

NAVY REGION SOUTHWEST

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# NAVY COMPASS

SERVING OUR MILITARY AND CIVILIAN COMMUNITY

November/December 2014

## TREEHOUSE TEARDOWN

SAILORS WORK HARD  
TO MAKE  
SAN DIEGO PARKS SAFER







# November/December

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*On the cover: Sailors volunteer to tear down treehouses that have been built by the homeless population in San Diego. The treehouses are creating risks for the San Diego River and residents. Read more about it on page 24.*

# Recognizing Environmental Excellence

Story by Navy Region Southwest Public Affairs

Protecting ocean, marine and coastal water quality, using greener technology and implementing programs to protect endangered species are just some of the top priorities for the Navy's environmental programs.

Commander, Navy Region Southwest Installations were recognized for setting the bar high when it comes to its efforts in making the Navy good stewards of the environment.

Each year, Chief of Naval Operations (CNO) Environmental Awards honor ships, installations, individuals, and teams for their outstanding achievements in Navy environmental programs. The Installation Environmental Program Directors (IEPD) of five CNRSW installations and two of its BRAC properties were recognized for during a Video Teleconference (VTC) ceremony with the CNO and Secretary of the Navy (SECNAV), Aug. 20.

Naval Facilities Engineering Command (NAVFAC) Southwest manages NRSW's environmental program, which is the largest in the Navy and operates in the most stringent regulatory climate in the nation. The five IEPD are NAVFAC Southwest personnel who manage the environmental programs at the Region installations.

NRSW, Executive Director, Teresa Ramos said the number of awards in Southwest Region, Base Realignment and Closure (BRAC) Program Management Office (PMO) "validate the exceptionally talented individuals dedicated to environmental (efforts), and the consistent support of leadership at the installation, region and NAVFAC."

### CNRSW AWARDEES

- Naval Base Point Loma, Natural Resources, Conservation, Small Installation
- Naval Air Station Fallon, Natural Resources Conservation Team
- Naval Support Activity Monterey Natural Resources Conversation Team,
- Naval Base Ventura County, Environmental Quality, Team
- Naval Base Ventura County, Sustainability, Industrial Installation
- Naval Weapons Seal Beach, Sustainability, Industrial Installation
- Former Naval Air Station Moffett Field (BRAC), Environmental Restoration Installation
- Former Naval Shipyard Hunters Point (BRAC), Environmental Restoration Installation



Former Hunters Point Naval Shipyard and former NAS Moffett Field BRAC bases were recognized the CNO FY13 Environmental Awards Ceremony, Aug. 20. (left to right) Lara Uizar, James Whitcomb, Danielle Janda, Melanie Kito, Patrick Brooks, Tony Konzen, Kim Ostrowski.



Naval Base Point Loma was recognized in the CNO FY13 Environmental Awards Ceremony. (left to right) Cmdr. Chad Koster, Angus MacKelvey, Andrew Wastell, Jessica Bredvik, Capt. Howard Warner.



# Saving Our Natural Resources

Story and Photos by Andrea Howry, Naval Base Ventura County

San Nicolas Island may be “The Island of the Blue Dolphins,” but last spring, it became “The Island of the Yellow Warbler.”

As with any ecological change on the island, the Navy’s environmental team watched it unfold.

“The Santa Anas blew much harder this spring than normal,” Natural Resources Manager Valerie Vartanian explained recently.

Migratory birds on a north-south route were pushed out to the island by that hot wind out of the east.

“The result,” she said, “was an amazing display of warblers, in numbers that no one ever sees out here.”

On a small island like San Nicolas — 9 miles long by 3 miles wide — a change like that doesn’t go unnoticed. And since the island 65 miles southwest of Point Mugu is a highly restricted part of Naval Base Ventura County, it’s the Navy or Department of Defense civilians who see it.

“This island is one of the most pristine of any of the Channel Islands, and that’s because of the Navy,” said John Ugoretz, a marine biologist who works for the Naval Air Warfare Center Weapons Division, which uses the island for missile testing and other missions. “Things stay more natural out here. Because there are so few people, resources are protected.”

Like the caliche forest.

A walk across the island reveals patches of white, porous rock. It’s calcium carbonate — called caliche — and it’s formed when rainwater sinks into the parched ground, then rises as the surface dries, bringing with it dissolved underground minerals.

In some spots, bands of caliche form around plant roots, which strip any nutrients out of the caliche, then

die, leaving behind castings of the roots and trunks. Over the years, the soil erodes, exposing those castings and turning them into a caliche forest.

Like the middens.

Native Americans are believed to have lived on San Nicolas Island for 8,000 years. Called Nicoleños, they ate shellfish and fish, and just like today’s humans, whatever they didn’t use, they tossed into a garbage dump. Those dumps are called middens, and more than 500 of them have been discovered on the island.

“When you’re here 8,000 years, you make a lot of garbage,” Vartanian said.

The island’s last Native American left in 1853 — the Lone Woman of San Nicolas Island and the inspiration for Scott O’Dell’s children’s book, “The Island of the Blue Dolphins.” She is believed to have lived alone on the island for 18 years before being brought to the mainland, where she died just a few weeks later.

The middens are protected as archaeological sites.

Like the pinnipeds.

Between 43,000 and 57,000 California Sea Lions live on, or visit San Nicolas Island each year, and 60 percent of the California population’s pups are born on the island.

In addition, about 23,000 elephant seals — 30 percent of the California population — haul out to the island over the course of a year, as do nearly 800 harbor seals and a few dozen Southern sea otters.

The island is also home to several endangered species, including the black abalone and the Western snowy plover. It is also home to the island fox and the island deer mouse, both of which have evolved into their own separate subspecies unique to San Nicolas Island.

The plants and animals that live on the island haven’t had it easy. The wind is strong, the fog is cold and thick, and worst of all, water is scarce.

“The bigger you are, the more water you need,” Vartanian said. “Everything out here has to be a good water conservationist.”

Plant roots must either grow deep to suck out groundwater, or they must spread out in shallow dirt to collect what little water they can soak up. Normal rainfall is 9 inches a year.

There are a few natural springs on the island and they’re marked with planted palm trees so they can be found easily.

Many years ago, the Navy installed a desalination plant to turn seawater into drinking water. The system has been upgraded through the years, and a new system is expected next year.

“Everything that has inhabited San Nicolas Island has learned how to utilize its resources,” Vartanian said.

Including humans.



Natural Resources Manager Valerie Vartanian lets visitors to San Nicolas Island get a closeup look of a darkwing beetle.



Coreopsis is a plant that is ubiquitous on San Nicolas Island. Most of the year it is in water-saving mode and looks like this, but in spring, it blooms, covering the island in a blanket of yellow.



