

MARINE CORPS AIR STATION

MIRAMAR, CALIF.

FLIGHT

JACKET



MARINE CORPS AIR STATION MIRAMAR, CALIF.

JANUARY 2013



**Warhorse,
'Stallions' support
Steel Knight
exercise**

**Joint Strike Fighter is
welcomed into
3rd MAW's training
operations**



Delivering a .50 caliber punch, 'Warhorse' hooves clobber training
Pilots and crews serving aboard CH-53E Super Stallions perform ed weapons training to perfect their responses above El Centro, Calif., Dec. 20.

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Skate for Troops marks 4th year

Approximately 50 participants travelled to Robb Field Skate Park in San Diego to support the 4th annual Skate for the Troops Dec. 9.

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San Diego Air and Space Museum honors 100 years of Naval, Marine Corps Aviation

San Diego Air And Space Museum offers free admission to active duty Marines and sailors.

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**Maj. Gen. (sel)
Steven W. Busby**
Commanding General
3rd Marine Aircraft Wing



Col. John P. Farnam
Commanding Officer
MCAS Miramar

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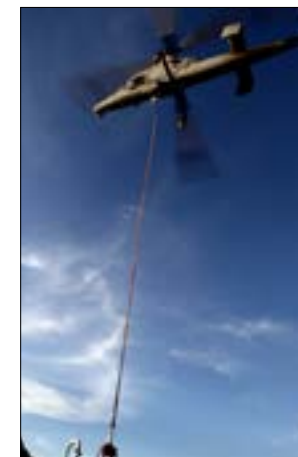
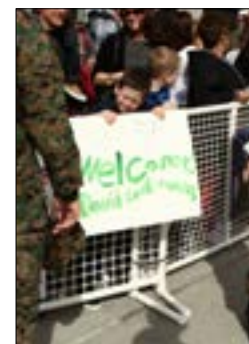
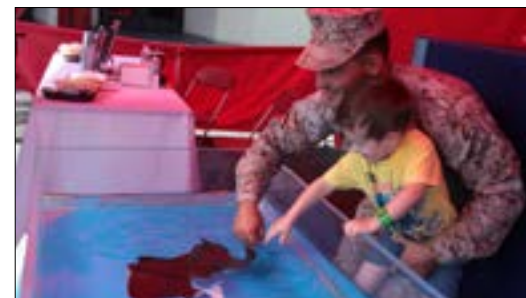
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MCAS Miramar

2012 in review



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ON THE COVER:

MARINE CORPS AIR GROUND COMBAT CENTER TWENTYNINE PALMS, Calif. -- A CH-53E Super Stallion with Marine Heavy Helicopter Squadron 466, 3rd Marine Aircraft Wing, carries a humvee during an external lift exercise aboard Marine Corps Air Ground Combat Center Twentynine Palms, Calif., Dec. 5. Super Stallions commonly carry loads that cannot fit into the cargo hold to transport to different locations quickly. (Photo by Lance Cpl. Melissa Eschenbrenner)

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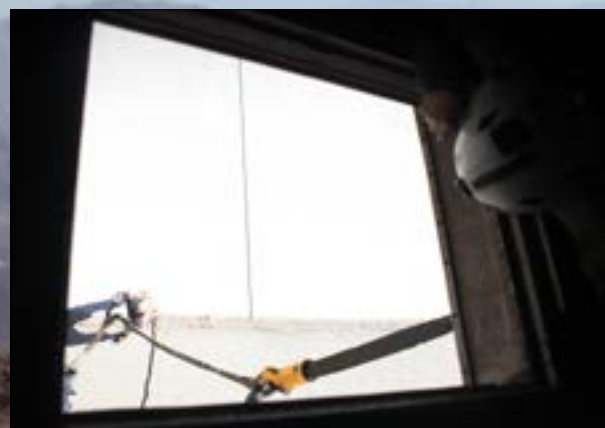
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Wolfpack, 5th Marines hit the desert



Sgt. Christopher Montes, a crew chief with Marine Heavy Helicopter squadron 466, 3rd Marine Aircraft Wing, and an El Paso, Texas, native, prepares cables to perform external lifts aboard Marine Corps Air Ground Combat Center Twentynine Palms, Calif., Dec. 5. External lifts can use up to two cables to ensure the load is steady and centered.



