, and I have to do whatever it takes to stop him."

Although Johnson was pretty confident in his abilities, so was his partner Recruit David E. Rogers, Co. F, who coincidentally also grew up boxing.

"I boxed for nine years," said Rogers, a Humboldt County, Calif., native. "I have no butterflies, I know I can beat him. You want to be confident going into a fight. If you don't have confidence or think negatively going into a fight, then you've already lost. The key to success is going into the fight with the right mentality."

When the two stepped into the ring there was no hesitation, the fight began immediately as they exchanged a flurry of punches. The punches were

thrown with so much speed and power, that when they connected on their opponents Flak jacket, it created a distinct thud. Their drill instructors watched on and one drill instructor remarked, "It's always the smaller guys that give the best fights."

As the fight continued the flurries slowed to two-punch combinations and the speed and snap began to diminish. It appeared the recruits had given their all and were extremely fatigued, and the fight ended.

"You just have to go in their

remaining calm, remember why you're here and why you're in there," said Rogers. "Most of these exercises are things most people would never do. I think this is pretty cool, and it's a good experience for all of us," said Rogers.



Recruit David E. Rogers, Fox Company, 2nd Recruit Training Battalion, stands by while awaiting his turn in a sparring exercise during the Crucible.



Recruits of Fox Company, 2nd Recruit Training Battalion, practice Marine Corps Martial Arts Program strikes while awaiting their turn in the sparring exercise during the Crucible, June 2. The recruits wear protective head gear, groin protectors, gloves and Flak jackets for safety during the exercise.