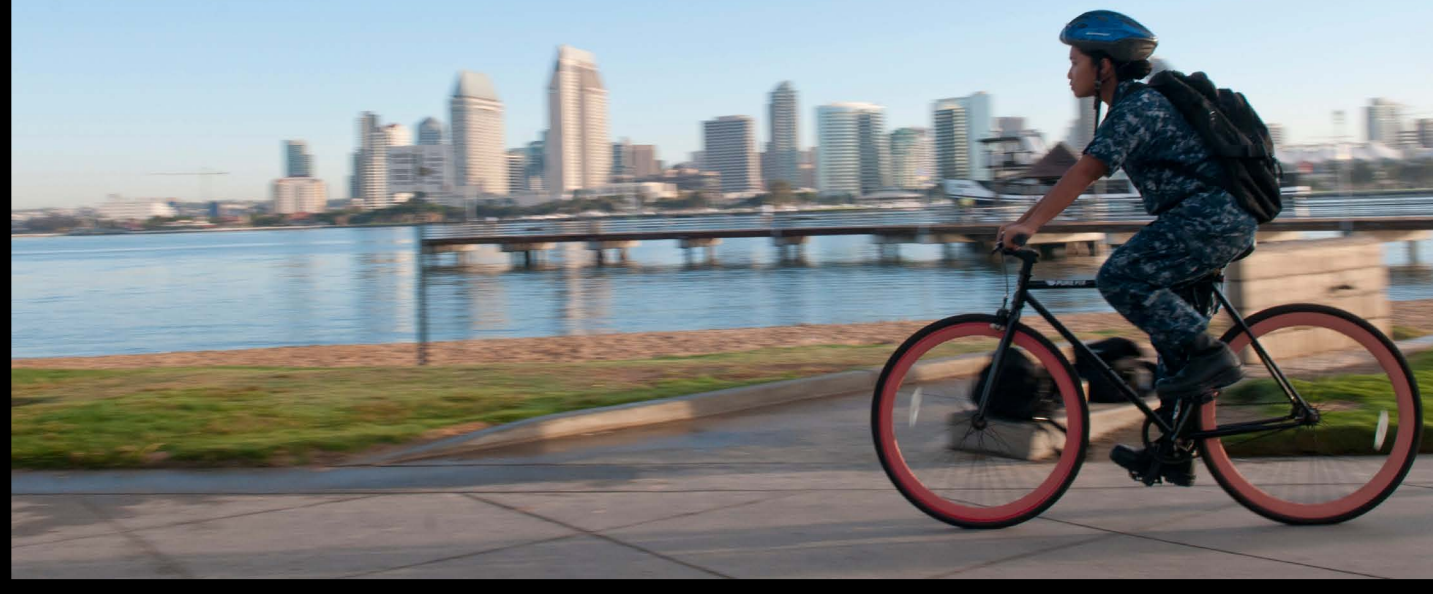
Mariluz Chan and her 3-year-old son, Nicolas, check out the tide pools during Family Weekend at San Nicolas Island.



# RIDING FOR A CLEANER PLANET

A NEW PATH TO IMPROVING ENVIRONMENTAL AWARENESS

STORY AND PHOTOS BY MC3 CHASE C. LACOMBE



The Navy is continuing to make strides in its effort to promote a cleaner and more environmentally friendly organization. It has reached out to other organizations nationwide to promote alternative transportation methods for Sailors and civilians.

Teaming with iCommute, the Navy held a Bike to Base event for bicycle riders Oct. 8th. The event is part of Energy Action Month as well as the Navy's growing commitment to reduce vehicle emissions and base traffic, thereby lowering commute time while reducing the Navy's carbon footprint.

"We had approximately 50 riders enter through the carrier gate on NBC and numerous uncounted others who utilized other entrances on base," said Wes Bromyea, NBC community plan liaison officer. "Even though riding a bike is not sharing a ride, it is still helping to reduce vehicle traffic on and around base."

Energy Action Month is a priority for the Department of the Navy (DON) as it provides an opportunity to highlight energy initiatives and show how advances in energy security, efficiency and sustainability as well as decreasing reliance and consumption on energy are

leading to increased combat capabilities.

"The Navy has a memorandum of understanding with the San Diego Association of Governments (SANDAG) to assist Sailors and government civilian employees in learning about alternative commuting options available and reducing vehicle traffic at the main gate of Naval Base Coronado by 1 percent in 1 year," said Bromyea. "Ride Share Awareness Week was held in October and we tried to coincide the Bike to Base event with it."

The Transportation Incentive Program (TIP) is a federally subsidized benefit that gives up to \$130 per month to cover some, if not all commuting expenses for those who utilize the San Diego County transit system's busses, trolleys, COASTER or SPRINTER. Currently TIP gives up to \$400 per month to those who choose to carpool or vanpool.

"The iCommute program was responsible for helping the Bike to Base event get underway," said Bromyea. "TIP and iCommute are two separate programs that work together. TIP is a Department of Defense program that assists members with the means to utilize

local public transportation."

TIP offers online ride matching, bike buddies, transit trip planning, the guaranteed ride home program, and regional bike map and resources.

"We are going to continue for the remainder of the time of the agreement with SANDAG to hold events that help raise awareness of ecologically better methods of commuting," said Bromyea. "The region and iCommute are going to continue to work together over the next several months to find other options for commuters to travel to base."

NBC could hold another smaller scale event in March 2015 with another large event next October as well as participate in National Bike to Work Day in May.

"The event was a success," said Bromyea. "The city of San Diego is only going to get bigger and have more cars on the road in the future. We have to find a way improve the systems currently in place and develop new ones to combat the increasing level of commuters and help reduce the environmental impact it causes."

For more information on TIP, visit <http://icommutesd.com/commuters/military>

## Who Qualifies?

Active Duty Navy and Marine Corps  
Federal full-time and part-time DON civilian employees, including Non-appropriated Fund (NAF) employees.  
Paid Interns

## Participants Responsibilities:

- \* Use this benefit only for commuting to and from work using mass transit, or another qualified means of transportation (QMOT).
- \* Adhere to all governing TIP rules and regulations.
- \* Complete required ethics training annually.
- \* Make claims based solely on costs associated with the use of a QMOT between the residence and permanent duty station.
- \* Select most cost effective combination of transit benefits available.
- \* Return unused transit benefits or reimburse the government upon separation, extended leave or TDY, or when transit benefits are unused.
- \* Keep TIP application record information current.
- \* Not seek personal financial gain through trade or sale of transit benefits.
- \* Request participation in TIP using the Transportation Incentive Program System web application.





# RISING FROM THE DEPTHS: A SAILOR AND HIS SHIP

Story and Photos by Mass Communication Specialist 3<sup>rd</sup> Class Chase C. Lacombe

Slowly entering the Naval Base San Diego auditorium with the aid of his walker, Earl McKeever, 90, comfortably took his seat behind a small white table. Only a single desk lamp next to him dimly lit his face as he began to tell the story of his young life in the Navy from more than 70 years ago.

Earl McKeever was a typical 17-year-old high school student in 1941. A straight 'A' student and member of the varsity football team at Wilson High School, McKeever left school to enlist in the Navy before graduation following the attack on Pearl Harbor.

"A wave of patriotism swept across our country," said June Overbeck, McKeever's daughter. "My dad and his twin brother, Ernie, decided to enlist in the Navy."

McKeever and his brother went through two weeks of boot camp and San Diego becoming U.S. Navy Sailors with orders to battleship, USS California (BB 44), which was actually sitting underwater, at the bottom of Pearl Harbor. The Cal-



Jamie Baumann (right) listens to her grandfather, Earl McKeever, a former U.S. Navy Radarman 3<sup>rd</sup> Class, as he speaks to Sailors about his experiences during the Battle of Leyte Gulf during World War II.

ifornia had been sunk while at her moorings on the southernmost berth of Battleship Row during the attack.

"The California had been hit with three torpedoes in the forward, mid and aft portions of the ship and one large bomb amidships along with several smaller ones," said McKeever. "Our captain looked out to the USS Oklahoma and saw it had capsized after sustaining hits from two torpedoes. Not wanting to share in the same fate, he ordered the evacuation of the California and flooded the side opposite where the torpedoes struck, keeping the ship upright as it slowly sank into the muddy bottom of Pearl Harbor."

The California was one of three battleships damaged that day that would be salvaged and refitted, ready to fight again.