A crew chief with Marine Heavy Helicopter Squadron 466, 3rd Marine Aircraft Wing, watches as a Marine with the 5th Marine Regiment connects a cable to a load during an external lift exercise aboard Marine Corps Air Ground Combat Center Twentynine Palms, Calif., Dec. 5. Loads that do not fit inside the cargo hold can be connected to lines and lifted externally.



Marines with the 5th Marine Regiment connect a cargo net filled with supplies to a single hook to be lifted externally by a CH-53E Super Stallion during an external lift exercise aboard Marine Corps Air Ground Combat Center Twentynine Palms, Calif., Dec. 5. External lifts can use up to two cables to ensure the load is steady and centered.

Story and photos by Lance Cpl. Melissa Eschenbrenner

MARINE CORPS AIR GROUND COMBAT CENTER TWENTYNINE PALMS, Calif. – When Marines have to train high in the mountains of Marine Corps Air Ground Combat Center Twentynine Palms, Calif., they are often unable to get their equipment through the rough terrain. This is when Marine Heavy Helicopter Squadron 466, the Wolfpack, comes to their aid.

The rough terrain makes it impossible to land, but CH-53E Super Stallions have the ability to carry a load externally hanging from beneath the aircraft.

“External lifts are one of the things we do most,” said Sgt. Christopher Montes, a crew chief with the Wolfpack, 3rd MAW and an El Paso, Texas, native. “External lift training is so important, because we need to know when we’re under fire that we can get the job done.”

Lifting up to 20,000 pounds is not easy, however regular training and pre-flight preparation can help make the task easier for pilots, crew chiefs and Marines on the ground, regardless of the conditions.

“When flying in high altitudes, like around mountains, more power is needed,” said Capt. Trevor Tingle, a pilot with the Wolfpack and a San Diego native. “When you’re doing externals in high altitudes, pilots need to be especially careful because of possible winds and rough terrain that make it difficult to hover.”

Pilots and crew chiefs plan their flight paths before the exercise to ensure the mission runs smoothly. Practicing external lifts in rough terrain helps ensure Marines are ready for anything because external lifts are more difficult with unpredictable terrain.

Pre-mission planning presents difficulties because locations to drop gear cannot be predicted. Training like this ensures the readiness of pilots and crew chiefs during missions with obstacles, added Tingle. Crew chiefs communicate to the pilots as to where the load is swaying and can watch the cargo by looking through an open hatch in the floor called a “hell hole.”

“The main difficulty is directing the pilots and getting them exactly where you need them to be,” said Montes. “It’s harder than it sounds. Trying to control the aircraft without having the controls can be difficult, because the pilots can’t see everything the crew chiefs can.”

Crew chiefs guide the pilots by telling them which direction to move, ensuring they are in a position where the cargo can be connected or disconnected.

Crew chiefs work with pilots to ensure they have a clear sight of the aircraft’s surroundings.

“Safety for everyone is extremely important,” said Montes. “We watch everything at all times to make sure everyone is staying safe.”

Crew chiefs communicate the location of ground Marines to pilots as the ground Marines prepare the cargo for loading and unloading to ensure safety, explained Tingle.

“You have a good view of what’s underneath you [when you’re looking through the hell hole], but you can’t see what’s on either side,” said Montes. “We have the other crew chiefs and pilots to help direct the aircraft to a good spot.”

Whether flying over rough terrain or over flat land, training prepares pilots and crew chiefs to complete the mission in any condition at hand. Team work and coordination of every Marine involved ensure the mission is completed safely.

Delivering a .50 caliber punch, ‘Warhorse’ hooves clobber training

Story and photos by Lance Cpl. Christopher Johns

“When I was deployed to Afghanistan in January 2011, the scariest thing I saw was a bright flash come up into the air from a truck on the side of the road. Even though nothing happened, I was glad I had my gunners in the back of the aircraft ready and trained if things got hairy,” said Capt. Madeline Dougherty, the quality assurance officer and a CH-53E Super Stallion pilot with Marine Heavy Helicopter Squadron 465 “Warhorse.”