"When my brother and I were assigned to what would become our new home, we had a crew of about 200 Sailors to work on it," said McKeever. "We were assigned in groups of two to conduct repairs. First we sent divers down to weld plates on the hull over the three torpedo holes. Only then were we able to pump the water out. After a certain point, we cut off the majority of the forward and aft mast so the ship wouldn't be top-heavy when it went back to the U.S. We worked one compartment at a time, scrubbing the overheads, bulkheads and



Earl McKeever at 17 years old after joining the U.S. Navy.

deck; cleaning up the oil which had covered the inside of our ship and pumping out the rest of the water."

The California, eventually brought back to life, once again set sail on June 7 for a trip to Puget Sound Navy Yard for further fixing.

"While sailing California the 3,000 miles to Bremerton, Wash., we had one big surprise: our ship listed hard from side to side," said McKeever, as his hands and body swayed back and forth, demonstrating the ship in the rough seas. "It was the highest list ever experienced by a large ship. You never knew if we would go over or not just like the Oklahoma. We would sleep with our lifejackets on right by the outside hatches. We had a destroyer with us in case the worst were to happen. It was all really scary."

From an uncertain transit through rough seas, to the uncertainty of an unknown field, McKeever's adventures continued in the Navy. In 1943, came the creation of his rate of radarman. Radar was a new tool the Navy was integrating on board its ships and submarines. Early versions of the radar could be unreliable and the jobs were tasked primarily to junior Sailors, many of whom had little or no formal training until the creation of the Radarman's 'A' school.

"While we were in Bremerton undergoing repairs and updating the California into a modern battleship, I was told that I was going to be sent to a



Crew abandoning the damaged USS California (BB-44) as burning oil drifts down on the ship, at about 1000 hrs on the morning of 7 December 1941, shortly after the end of the Japanese raid. The capsized hull of USS Oklahoma (BB-37) is visible at the right. Official U.S. Navy Photo, NHHC Collection.

Scene on the southeastern part of Ford Island, looking northeasterly, with USS California (BB-44) in right center, listing to port after being hit by Japanese aerial torpedoes and bombs. Official U.S. Navy Photo, National Archives Collection.



radar school," said McKeever. "Nobody knew what radar was; it was something really new. We were told to keep quiet about it, as it was top secret. We went to Point Loma, Calif. to the first radar school on the west coast. We studied various types of radar and learned to identify various aircrafts, ships and submarines until the day came that we were to report back to the ship.

The California departed Washington with its newest Radarman 3<sup>rd</sup> Class on Jan. 31, 1944 for shakedown in San Pedro, Calif. to demonstrate its sea-worthiness and battle efficiency as it made its final preparations for war in the Pacific. On May 7, the California departed San Francisco for the invasion of the Marianas.

"There were ten major battles and lots of minor engagements that my brother and I were in during our four years on board," said McKeever. "We were in Saipan where we executed shore bombardments on enemy targets. After Saipan, we were in Guam and Tinian. In Guam, there were so many planes in the air, we called it a turkey shoot. No matter where you aimed, you were going to hit a plane. We had code names for different aircraft and vessels. An enemy plane was called a zero. I helped track the various aircraft and determine friend from foe."

During its operations in Saipan, McKeever's ship sustained damage from an enemy shore-based



artillery that caused considerable structural damage to his ship.

“The artillery shell created a large hole that went down three decks,” said McKeever, raising his arm high in the air and dropping it as if it were the shell as it dug its way through the steel decks. “The water was pouring in. Men were down there trying to cut them loose and a lot of them were (close to) dying. They were trying to get the Sailors out to take them to sickbay for treatment. We still had this hole in us when we started heading south toward the equator and the water continued to flood in.”

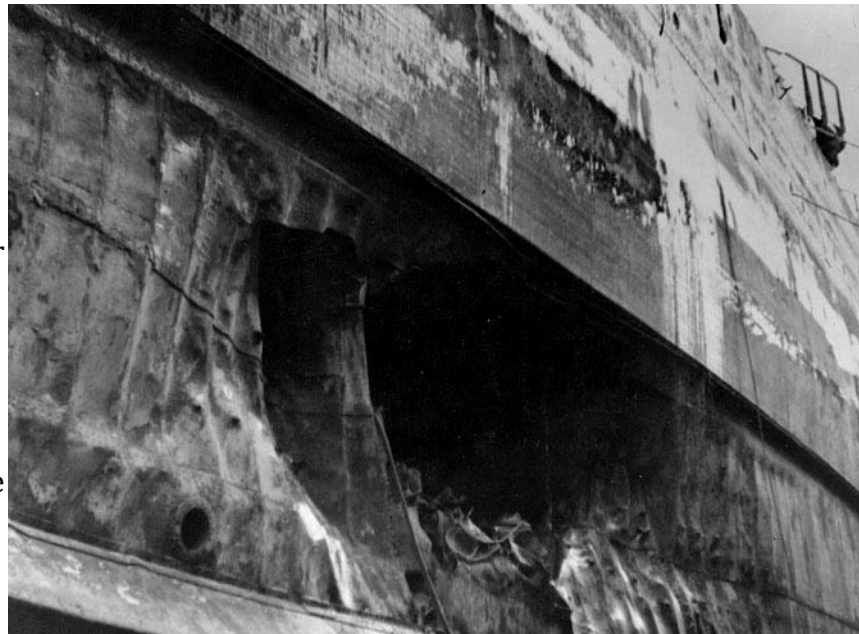
The California also sustained damage to the hull during a collision with its sister ship, USS Tennessee (BB 43), and underwent repairs at Espiritu Santo in the South Pacific. Newly repaired, McKeever began the trip into the Philippines by way of Australia and New Guinea.

General Douglas MacArthur, Admiral Chester Nimitz and President Theodore Roosevelt had recently met and reached a consensus on how control in the Philippines would be taken. Leyte Gulf was the pin on their map for this operation. McKeever and his beloved ship would soon play a major role amidst the largest naval battle in history.

“We reached Leyte Gulf on Oct. 17,” said McKeever, whose eyes stared off recalling a familiar memory. “They had all the aircraft carriers guarding the entrance and the battleships and other ships had entered into Leyte Gulf. We started hitting all of the targets that we were told to. The enemy knew we were coming and had made preparations for our forces’ arrival. As well as we were hitting our targets, they were hitting us too. We took several shells from their big guns as we sailed back and forth attacking. We were firing over the heads of the troops from the landing onto the islands at the enemy. They had a lot of large weapons that were killing a lot of our men on the beaches.”

Allied shore-based forces stormed the island of Leyte, Oct. 20. The strategy was to isolate Japanese-occupied countries in Southeast Asia, thus depriving Japan and its forces of oil supplies they required to continue their campaign.

“After sailing north for awhile, the idea came upon



Torpedo damage to the hull of USS California (BB-44), photographed at the Pearl Harbor Navy Yard, April 1942, soon after the ship had been drydocked for repairs. This is California's forward torpedo hole, centered at about Frame 52. Official U.S. Navy Photo, National Archives Collection.

us that we might be chasing a decoy fleet, and that the real trouble may lie elsewhere,” said McKeever. “So we turned our ships back around. Soon a huge battle fleet was coming from the south end. We weren’t expecting that. We changed our powdered shells that we had been using on the beaches to armor piercing shells in our 14 inch guns to combat the enemy fleet.”

Leyte Gulf was a pivotal victory during World War II in the Pacific as it left the Imperial Japanese Navy decimated with the loss of 12,500 men, 26 ships and 300 aircraft. The U.S. ended Japan’s ability to wage war in the Pacific. The few surviving ships remained in port for the rest of the war.