Pilots and crews serving aboard CH-53E Super Stallions perform weapons training to perfect their responses above El Centro, Calif., Dec. 20.

“We perform training like this about twice a month,” said Dougherty, a Winchester Bay, Ore., native. “If we didn’t train like this, we would have crew chiefs who don’t know how to use the weapons systems, and it’s important to train to have those skills just in case the need should arise.”

Before any training can begin, ordnance Marines must ensure the weaponry is properly attached to the aircraft and all ammunition is secured and prepared aboard the aircraft.

“The aircraft has three weapon systems attached to it, two on the doors on each side and one in the rear on the ramp,” said Lance Cpl. John Mathiasmeier, an aviation ordnance Marine with the Warhorses and a Mediapolis, Iowa, native. “These weapons will fire 950 to 1,100 rounds per minute up to 2,000 meters. If the weapon isn’t properly

secured to the aircraft with the proper mounts, the weapon system becomes useless.”

While flying this now-armed aircraft, pilots must ensure the targets come into the sights of the GAU-21 .50 caliber weapon system for crew chiefs and gunners to get the best shot possible.

“All I see when I fire this weapon is a lot of tracers and even more destruction. It’s more exciting than sky diving to me,” said Lance Cpl. Shawn Eastman, a weapons and tactics instructor with the Warhorses and a Stafford, Va., native. “We fire 75 round bursts at targets to ‘suppress’ [mock enemies] for training like this, because we need to be able to perform in training the way we do in combat. If we can’t effectively fire and suppress the enemy, then we may not be able to put Marines on the ground, even though we would normally have other aircraft to help attack and destroy the enemy.”

After engaging the target with 3,600 rounds, crew chiefs communicate with pilots to ensure the threat has been minimized and so they are ready for whatever else may come their way.

“At the end of the day, with this training, crew chiefs and pilots will react in combat the same way they react here and we can realistically accomplish our mission,” said Eastman. “Whether it’s putting Marines into or picking them up from a landing zone, or giving them supplies, we have to know how to do this or people could die.”

A Marine with Marine Heavy Helicopter Squadron 465 “Warhorse” prepares a GAU-21 .50 caliber weapon system for weapons training on the flight line aboard Marine Corps Air Station Miramar, Calif., Dec. 20. Primarily used to transport troops and supplies, Super Stallion crews need to be prepared to defend themselves from enemy fire.



Marines with Marine Heavy Helicopter Squadron 465 “Warhorse” mount a GAU-21 .50 caliber weapon system on the ramp of a CH-53E Super Stallion on the flight line aboard Marine Corps Air Station Miramar, Calif., Dec. 20. For training like this, the aircraft carries three of these weapon systems, firing 3,600 .50 caliber rounds between them.



A Marine with Marine Heavy Helicopter Squadron 465 “Warhorse” lifts a GAU-21 .50 caliber weapon system on the ramp of a CH-53E Super Stallion on the flight line aboard Marine Corps Air Station Miramar, Calif., Dec. 20. The weapon system fires up to 900 rounds per minute and can be fired for 75 round bursts, devastating and suppressing the enemy’s position and fire.



Lance Cpl. Michael Zawicki, a crew chief with Marine Heavy Helicopter 465 and a Westminster, Calif., native, secures a chain to a Humvee during the Steel Knight training exercise aboard Marine Corps Air Ground Combat Center, Twentynine Palms, Calif., Dec. 14. Pilots and crew chiefs with HMH-465 preformed external lifts to take supplies out of the hills and uneven terrain of MCAGCC Twentynine Palms.



A CH-53E Super Stallion with Marine Heavy Helicopter Squadron 465 sets down a Humvee during the Steel Knight exercise aboard Marine Corps Air Ground Combat Center, Twentynine Palms, Calif., Dec. 14. During the exercise, three Super Stallions with HMH-465 lifted and transported supplies as well as two Humvees back to Camp Wilson aboard MCAGCC Twentynine Palms.

Warhorse, ‘Stallions’ support Steel Knight exercise

Story and photos by Pfc. Raquel Barraza

MARINE CORPS AIR GROUND COMBAT CENTER, TWENTYNINE PALMS, Calif. – Marine Heavy Helicopter Squadron 465 “Warhorse” used their heavy lifting capabilities to support Marines with Combat Logistics Battalion 5, Combat Logistics Regiment 1 participating in the Steel Knight exercise aboard Marine Corps Air Ground Combat Center, Twentynine Palms, Calif., Dec. 14.

Exercise Steel Knight prepares Marines for deployment by responding to combat-related crisis. The training lasts three weeks and consists of counter insurgency operations and amphibious assaults.

Although the weather almost kept the Warhorse down, they proved that rainy conditions could not hinder their ability to accomplish the heavy lifts.

“We kept pushing, and it was hard, but we found a way to get out there,” said Capt Steven Bickham, the flight equipment and ordnance officer in charge and a Baton Rouge, La., native.

The flight crew worked together to repeatedly lift vehicles and many supplies from uneven terrain in the hills of Twentynine Palms. This type of flight operation is commonly referred to as externals.

External flights help move many supplies or heavy vehicles to places where other vehicles cannot reach because of terrain or how much needs to be transported.

“The capability of the [CH-53E Super Stallion] stands alone,” said Bickham. “We are the heavy lift capability of the Marine Corps.”

With no roads leading out of the hills, only externals could transport all the equipment quickly and safely back to Camp Wilson aboard MCAGCC Twentynine Palms.

For the helicopter support team and HMH-465 Marines, this training helped them practice rigging up a load in a hostile environment, added Capt. Madeline Dougherty, the quality assurance officer and a Winchester Bay, Ore., native.

Even with uncontrollable factors like weather, the Warhorse accomplished all necessary elements for mission completion.

“Overall it was a huge success,” said Bickham.

The Warhorse continue to train to stay mission ready through rain or shine.



A CH-53E Super Stallion with Marine Heavy Helicopter Squadron 465 lifts supplies during the Steel Knight exercise aboard Marine Corps Air Ground Combat Center, Twentynine Palms, Calif., Dec. 14. The Super Stallion’s heavy lifting capabilities supported Marines with Combat Logistics Battalion 5, 1st Combat Logistics Regiment during the exercise.

Pilot royally serves alongside Marines

Story and photos by Lance Cpl. Melissa Eschenbrenner

When foreign countries look for help to better train their military, they sometimes look to train with other allied countries and learn strategies to better everyone as a team.

One program offered by the British Royal Air Force is the Royal Air Force/United States Marine Corps Pilot Exchange Program.

“In the exchange program, we have about a dozen pilots in the United States, but only one with Marines,” said Flight Lt. Daniel Shaw, the Royal Air Force exchange officer with Marine Fighter Attack Training Squadron 101, 3rd Marine Aircraft Wing and a London, native. “It’s a valuable thing to take what I’ve learned here back to the United Kingdom and it makes the Royal Air Force and the Marine Corps better organizations. That’s why this program exists.”

During his three year tour, Shaw will learn everything there is to know about the F/A-18 Hornet and the tactics the Marine Corps uses to support Marines on the ground.

“The knowledge [Shaw] brings to the table is unsurpassed,” said Capt. Taj Sareen, an F/A-18 Hornet instructor pilot with VMFAT-101, 3rd MAW and a San Francisco, native. “In the exchange program they only send their best pilots. He will be absorbed into the fighter pilot community. At the end of his three-year tour here, he will know what it means to be a Marine pilot and a Marine officer.”

In the Royal Air Force, their purpose is to gain air power. However, in the Marine

Corps the purpose of aircraft is to support the Marines on the ground and aid in amphibious assaults. The tactics and strategies are very different than those of the Royal Air Force, explained Shaw.

“It’s an amazing opportunity [to work with Shaw],” said Sareen. “It’s a window into another world. He brings a completely different view and set of skills.”

Not only does Shaw need to learn about the aircraft and strategies in the United States Marine Corps but he must also learn the culture.