“We were there for several weeks,” said McKeever. “There was a kamikaze pilot who struck our ship and killed my radar officer when his plane hit the radar tower. The plane bounced down (the ship) and killed a lot of men there. I saw the ship’s mailman whose legs were split off and a boatswain’s mate who was burned from head to foot. To this day, I don’t know if they lived or died. One of our 14 inch guns was hit. My brother Ernie threw a man out of the way and was hit himself. My brother and I were both reported dead initially, but we both lived through it. When the few ships that were left finally retreated, it truly was a victory for us at Leyte.”

This was the first time Japan had carried out organized kamikaze attacks. By this point in World War

II, the Empire of Japan had fewer aircraft remaining than the Allied forces had ships demonstrating the difference between the two opposing side’s ability to wage war.

“We were just teenagers, and we were all afraid and scared, said McKeever. His demeanor no longer expressed the joy of fond memories of days at sea, but rather the lines in his face seemed to deepen in the low light as the familiar chill of fear and the foreboding emotions of war seemed to slowly creep up his spine. “You didn’t know if you would live or die. I hope no Sailor has to experience the war we did but if you do, I know with all the training you go through, you’ll be ready.”

Of the more than 200,000 U.S. servicemen who participated in the battle, allied forces suffered the loss of 2,800 men and six ships. The war ended after the release of two atomic weapons over the Japanese cities of Hiroshima and Nagasaki Aug. 6 and Aug. 9. This bold tactic by President Harry S. Truman removed any means for Japan to continue to wage war and forced the surrender aboard the battleship USS Missouri (BB 63) Sept. 2, 1945.

“The loss of life was enormous,” said Overbeck. “The victory at Leyte Gulf was significant not only because of the strategy and tactics used and



Former U.S. Navy Radarman 3rd Class Earl McKeever, 90, speaks to Sailors at Naval Base San Diego about his experiences during the Battle of Leyte Gulf.

the awe-inspiring heroism, but because of the liberation from oppression for millions of Filipinos and thousands of Allied prisoners of war.” Choked up and with tears in her eyes, she concluded. “Personally I would like to thank all of you, as well as my dad, and all of our servicemen and women for the tremendous sacrifices made to defend our freedom.”



Former U.S. Navy Radarman 3rd Class Earl McKeever (left) and three other World War II survivors pose with Capt. Curt Jones, commanding officer, Naval Base San Diego. McKeever spoke to a group of Sailors about his experiences during the Battle of Leyte Gulf.



# Honoring a Hero

Story and Photos by Sharon Stephensonpino

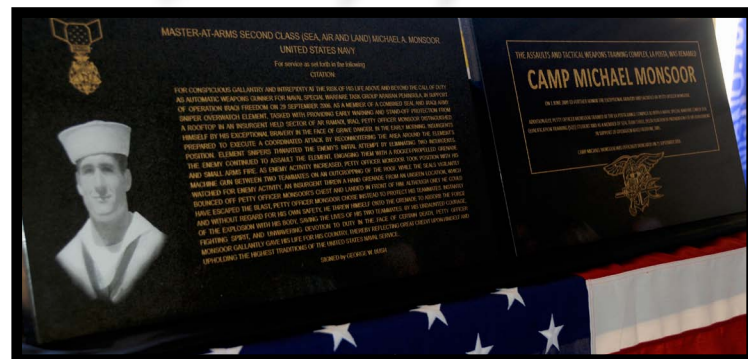
George and Sally Monsoor sat in the front row listening as the story of their son Michael's heroism was retold to more than 100 family members, friends, and SEALs who attended a recent dedication ceremony.

On Sept. 25, Naval Special Warfare Group ONE (NSWG-1) officially changed the name of one of their units from Assaults and Tactical Weapons Training Complex, La Posta, Calif., to "Camp Michael Monsoor."

Master-at Arms Second Class (SEAL) Michael Monsoor was killed in the line of duty while serving in Iraq, Sept. 29, 2006. On that morning, he served as automatic weapons gunner in a sniper over watch element positioned on a residential rooftop in a violent area known for its stronghold of insurgents. His team observed four enemy fighters armed with AK-47s. SEAL snipers from his roof engaged two of them, which resulted in one enemy wounded and one enemy killed. Monsoor, located closest to the egress route, was watching for enemy activity when an insurgent hurled a hand grenade onto the roof. The grenade hit Monsoor on the chest and bounced on the deck. He immediately leapt to his feet and yelled "grenade" alerting his teammates of impending danger, but they could not evacuate in time. Monsoor, without hesitation, threw himself onto the grenade, smothering it to protect his teammates who were lying in close proximity. The grenade detonated as he came down on top of it, mortally wounding him.

Commander, Naval Special Warfare Command, Rear Adm. Brian L. Losey said Monsoor has forever left his mark in the special forces community. "The dedication of this camp in honor of MA2 Michael A. Monsoor will remind every warrior that trains here of the highest examples of the heroic, selfless service that he lived," said Losey, adding that Monsoor's legacy will be carried on by future generations of SEALs.

Capt. Todd J. Seniff, Commander, NSWG-1 said Monsoor's namesake and character add to the legacy of the hallowed grounds. "On this range complex, you can trace the arc of the SEAL operator's existence," said Seniff, "and so it is right and fitting that



it should have Michael's name on it."

Family members traveled from Orange County, Calif. to participate in the ceremony and watch Monsoor's parents uncover a memorial plaque that will always be a reminder of their son's legacy.

Monsoor grew up in a family where helping others was a way of life. Mike's father was a Marine, and his mother a social worker. They said together, they raised their four children to understand the meaning of service and sacrifice.

Camp Michael Monsoor, the Mountain Warfare Training Facility is part of Naval Base Coronado, which is located 50 miles east of San Diego, and home to the largest live-fire "shoot house" in North America. This 15,000-square-foot state-of-the-art Close Quarters Combat (CQC) facility has terrain that's similar to what U.S. military forces operate in downrange. Camp Michael Monsoor is one of the few training facilities that allows special forces the ability to train in a "live fire" environment.

"Camp Michael Monsoor helps ensure that our SEALs have realistic training closer to home and fosters mission readiness by implementing the Congressionally-mandated growth in the special operations community," said Commander, Navy Region Southwest, Rear Adm. Patrick Lorge.

Monsoor's parents thanked members of NSWG-1 for the support their family has received in making the dedication of Camp Michael Monsoor a reality.

"Mike would have loved being here; he loved being a SEAL and loved the guys he worked with," Mrs. Monsoor said tearfully. "This is a beautiful facility. If Michael were here, he would have said 'there are other men and women who deserve to be recognized.' That's just how he was. Mike was a humble guy."





# NAS LEMOORE HONORS POWs, MIAs

STORY/PHOTOS BY MELINDA LARSON

The wife of a Naval Air Station (NAS) Lemoore pilot listed as missing in action in 1972, and veterans of three wars were guests of honor during the annual National POW/MIA Recognition Day ceremony at the base chapel Sept. 19.

Eighty-eight prisoners of war and missing in action (POW/MIA) of America's estimated 80,000 were home based at NAS Lemoore during the Vietnam Conflict. Forty-four of them were released POWs.

"They endured one of the greatest challenges anyone, especially an American, can face — the loss of personal liberty," said Capt. Monty Ashliman, NAS Lemoore commanding officer.

Lt. Cmdr. Dennis Pike, a member of the "World Famous Golden Dragons" of Attack Squadron (VA-192), never returned home to Lemoore from Vietnam. Pike was flying an A7-E Corsair II from the deck of the USS Kitty Hawk on March 23, 1972. His jet suffered catastrophic engine failure. A synopsis of Pike's final moments in the jet is recorded on the POW Network's web page.

"Uh oh, there goes the engine. Well, see you guys later," Pike indicated to his nearby fellow pilots that he had to eject.

Meanwhile, back in Lemoore, his wife, Lou Ann, was raising their three children while anxiously awaiting his return. She was 32 when she learned the father of their three children had ejected over Laos.