“If you drive on a Royal Air Force base, you might see people standing outside of their building and smoking, but on a Marine Corps [installation], you see people practicing fighting [techniques],” said Shaw. “There is learning to be had trying to speak ‘American.’ We speak the same language, but you would be surprised on the different ways we use words.”

Shaw is taking this opportunity to broaden his horizons. The training will hopefully prove to be a valuable asset for him in the future.

“The perception is that the Marines are the best of the U.S. armed forces,” said Shaw. “While I’ve been here, I have not seen anything that would make me think anything different.”



Flight Lt. Daniel Shaw, a Royal Air Force/United States Marine Corps Pilot Exchange officer with Marine Fighter Attack Training Squadron 101, 3rd Marine Aircraft Wing, and a London, native, prepares for a flight Dec. 20. Shaw, who is in the British Royal Air Force, is training to fly the F/A-18 Hornet while learning the tactics of the Marine Corps as part of the program.



Flight Lt. Daniel Shaw, a Royal Air Force/United States Marine Corps Pilot Exchange officer with Marine Fighter Attack Training Squadron 101, 3rd Marine Aircraft Wing, and a London, native, straps in before a training flight in an F/A-18 Hornet for a training flight aboard Marine Corps Air Station Miramar, Calif., Dec. 20.

Skate for the Troops marks 4th year

Story and photos by Cpl. Lisa Tourtelot

SAN DIEGO – “I got retired for [post-traumatic stress disorder], and nothing ever worked” said Franklin Quiros, a retired Marine Corps Martial Arts Program instructor and Oceanside, Calif., native. “This is what works for me, skating.”

Quiros was one of nearly 30 skate and longboarders who travelled to Robb Field Skate Park in San Diego to support the 4th annual Skate for the Troops Dec. 9.

Approximately 50 participants attended the event that raised more than \$500 for the Semper Fi Fund. Since its inception, Skate for the Troops events have raised more than \$2,500 for the charity.

“I wanted to come out here to support the Semper Fi Fund,” said Quiros, whose long hair, piercings and numerous tattoos belie his conservative past in the Marine Corps. “I know what it does and I know what it stands for. If I had more money, I’d donate more money. One day I might end up using the fund, too. So, I might as well do a skate for it.”

This year’s Skate for the Troops was a seven-mile trek around Mission Bay, followed by a raffle of prizes donated by local skate and longboarding shops and a free lunch from the InSlider food truck.

Charlotte Smith, the event’s organizer and San Diego native, explained that her husband, Derek Smith, founded the event in order to support his fellow Marines while doing what he loves – longboarding.

“He decided he wanted to give back. He was a Marine for four years, he served in Iraq twice,” explained Charlotte. “Derek is a longboarder and he knew he wanted to do an event involving this industry because these guys are awesome. They get a lot of bad raps because of the stigma that comes with skateboarding. We wanted to show that this is a positive

community.”

Derek Smith, the event founder and Mechanicsville, Md., native, explained that some changes to the event have made it more accessible to potential skaters.

“The first time I started this, I wanted to do a crazy, ridiculous amount of distance like 30 miles. We did it from Oceanside to Torrey Pines, which is like 20 miles,” said Derek, a former heavy equipment and motor transport operator in the Marine Corps. “Last year we did about 12 miles and this year we’re doing seven. It’s getting shorter and shorter, but it’s not for me, it’s for everyone else.”

Derek’s sister, Army 1st Lt. Janelle Smith, also a Mechanicsville, Md., native, and adjutant with the 145th Multifunctional Medical Battalion, added that improved publicity has helped spread the word about the event. However, she expressed concerned that potential volunteers may think they aren’t right for a longboarding event.

“I’m also concerned that some of [active-duty military] don’t skate, so they feel like they can’t participate in any way, but there is so much more that they can do,” said Janelle, who also works at the Veterans Village of San Diego as a therapist.

Whether a volunteer skates or not, he or she will find a warm welcome and a positive opportunity to give back to the Semper Fi Fund at Skate for the Troops.

“Not many people really care. It’s sad,” said Quiros. “I’ll do anything for these guys. I’d give them my board if they needed it, you know? That’s why I’m here.”