"We may never know what happened to him," said Mrs. Pike.

Every year she faithfully returns to the base on the third Friday in September for the annual ceremony. As this year's guest speaker, she related a tale of a former POW who spent time in the same camp as a resourceful young Navy Seaman.

"Seaman Apprentice Douglas Hegdahl managed to trick the North Vietnamese into thinking he was a fool. When asked to write statements against the United States, he agreed, but pretended to be unable to read or write, which was believable to the Vietnamese captors," Mrs. Pike related from the book "The Incredibly Stupid One," by former POW Capt. Richard Stratton (ret).

Turns out the "stupid one" should have been nicknamed the clever one.

"After Hegdahl appeared to be incapable of learning to read and write, his captors gave up on him.

Later, he came to be known to the Vietnamese as 'The Incredibly Stupid One.' because they thought he was so stupid, the Vietnamese gave him nearly free rein of the camp," Mrs. Pike added. "During his prison stay, Hegdahl sabotaged five trucks by putting small amounts of dirt in their gas tanks."

Hegdahl reportedly memorized names, capture dates, method of capture, and personal information of about 256 other prisoners — to the tune of the nursery rhyme "Old McDonald had a Farm." Hegdahl was one of three POWs who were released from Hanoi on August 5, 1969. He was ordered by Stratton to accept an early release so that he could provide names of POWs being held by the North Vietnamese and reveal the conditions to which the prisoners were being subjected, Mrs. Pike added.

A former prisoner of war and veterans from World War II, Korea and Vietnam attended the remembrance. M.W. Del Re, Jr., became a POW on August 16, 1943. He was a 2nd Lieutenant in the U.S. Army Air Corps and part of the crew, as navigator, of a B-17 over occupied France.

"His bomber took heavy hits and was soon in a spin, apparently on fire and going down. He and a couple others of his crew were trying to open a hatch to egress, but they were not able to get it open. The ground was coming up fast, and he thought it was going to be over soon," Capt. Ashliman said as he acknowledged the Tulare man's presence at the ceremony.

"Suddenly, the B-17 exploded, and he was blown clear of the aircraft and was able to pull the rip cord of his parachute for a nylon let down. He spent months in hospitals to get his injuries healed and was finally repatriated in January 1945," Ashliman said. Del Re subsequently became a judge in Tulare County and retired, with the rank of Captain, from the U.S. Air Force.

The remembrance concluded with two Strike Fighter Squadron (VFA 122) students, Lt.j.g. Paul Shen and Lt. j.g. Leslie Baca, reading the roll call of the absent 88 NAS Lemoore-based POWs and MIAs, a 21-rifle salute and the playing of "Taps" by Baca. National POW/MIA Recognition Day was established by an Act of Congress and is observed on the third Friday in September. It is one of six days that the POW/MIA flag can be flown.





# Suicide Prevention

## A Conversation Worth Having

Story by Jessica Tounzen, NCCOSC Public Affairs

Naval Center for Combat and Operational Stress Control (NCCOSC) staff marked Suicide Prevention Month by participating in two training events aimed at stress management, suicide prevention, and resiliency building Sept. 10, at Naval Base San Diego and Naval Air Station North Island.

These training sessions came on the heels of a message from Commander, Navy Region Southwest, stating that “Suicide Prevention Month is not meant to be a single event for the year. Rather, let this month be the springboard for ongoing engagement concerning open communication, personal wellness, peer support, and bystander intervention, for every Sailor, every day, throughout the year to ensure we have the most resilient combat force possible.”

Rob Gerardi, retired master chief hospital corpsman and NCCOSC education and program development department head, said during the training that stress management, resiliency, and ultimately, suicide prevention, starts at the top of the chain of command.

“Leaders have the responsibility to create an environment where there’s trust, unit cohesion, and respect, and where it’s okay to ask for and give help,” he said.

Air Traffic Controlman 1st Class (AW/SW) Rebecca Rosati, who works at San Diego’s Fleet Area Control and Surveillance Facility, said a supportive chain of command does indeed play a vital role in whether a



Dr. Dan Deluna, suicide prevention coordinator, Navy Region Southwest, discusses the impact of suicide and the importance of reaching out to shipmates and those in need during a Suicide Prevention Awareness event at Naval Base San Diego, Sept. 10.

service member is able to seek help for mental health concerns.

“They might feel like it could affect their career, or they’ll be seen as ‘that person,’ the problem child,” explained Rosati. “They need leaders who will sit down and hear their story and not judge.”

That was the whole idea behind these training events, said Cmdr. Stephan Dupourque, who leads Navy Region Southwest’s 21<sup>st</sup> Century Sailor & Marine initiative. The initiative is “a set of objectives and policies, new and existing, across a spectrum of wellness that maximizes each Sailor’s and Marine’s personal readiness to hone the most combat effective force in the history of the Department of the Navy,” according to the program’s website.

“Anything that starts a conversation is helpful,” said Dupourque. “We need to ensure people are comfortable talking about suicide and that we’ve got the open lines of communication to do just that.”

Suicide education and treatment have come a long way, added Dupourque. “I think the understanding of suicide and what causes it has improved over the years. We’ve gone from not talking about it and placing blame, to treating it as an illness.”

But there’s still room for improvement, especially in the military, where there’s a long-standing perception that you must not show weakness. Even with the many strides in suicide prevention and awareness, it’s still talked about behind closed doors, perpetuating the stigma, the idea that it’s something to be ashamed of.

“In the Navy, we do physical fitness tests every six months, but we don’t do command mental fitness tests—those are done in private. If you fail your physical fitness test, everyone knows. Your shipmates and your command support you and encourage you to improve so you can pass the next one,” said Dupourque.

Why isn’t mental fitness approached as openly as physical fitness, and service members shown the same support from their shipmates and chain of command? Simply put, because many people are afraid or ashamed to reveal their inner struggles. That is what would enhance training events like these: a peek into the life of someone who’s been there, who’s not afraid to stand up and admit they’re human.

Someone to say it’s okay to ask for help. This is a conversation worth having, and a conversation that could save lives.

Gerardi listed four ways service members can maintain their mental fitness: by practicing optimism, flexible thinking, behavior control, and positive coping. These are all factors in building resilience, which is associated with decreased suicide risk.

Optimism can be taught, he said, and that includes positive expectations, beliefs, and reactions. It’s okay to allow yourself some time to mourn a traumatic event or a bad situation, but it’s important to find the silver lining. Try starting out every day by listing three good things in your life—like a roof over your head, a steady paycheck, or good friends.

Flexible thinking is the ability to look at a situation from a different perspective, to stop and really think about it. “Sometimes the simplest way of doing things is the best...there’s brilliance in the basics,” says Gerardi.

Bad days are inevitable, and there will always be things or people who annoy you or get you down. Stress is a physiological change that often prevents you from seeing things in the best light. That’s where behavior control comes into play. Try taking deep breaths or flexing and releasing your muscles. Turn to your favorite activities to help relax and relieve some of that tension.



Cmdr. Stephan Dupourque, director of the 21<sup>st</sup> Century Sailor & Marine Initiative for NRSW speaks about the risk factors for suicide and how to intervene during an event, Sept. 10.

Positive coping techniques address the physical, mental, social and spiritual aspects of your life. Staying physically fit, eating well, get-

ting adequate rest, taking time to interact with others, belief in a higher power or contributing to something bigger than you are all great ways to enrich your overall well-being and improve your resiliency.

“I always try to see the positive in things. I don’t see the point of being negative because you have to do it one way or another, so you might as well make the best of it,” said Gas Turbine Systems Technician-Electrical (GSE) Second Class (SW) Darren Williams, who is stationed at Regional Maintenance Center Southwest in San Diego.