Charlotte Smith, left, the Skate for the Troops event organizer and San Diego native, presents a new longboard to an event participant at Robb Field Skate Park in San Diego Dec. 9. To raise money for the Semper Fi Fund, local skate and longboarding companies donated new boards, wheels, trucks and merchandise to raffle off after participants finished a seven-mile skate.



Participants show off their boards and winnings after the 4th annual Skate for the Troops event in San Diego Dec. 9. The event began with a seven-mile skate around Mission Bay and ended with a raffle of donated skating merchandise, which raised more than \$500 for the Semper Fi Fund.



Skaters take off from Robb Field Skate Park in San Diego Dec. 9 for the 4th annual Skate for the Troops. After a seven-mile trip around Mission Bay, participants gathered for a raffle of donated skating merchandise and free lunch from the InSlider truck.



Lance Cpl. Cody Arroyo, an artillery mechanic with 1st Maintenance Battalion, Combat Logistics Regiment 1, and a Manchester, N.H., native, waits to start the 4th annual Skate for the Troops in San Diego Dec. 9. Approximately 30 longboarders skated seven miles around Mission Bay to raise money for the Semper Fi Fund.

A T-34 training plane is displayed at the Flying Leatherneck Aviation Museum, Dec. 8. Retired Lt. Col. Jay N. Bibler, a former F-4 Phantom pilot and a native of San Jaquin Valley, Calif., flew in this type of plane during pilot training in 1958.



Retired Lt. Col. Jay N. Bibler, a former F-4 Phantom pilot, and a San Jaquin Valley, Calif., native, shows an artist's drawing of an A-4 in the Flying Leatherneck Aviation Museum, Dec. 18. Bibler flew the A-4 aboard Marine Corps Air Station El Toro, Calif., in the 1960's before he transitioned to flying the F-4 Phantom.

Pilot takes off on adventure leading to first Phantom squadron

Story and photos by Lance Cpl. Melissa Eschenbrenner

When a freshman in college heard all of the great opportunities for Marine officers who join the platoon leadership course by a Marine major in his dress blues, he could not resist. He signed the papers on the spot and knew the Marine Corps was where he belonged.

This was in 1954 and he was ready and excited to finish college and begin his career as a pilot. He dreamed of having an adventurous lifestyle, but he did not know yet if it was all going to fall into place. He was unaware at the time that he would later have the opportunity to fly in the first Marine F-4B Phantom squadron.

Four years later, in 1958, Jay N. Bibler pinned on his first set of second lieutenant bars.

Prior to his commissioning, one of his instructors sat him in the back-seat of an airplane for the first time.

"He was doing everything he could to see if I was cut out for it," said Bibler, a San Jaquin Valley, Calif., native. "He was doing flips and things to see if I got sick and I didn't. In fact, when we landed, I asked when we could fly again."

Bibler began his training in a T-34 plane, and 18 flights later he flew solo at last.

"It was exhilarating," said Bibler. "You're finally in control and you're by yourself. It's all up to you."

Bibler then went to Pensacola, Fla., and Kingsville, Texas to finish his flight training. Bibler earned his wings in 1960 and received orders to Marine Corps Air Station El Toro, Calif.

He began flying the A-4, until he was offered to join the first Marine F-4B Phantom squadron, Marine Fighter Attack Squadron 314, Black Knights.

When the opportunity arose that Bibler could fly Phantoms, he decided to stay in the Marine Corps. Bibler spent the rest of his career flying them.

"I was able to serve in Vietnam twice," explained Bibler. "The first tour was a 13-month-tour, which was a typical length of time to be deployed. But, the second tour was only 11 months; it was cut short."

During the Battle of Khe Sanh, he took enemy fire. This left one engine on his aircraft useless and broke many instruments necessary to fly. After unsuccessfully trying to drop attachments on the aircraft to lose excess weight, Bibler and his co-pilot were forced to eject.

"Luckily, We learned how to eject in school, you have to make sure you lean your head back and sit up straight because the pressure could break your spine," said Bibler. "When we were going down, we were looking at our surroundings like we were taught and didn't see anyone we were concerned about. They spoke to us but of course we couldn't understand. There were Army helicopters in the area so they got to us and picked us up in what seemed like ten minutes."