There is no better time than right now to act on suicide—the third leading cause of death in the Navy, according to Dr. Dan Deluna, suicide prevention coordinator for Navy Region Southwest.

“Don’t be afraid to *Ask* what’s wrong, *Care*—meaning listen, offer hope, and don’t judge—and *Treat* by taking action, getting the person help and following up with them later,” urges Deluna.

Suicide claims a life every 13 minutes in the US, which means every 14 minutes someone is left behind to make sense of it. Sixty-five percent of attempted suicides have a documented history of behavioral problems, leading mental health professionals like Deluna to believe more could have been done to prevent them. Proper stress management and a supportive command may ultimately be the key to prevent the loss of more lives to suicide. It’s an all-hands effort, and the most important conversation you could have.

***If you are finding yourself struggling with depression or thoughts of suicide, don’t be afraid or ashamed to get help. Call the National Suicide Prevention Lifeline at 1-800-273-TALK (8255), Military OneSource at 1-800-342-9647, or seek out a friend, coworker, or chaplain. You can also explore all of the resources available at [www.nccosc.navy.mil](http://www.nccosc.navy.mil).***



Retired Hospital Corpsman Master Chief Rob Gerardi, department head for education and program development at NCCOC, discusses how to build and maintain resiliency at the Suicide Prevention Awareness Month event at Naval Base San Diego, Sept. 10.



# A Work in Progress

Editorial by Jessica Tounzen, NCCOSC Public Affairs

I was 25 when I first began treatment for depression. Throughout most of my adolescent and adult life, I'd battled self-confidence and body image issues, and thanks to a couple of bad relationships, I fought with insecurity and self-worth as well. Finally, after years of hearing that I needed to "just choose to be happy," I realized that my depression didn't exist due to a lack of effort on my part, but an indication that there was something deeper, out of my control, and I realized I needed help.

Fast-forward to today, nearly six years later. I'm almost 31, a recently-separated Navy veteran now back in Federal employment as a civilian, a concept that is still somewhat foreign to me after six years in uniform. I'm married going on four years, with a two-year-old daughter who I love madly but who also challenges me daily, as two-year-olds do.

I've seen a handful of psychologists and psychiatrists. I've been to talk therapy, and I've tried journaling. I've been on six different antidepressant medications and I'm finally beginning to discover a balance that works for me. I'm gradually finding my way out of the deep fog of despair and hopelessness that enveloped me for so long. I still have days where I feel ill at ease in my own skin, where I don't want to get out of bed, where I just don't feel like dealing with my responsibilities. I *know* I have issues. I'm not perfect. I am just trying to be the best mother and wife I can be, and if I need help along the way, that's okay, because I am a *work in progress*.

Robin Williams was a man who seemed to have it all. A brilliant, funny man, adored by many, living a life of fame and fortune. But when he suddenly took his own life, the comedic mask worn by the actor was finally taken off to reveal the pain of the man, who, it turned out, was just like me. Because here's the thing about depression: it doesn't discriminate based on your gender, the color of your skin, or how much money you make. *Depression is a chemical imbalance, it's not your fault, and there is help.*

During my six years in the Navy, I attended countless briefings on suicide awareness. My shipmates and I were reassured by our chain of command that if we needed someone to talk to, they were there. They said there was no shame in asking for help. But not once did someone stand up and say "I've been there. I've fought depression. I've had suicidal thoughts. I've

wandered through a tunnel so long and so dark that I never thought I'd see the light at the end."

That's why I decided to speak up and share my story. I want you to know if you're feeling depressed, if you struggle to get out of bed, and you can't find the light at the end of the tunnel, you're not alone. You're not weak. Don't be ashamed or afraid to get the help you need—and deserve—to be the best YOU that you can be.

**If you are finding yourself struggling with depression or thoughts of suicide, don't be afraid or ashamed to get help. Call the National Suicide Prevention Lifeline at 1-800-273-TALK (8255), Military OneSource at 1-800-342-9647, or seek out a friend, coworker, or chaplain. You can also explore all of the resources available at [www.nccosc.navy.mil](http://www.nccosc.navy.mil).**

## Tips for Battling Depression

**Integrative Wellness:** Your physical, emotional and psychological health is connected — taking care of your body helps keep your mind healthy.

**Physical Activity:** Get up and get out! Learn how. Engaging in 150 minutes per week of moderate exercise can help with chronic pain, depression, anxiety and stress.

**Nutrition:** Eating a variety of nutritious foods keeps you performing and looking your best. Learn how to create easy and great-for-you meals that offer a variety of healthy carbohydrates, fats and protein.

**Tobacco-free Living:** Research has found that tobacco increases stress. Eliminating tobacco from your life will help contribute to your mental wellness.

**Mental Wellness:** Emotional and mental well-being increases your ability to cope during stressful times. Explore resources to help strengthen you and your family's mental and emotional health.

**Sleep:** Getting sufficient rest each night ensures optimal mental performance and can help alleviate stress. A general rule of thumb is that adults require about seven or eight hours of sleep a day, while children need 10 or more hours, depending on their age.

**For more helpful tips visit the Healthy Base Initiative at [www.militaryonesource.mil/hbi](http://www.militaryonesource.mil/hbi)**

# CNRSW HQ HOLIDAY PARTY Masquerade

Saturday, December 6, 2014 • Admiral Kidd Catering and Conference Center  
Naval Base Point Loma, NMAWC • 5:30 pm Social • 6 pm Dinner • Party Ends at 10:30 pm  
Dinner • Dancing • Photo Booth • Door Prizes • Fun!

## DJ Flexander

Email song/music request to the DJ.  
flexanderdelrosario@gmail.com  
Subject: CNRSW Holiday Party

## Free Photo Booth

Take memorable and fun photos at the PBX™  
The Photo Booth eXperience

## Lodging

Navy Gateway Inns & Suites (NGIS)  
32444 Echo Lane  
San Diego, CA 92147  
Call (619) 524-0557 for reservations.  
Code: Masquerade  
VIP Room \$80  
Standard Suite \$65  
[www.dodlodging.net](http://www.dodlodging.net)

## Child Care

5:30-10:30 PM  
"Give Parents a Break"  
Patrick Wade Child Development Center  
Children ages 6 weeks-12 years old  
Call (619) 222-3400 for reservations  
\$4 per hour per child

## Dinner Menu

**Buffet Dinner**  
Carving Board:  
Prime Rib of Beef  
Parmesan Crusted Chicken  
Spinach Ravioli  
Roasted Red Potatoes  
Fresh Vegetable Medley  
Rolls and Butter

**Starters**  
Farmers Market Display  
Chef's Choice  
Hot Hors d' Oeuvres  
Mediterranean Salad

**Gourmet Coffee & Desserts**  
Assorted Coffee and Creamers  
Assorted Dessert

\*Cash Bar Only

## Tickets are on sale now!

Open to CNRSW military, civilians, and contractors.  
(one guest per I.D. card holder)

\$30 per person  
Cash, Credit Cards, and MWR Bucks  
To reserve a table, purchase eight (8) tickets together. Open seating is also available.

Attire: Holiday Semiformal  
Masquerade theme party.  
Mask optional.  
Prize for "Best Dressed".



**For Tickets Contact:**  
Irma Malaban: 619-532-2074  
ITCS Wheeler: 619-532-1986  
Fran Malone: 619-532-3059  
ABE2 Long: 619-532-2925



# MCRD Bootcamp Challenges recruits runners

Story by Mass Communication Specialist 3rd Class Joe Bishop, Navy Public Affairs Support Element West

San Diegans along with service members and their families participated in the annual Boot Camp Challenge on Sept. 27 at the historic Marine Corps Recruit Depot (MCRD) in San Diego.