Often, the Russian enemy forces would test the new Phantom's response time. They were interested in knowing the capabilities of the new aircraft because they had not seen it before, explained Bibler.

"We would start the aircraft and look over the aircraft and read magazines as we waited for the sound of the gong or a phone call to send us out," said Bibler. "There would be times when [we'd go to intercept them] and they'd just carry on, and we'd sort of wave at each other. There was no hostile intent from either side. You'd see them taking pictures of us as we took pictures of them."

Before retiring after 25 years in the Corps, Bibler earned the rank of lieutenant colonel, turning down the opportunity to become a commanding officer. He lost his eye sight and could no longer fly toward the end of his career; Bibler never lost the camaraderie of his fellow Marines in the Squadron.

"We were professionals at what we did," said Bibler. "We enjoyed the flying but, it was the camaraderie that you couldn't beat in our squadron."



A real NASA mars rover sits on display at the San Diego Air and Space Museum in San Diego, Dec. 20. Although this one has not been to space, many artifacts, like the Apollo 9 Command Module, have.



Above: Bailey Burkahart Smeiter, a part time model for the San Diego Air and Space Museum and Ventura, Calif., native, poses in front of the Apollo 9 command module at the San Diego Air and Space Museum in San Diego, Dec. 20. Like many artifacts in the museum, the Apollo 9 command module is not a replica.



Verne Wochnick, chairman of volunteers for the San Diego Air and Space Museum and Studio City, Calif., native, talks to spectators at the San Diego Air and Space Museum in San Diego, Dec. 20. Many Volunteers, like Wochnick, are veterans who help give tours and restore artifacts of the museum.

San Diego Air and Space Museum honors 100 years of Naval, Marine Corps Aviation

Story and photos by Pfc. Raquel Barraza

SAN DIEGO – With this year marking the 100 year anniversary of Naval and Marine Corps aviation, the San Diego Air and Space Museum helps local Marines and sailors view a glimpse into the past to see the advancements throughout the years.

For the past three years, the San Diego Air and Space Museum has offered free admission to all active-duty service members and two dollars off general admission to dependents of a service member.

Members of the museum invite the Marines of Marine Corps Air Station Miramar, Calif., to come and enjoy themselves, explained Terry Brennan, curator and director of restorations of the San Diego Air and Space Museum and a Long Beach, Ind., native.

"This is our way of thanking them and appreciating what they do," said Brennan.

The museum mainly focuses on honoring military pilots and restoring aircraft of all branches of the military.

"We recently completed the restoration of an AU-1 Corsair, like those flown by the Marines in the Korean War," said Brennan.

Alongside the exhibits of aircraft, the

museum also has many simulators in which guests virtually pilot an aircraft, including one simulator that can only be found in the San Diego Air and Space Museum.

"We have the only F-35 Lightning II cockpit simulator outside of the military," said Verne Wochnick, the chairman of volunteers of the San Diego Air and Space Museum and a Studio City, Calif., native.

The Museum has earned the nickname of "Smithsonian West," added Wochnick.

Many of the volunteers that restore the aircraft originally built the aircraft when they were in use.

Even with many exhibits and activities, the museum always has new traveling exhibits for all ages to enjoy.

"Starting February 1, we'll have a Ripley's Believe It or Not exhibit," said Brennan. "Although it's not very aviation related, it should be enjoyable none the less."

The museum intends to keep the free admission for as long as possible and hopes Marines take advantage of this inexpensive and fun way to celebrate Naval and Marine Corps aviation.

Marine Makes explosive entrance to new job field

Story and photos by Lance Cpl. Christopher Johns

He is nondescript—not too tall, not too muscular. He seems like any average person you might meet at a coffee house, pleasant even.

After giving college a try, he decided it was time for a change and he turned to the Marine Corps. While in the Marines, he served as an avionics technician for five years before deciding to give another career path a chance.

A far cry from mundane college classes and highly-technical aviation work, he has chosen a career marked by moments of heart-pounding, gut-wrenching fear.