"It's an opportunity for civilians to get a taste of what it's like to be a recruit going through training," said Sgt. Benjamin E. Woodle, a combat correspondent assigned to MCRD. "It helps showcase the experience for the San Diego community. We're right in the heart of San Diego, so it's good to let the

community see what it has invested in."

The 3-mile obstacle course was run on both paved roads and hard-packed dirt. The course consisted of more than 40 obstacles, including hay jumps, tunnel crawls, log hurdles, a six foot wall, trenches, cargo-net crawls, and push-up stations. Located at each station were Marine Corps drill instructors, who provided motivation for participants and ensured that they completed the obstacles properly.

"I want the participants to know that when times are hard that they're going to get through – no mat-

ter what," said a drill sergeant participating in the Challenge.

Volunteers from Veterans Village of San Diego and many San Diego competitors dedicated their time to pass out T-shirts and offer support throughout the course.

The event intended to offer the local community a good time, while also revealing a side of the Marine Corps that the public does not usually see, according to Sgt. Walter D. Marino, a combat corre-

spondent at MCRD. Following the event, finishers were treated to music, food and complimentary massages. Local businesses also set up tents and offered complimentary merchandise and information.

"The Marine Corps is a great organization," said John Serocki, a runner from Del Mar. "It's important to support those who make such a big sacrifice."

The MCRD Bootcamp Challenge is part of the ongoing Fleet Week series of activities throughout San Diego that honor service members and their families.



# The Heart and Fury of Hugo Franco

Story by Mass Communication Specialist 3rd Class Joe Bishop, Navy Public Affairs Support Element West

A tall middle-aged man with a big grin strolls around the booths at the annual Marine Corps Recruit Depot (MCRD) Bootcamp Challenge – a 5K run full of obstacles and motivated drill instructors. He sports a light yellow T-shirt that reads on the front "I had heart surgery," and on the back "What's your excuse?"

This is not the first Bootcamp Challenge for San Diego resident Hugo Franco. There is nothing new about running obstacle courses for him and training hard to earn top run times. He works out five to six days a week and runs religiously. Franco sticks to his training as he patiently waits for a shot at his dream – to become a San Diego Firefighter. But sometimes life sets up its own obstacles. The doctors recently told Franco that his heart would prevent him from ever joining the fire house.

"So all these years I was trying to get into the fire department – it took me seven years," said Franco. "And finally when Hemet gave me that opportunity, I failed it."

When Franco received the call to join the Hemet Fire Department he was prepared. He was in fantastic physical shape, and he already completed all the necessary prerequisites.

"The opportunity came and I went through all the requirements," said Franco. "I had my resume. I had my fire academy, but, I lost my opportunity to become a firefighter. So they went to the next person, and I fell back to the end of the line."

The Hemet Fire Department requires all firefighters to undergo a stress test through physical exercise. A stress test determines the amount of stress that a person's heart can manage before developing either an abnormal rhythm or evidence of ischemia, that is, not enough blood flow to the heart muscle.

Franco failed his first stress test. He figured it was a mistake, so he retook the exam. He failed again. His dream on the line, Franco took a third test just to confirm that he actually had a serious heart problem. He failed the exam again. Reality set

in as Franco realized that these failures meant he lost the chance to pursue his dream.

"I thought I was untouchable," said Franco. "I thought I was going to pass the medical with flying colors. I called my wife and said, 'You know what, something is going on'. So, after a nuclear stress test, an angiogram and a CT (computed tomography) scan, that's when they found out that I was born with an anomaly in my heart."

The doctors told Franco, at this point, that he was lucky to be alive. He needed heart surgery as soon as possible.

"I saw the look on the doctor's face when he was looking at my monitor," said Franco. "He said, 'You know, what I'm looking at? You should be dead right now.'"

Franco's high level of fitness was his saving grace. Ironically, his hard work in the gym, his competitive runs, like Bootcamp Challenge, all his training for his lost firefighting dream is also what most likely kept him alive all these years.

His dedication to fitness kept him healthy enough to let his heart problem go unnoticed. In fact, Franco, in his early forties and with a serious heart condition, was still successfully competing against firefighting candidates in their late teens and early twenties.

"If it wasn't for me eating the way I did and having (my passion for firefighting), I would've been dead, said Franco. "No healthy eating, no workouts, I would've been dead."

After only six months from the day of his open heart surgery, Franco was back to running competitions. This time he set a new personal record at the MCRD Bootcamp Challenge.

"My time last year was 26 minutes, 24 seconds," said Franco. "This year it was 25:35, so I improved by about 50 seconds."

Franco may not ever be a firefighter, but he still has his life. Despite the obstacles life throws his way, he's still growing and improving every year.



# Rescue Task Force Conducts Active Shooter Exercise

Photos and Story by Mass Communication Specialist 3<sup>rd</sup> Class Chase C. Lacombe

Members of Command Navy Region Southwest Rescue Task Force (RTF) conducted scenario training exercises at the Strategic Operations Facility, Oct. 30.

“The purpose of this exercise was to get victims of a violent incident out of the danger area, or warm zone,” said Mary Anderson, Navy Region Southwest assistant fire chief-emergency medical services (EMS). “Typically fire department and emergency medical technician (EMT) personnel were not allowed into the warm zone. It was considered unsafe and we were kept at a distance of several blocks to a mile away until law enforcement made the scene cold.”

A different approach to this long-standing safety guideline is now being considered and tested. Specially trained responders are now being instructed on how to safely breach this line to rescue victims who need immediate medical attention.

“Now we have a specialized team of EMTs and paramedics who will go into these unsafe and unsecured areas under force protection and pull out victims,” said Anderson. “This is what helps decrease mortality.”

There has been an increase of hostile events in recent years on military installations involving active shooters. The Washington Navy Yard experienced a lone gunman who fatally wounded 12 people and Fort Hood in Texas where 43 people were either wounded or killed in 2009 and again in 2014 where four were

killed and 16 more wounded. Additional incidents have also occurred around the United States resulting in the deaths of military and civilian personnel, stressing the need for additional training and tactics in order to combat this type of threat and save more lives.

“The RTF’s mission is to go into these zones, find victims and pull them out into the cold zone where it’s safe and into awaiting ambulances,” said Anderson. “The ultimate goal is to save more lives. A person can bleed to death in under three minutes from a wound to a major artery.”

This type of training is a new tactic that is still in its stages of infancy. However, local agencies have been working diligently throughout most of 2014 to develop and refine these tactics so that responders to future incidents will have the knowledge and confidence in order to handle threats and rescue victims quicker, minimizing the loss of life.

“We started building this program back in April,” said Anderson. “We held our first classes here in August and September. So far the training has been going really well. The goal was to implement this program by Oct. 30. Commander, Navy Installations Command (CNIC) has come out today to validate our program with the hopes that CNIC will expand this program worldwide. So Navy Region Southwest (NRSW) is setting the foundation and leading the way with this program.”

With the success of this program for NRSW and through continued training, other military bases and installations will now adopt the model created here and begin training their own task forces to respond to potential incidents in much the same way.

“Our next scenario training class will be held in December with all of the Southwest installations,” said Anderson. “We will then continue the validation process quarterly or semi-annually thereafter for the other locations who have been asking for it.”

“In parallel, we are providing training with the Naval Medical Facility to get procedural train-

ing in addition to pre-hospital trauma life support training,” said Cmdr. Gerard Demers, Navy Midwest EMS/disaster medical director. “That provides the medical training that goes into the RTF team. Traditionally, combat life support is not part of non-tactical SWAT teams. This is not necessarily tactical medicine where our medics are armed, but is basically warm zone support of law enforcement.”

Team members who are active responders in the training scenarios are fully debriefed and the evolutions are analyzed to target correct actions and responses performed as well as identify what areas can be improved upon or modified for future training.

“We are learning and adapting as part of a dynamic risk threat assessment,” said Demers. “We change our tactics and our program based on perceived threats and ultimately will be modified for each campus as each location is a little different. They each have different potential threats and staffing levels. Some military institutions may not have as robust an EMS footprint as we have in the southwest region. That’s where we have to provide training to them in addition to gear and improve skillsets in their agencies. What I hope to do in the future is to provide additional training to law enforcement to further integrate our response for the RTF.”

The training continued throughout most of the day as various scenarios of active shooter car crash and hospital drills were conducted. These and other potential threat scenarios will be reviewed, modified and reimplemented into future exercises.

“I think as we move forward through the multiple iterations, the classes are becoming more tightknit,” said Demers. “We have had two distinct organizations who had different plans, tactics and vocabulary who now are more familiar with each agencies standard operating



Emergency medical task force technicians carry an injured victim out of the hostile zone to a safety zone during an active shooter exercise. Training was conducted to make sure first responders can safely and efficiently extract wounded victims in the event of an actual attack.

procedure and can now operate more seamlessly. The more they work together, the better they are. As this program matures, we going to use the lessons learned to export to the other commands. It is going to be an amazing program and every time I see it, it improves.”

## Noteworthy...

Navy Region Southwest’s Fire and Emergency Services prepare and train for a wide range of crisis situations in the effort to save lives and ensure safety.

The department’s hard work and dedication resulted in NRSW’s recognition by the 2013 Department of Defense’s Annual Fire and Emergency Services Award Program. NRSW won the Fire Prevention Program of the Year Award, under the leadership of Chief Ernst Piercy and Chief Frank Montone.

The DoD’s Annual Fire and Emergency Services Awards are presented by the Secretary of Defense to DoD firefighters and fire and emergency services departments that go above and beyond the call of duty.



Simulating an active shooter attack, a civilian plays the role of a gunman during Navy Region Southwest’s Rescue Task Force (RTF) training at the Strategic Operations facility.



# NBSD Leads the Effort to Feed Families

By Quartermaster 3rd Class Christina McAllister, Naval Base San Diego

Theodore Roosevelt once said “This country will not be a good place for any of us to live in unless we make it a good place for all of us to live in.”

Sailors have been volunteering and serving their communities for years in hopes of making it a better place. These Sailors don't do it because they have to they do it because they know the importance of serving those who serve them.

Through programs like the Feds Feed Families Campaign, Sailors have been able to make a direct impact in their communities.

Feds Feed Families is a voluntary effort geared towards federal employees' donation of food and non-perishable food items to their local communities. It is led by U.S. Department of Agriculture and supported by the Office of Personnel Management.

NBSD has always made it a goal to lead the effort in the San Diego area.

It was that drive that led NBSD to collect and donate 140,028 pounds of food and non-perishable during the 2014 Feds Feeds Families campaign this summer.

“This year's Feds Feed Families campaign was a great success for Naval Base San Diego,” said Religious Programs Specialist 1st Class Kenneth Burling, program facilitator. “We especially had strong participation from the Commissary, which generated almost three thousand pounds in food donations.”

In order to receive maximum participation NBSD's religious department set up donation boxes at various locations throughout the base and reached out to tenant commands to encourage them to participate as well.

“Through coordinated efforts and weekly deliveries to the food bank, we were able to efficiently move the donations quickly to ensure families

were able to get the food,” said Operations Specialist 2nd Class Diana Vargas, Naval Base San Diego.

The food and non-perishable items were donated to St. Vincent de Paul, a local California nonprofit that provides meals to homeless in San Diego. The Regional Task Force on the Homeless counted 9,020 sheltered and unsheltered homeless in the County of San Diego in 2010. St. Vincent de Paul Village saves lives every day by providing basic services such as meals.

“I am very proud of the generosity shown by our sailors,” said Captain Curt Jones, Naval Base San Diego's commanding officer. “The individuals who donated tens of thousands of pounds of food this year are making a difference for local families in need. With all of the support we receive from our community, I'm delighted that we were able to step up and help out also.”

Thanks to the generosity of federal employees like NBSD Sailors more than 24.1 million pounds of food has been collected to nourish families across America since 2009.



## NAVFAC Southwest Seabees Remove Tree Houses in San Diego River

Story by Mario T. Icari, Naval Facilities Engineering Command Southwest Public Affairs

San Diego River Park Foundation (SDRPF) volunteers and Naval Facilities Engineering Command (NAVFAC) Southwest Seabees worked together on a waste cleanup effort at San Diego River, Oct. 1.

“Our guys, along with the volunteers, work great as a team,” said Builder 1st Class Demar Machuca, a NAVFAC Southwest Seabee. “How we planned it as a team came together and it was shown on what we accomplished today. The foundation was very impressed and our Seabees are getting thanked for how they dedicated time and know how to help our community out, especially since we all share the beaches here in San Diego and this stuff ends up on the shore where we take our families out to at local beaches.”

NAVFAC Southwest Seabees assigned to Naval Base Point Loma, Naval Base Coronado, Naval Base San Diego, San Clemente Island, 1220 Pacific Highway, and several Navy officers and chief petty officers from NAVFAC Southwest and Space and Naval Warfare Systems Center Pacific were involved in the cleanup effort.

The cleanup involved removal of trash and the deconstruction of three large treehouse structures that were found to be inhabited by groups of local homeless people in the San Diego River areas near the intersection of Interstate 805 and Interstate 8 underpass.

“I have the utmost respect for the Seabees,” said Doug Taylor, San Diego River Park Foundation river ambassador. “I appreciate their help for creating a better future for the San Diego River. The impact to the

river is tremendous. We are out here today working together to clean the river and give it a better future. We'll probably fill two 40-yard dumpsters completely full with trash and debris just today.”

Seabee's were the primary group involved in the deconstruction of the tree houses due to their expertise in demolition work. The SDRPF volunteers were the primary group involved in removing the trash from the surrounding areas. Both groups will be involved in hauling out the debris to a dumpster.



“We saved the community and the foundation over \$15,000 in contractor fees if they would have hired someone to demo., and another \$5,000 to haul the trash,” said Machuca.

The tree houses and their former occupants were located in a sensitive riparian (river bank) habitat.

The tree houses caused a significant amount of trash and debris to be washed up the river during rain storms, which leads directly to the Pacific Ocean. Hazardous materials such as latrines, paint, and electronics contaminate the soil and ground water and negatively impacts the river ecosystem.

A large portion of trash was located on the south bank of the San Diego River and in the river water itself. Removal of the waste will ensure that it doesn't end up in the ocean, stops further contamination of the soil and ground water and allows plants to return to the area.





# NAVY COMPASS



## Volume XX Issue 3

November / December 2014 Edition

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The Navy Compass is published and managed by Commander, Navy Region Southwest Public Affairs Office team. This magazine is an authorized publication for the members of the Department of Defense, dependants and retired personnel. Contents are not necessarily the official view of, or the endorsement of the U.S. Government, Department of Defense, or the U.S. Navy. The Navy Compass reserves the right to edit submissions within Associated Press Stylebook guidelines and subject to current Public Affairs review prior to publication. Submission ideas can be sent online via [www.navyregionsouthwest.com](http://www.navyregionsouthwest.com).

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## NEXT ISSUE...

-Tips for Financially Fitness in 2015

- Cancer Survivor gets her Star!