“Every one of the people I’ve told [I was doing this] who were in the military told me I was stupid or crazy,” said Sgt. Corey Jones, a San Diego native who is training to become an explosive ordnance disposal technician aboard Marine Corps Air Station Miramar, Calif.

“For the past couple of years I’ve been completely fascinated with explosives,” said Jones. “I love the fact that this job is going to be a challenge, the camaraderie and the amount of respect that EOD Marines have earned not just from each other, but from countless others as well. I wanted to be a part of that, so here I am.”

As part of his on-the-job training, Jones shadows his soon-to-be peers as they carry out their daily missions. One of these missions is to train and keep in constant mastery of their skills, calling for training sessions in many different fields, much like the inert training Dec. 12.

“We try to mitigate hazards so others can carry out their missions,” said Staff Sgt. Kris March, an EOD team leader with Marine Wing Support Squadron 373 and a Greenwich, Conn., native. “[Jones] was an air wing Marine and decided he would like to do something a little more exciting; he wanted to feel like he was a part of something bigger than himself. It was a big decision to make, especially when in the field, his team leader could be injured while doing his job and [Jones] would have to take over. That’s a huge responsibility for a young sergeant and he will have to be able to step up when the time comes.”

The minimum rank required to join the EOD family is sergeant. As a sergeant, most

Marines are resident experts in their occupational fields, they know the workings of the job and most other Marines come to them for information.

“For [Jones], it’s a whole new Marine Corps,” said Master Sgt. Dennis Williams, the staff noncommissioned officer-in-charge of the MWSS-373 EOD technicians and a Youngstown, Ohio, native. “This is an aspect of the Corps that not a whole lot of people get to see. He was a resident expert in his field and that’s all he knew for his five years in the Marine Corps and now he’s starting almost all over again.”

As a trainee, Jones’s mentors think highly of the newly promoted sergeant.

“He soaks everything in like a sponge,” said Williams. “He’s very intelligent and loves to be hands-on while learning. He just sucks in the information as fast as we can give it to him and wants to be as prepared for his training as possible before he goes. He’s performing at a very high level at this point, because he wants to touch everything, wants to learn and ask questions. It kind of motivates me to see this young sergeant jump out there to learn something new to better himself and the Corps at the same time.”

While bettering himself with the teachings of the EOD Marines stationed with MCAS Miramar, Jones also has another ordeal ahead of him.

“The process to become an explosive ordnance disposal technician is pretty rigorous,” said March. “The school has a screening process to weed out the people who are trying to join this field for the wrong reasons, like a potential bonus or because it’s ‘cool’ and outside the norm. School lasts for up to eight months, possibly even longer, and even after he finishes his schooling he’s never going to stop learning. Jones understands that, and I think he’s going to be a good fit in this field because of it.”

While thinking of joining this career field, Jones would talk to his peers in the Marine Corps and other services and receive exclamations of a matching tune.

“It’s not just a bunch of stupid, crazy kids going around blowing stuff up for the heck of it,” explained Jones. “These are some of the smartest people I’ve ever met and had the pleasure of working with.”

“Every one of the people I’ve told [I was doing this] who were in the military told me I was stupid or crazy,” said Sgt. Corey Jones.



Right: Sgt. Corey Jones, an on-the-job trainee with Marine Wing Support Squadron 373 and San Diego native, watches his mentor make a piece of ordnance inert during training aboard Marine Corps Air Station Miramar, Calif., Dec. 12. Jones decided to join the ranks of explosive ordnance disposal Marines after developing a fascination for the job two years ago.



Left: Sgt. Corey Jones, left, an on-the-job trainee with Marine Wing Support Squadron 373 explosive ordnance disposal and San Diego native, stands to stretch his legs after observing his mentor while making a bomb inert during training aboard Marine Corps Air Station Miramar, Calif., Dec. 12. While waiting to go to his schooling as an EOD technician, Jones shadows technicians stationed at the air station to learn tricks of the trade. Right: An explosive ordnance disposal technician with Marine Wing Support Squadron 373 explains a process for making ordnance inert aboard Marine Corps Air Station Miramar, Calif., Dec. 12.



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Taking the Plunge

Video created by Sgt. Isaac Lamberth



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