



President's Message

Richard B. Rothwell



After a much needed wet winter in Southern California, the weather is beginning to feel more normal – warm and dry. Not so on

April 21 when some 30 CPHS members and guests toured Camp Pendleton training sites. The skies were overcast with a threat of rain, but that did not dampen the adventure. Howard Blair's excellent article in this edition of "Groundbreaker" describes our experience in the fascinating Infantry Immersion Trainer (IIT), otherwise known as the Afghan Village. In addition to visiting the IIT we enjoyed lunch in the School of Infantry mess hall and toured the 360-degree screen electronic convoy trainer. It is a huge, highly sophisticated video game with a serious purpose -- teaching Marine drivers and crews how to react to various combat scenarios. Members were able to "drive" a HUMMV at high speed through Fallujah while attempting to avoid roadside bombs and snipers.

Before leaving the Base we visited and toured the Las Flores adobe under the guidance of Danielle Page, from the Base Environmental Security staff and an ex officio member of the CPHS Board of Directors. As you may recall, this 1860's era Monterey style structure is a National Historic Landmark. It is about to undergo its next phase of restoration, work that CPHS is helping to fund.

All hands agreed that the visit to Camp Pendleton training sites was interesting, enlightening, and exceptionally well hosted by Marines and civilian trainers. It was one of a series of experiences our members have shared. Others included tours of the historic districts of San Juan Capistrano and San Clemente; a

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CPHS Members Get a "Feel" for the Latest Training Techniques

by Howard G. Blair

"As a Marine Squad Leader, your mission is to enter this particular village in Afghanistan and determine if the population there is friendly, neutral or hostile to the American Marines. You need to understand how to interface with the people in power, watch for potential enemy combatants, and protect your men from improvised explosive devices (IED's). You need to have a plan to react to any enemy fire or if they are neutral move them to friendly."

The Infantry Immersion Training Division (IIT) has a facility on the base of Camp Pendleton that trains Marines on how to get the above objective accomplished. MGySgt. Steve Smith, USMC (Ret), who runs the operation, spent four hours on the morning of April 21st walking 31 CPHS members thorough the training site, which is a replica of an actual Afghan village. You can see the entrance to the village in the picture to the right. This village would have a population of around 300 people, most of which have probably never ventured further away than the next village, if that far. This "training" village has an elaborate sound system and has over 300 cameras positioned throughout the area. In fact as we were walking through we heard a helicopter keep flying by overhead. It took several of us about ten minutes to discover the sound came through the hidden speaker system in the village.



In order to make the training as real as possible, IIT has hired a group of actors who not only dress and act as villagers, but also speak Afghan. As we left the village we saw some of the actors getting ready for the next training session. (picture on the right) Some of the other actors were getting made up. One individual has what looked like a blown off arm. MGySgt. Smith, a 30 year infantry veteran that served in both Iraq and Afghanistan, told us that when some of the villagers act hurt, they may have simulated arms or legs blown off with red fluid that looks like blood. He continued to emphasize that the training was as realistic as they could make it because it was necessary for the training.



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CPHS Member Event

CPHS Members Get a “Feel” for the Latest Training Techniques

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Before the squad leader leads his squad (about 12 or 13 men plus an interpreter) go into a village, he is given a map of the village. His job is for him and his squad to memorize the layout of the village. They need to know all they can about where each nook and alley leads in case they get into a fire fight and have to react quickly. You can see by the picture to the right how narrow some of the passageways are. Some of these “alleys” may go to a dead end, and some may have living quarters come off of them. There is no particular plan to any of the villages, and each one is different. This is why the squad has to take time to study and memorize the layout of the village.



As you walk through the village, one can see various mock ups of stores and live stock. This picture shows a sheep tied to one of the stores. The objective of the squad is to ensure as best they can that there are no IED's in or near any of the stores. IED's can be placed almost anywhere and in almost anything.



In fact, there was an IED placed in this pile of tires that is shown to the right. The trainers watch closely if any of the squad notices the explosive device and if he does how he reacts to it. The trainers can also call a control room and have the IED explode, causing mock injuries.



Of course each village has a market place where some of the food that is grown is sold, along with other imports such as cellular phones, jewelry and other items. Once again the idea is for the Marines to get used to seeing the markets and to keep their eyes and ears open always looking for trouble, but trying to remain friendly.

All around the village there are signs of Afghan living. You will see posters on the walls and behind some of the inner walls are some living quarters. All of the living quarters have dirt floors with rugs thrown over them. The picture on the right is one room of the living quarters of the tribal leader. All of the other quarters that we saw were not near as nice as the one shown in the this picture.



Once the training exercise with the squad is complete, there is a debriefing from the trainers and MGySgt Smith. The squad also gets a CD of their time in the village, which can be replayed for further review. Some months there are 600 Marines that come through the village. The cost estimate for the training site was around 30 million dollars. This report does not even begin to explain the details and nuances of the immersion technique. Marines learn how to watch for hostile body language, and how to show people of that culture respect. They also learn to trust each other in tight situations, and how to anticipate dangerous areas.

One thing that was made clear to the CPHS members and guests is that today's Marine Corps is a lot different than it used to be. Today's Marines are better trained, but still have a difficult mission in Afghanistan. They are trying to win the hearts and minds of people whose culture is several centuries behind ours. One thing is for sure, for once the Marine Corps has the best training available in order to assist both Marines and Corpsmen obtaining their overall challenging objectives.

National Museum of the Marine Corps

part 4 of 4 by Maj. Cal Frantz, USMC (Ret)

Two significant events leading up to building the National Museum of the Marine Corps occurred well before it was opened on November 10th, 2006. The first had to do with real estate. When Interstate 95 was built, a strip of land that had been part of Marine Corps Base, Quantico, was isolated between I-95 and US Route 1. The Marine Corps donated this beautiful wooded area to Prince William County, Virginia, for development as a park. As planning for the Heritage Center involved the local community, Prince William County officials saw immediately the benefit of a place that was estimated to draw half a million visitors per year. They offered to give part of the park back to the Marine Corps as the site for the museum. In 2000 the deal was done, and 135 acres were given back to the Marine Corps for the Heritage Center campus – land that stood beside the busiest tourist corridor on the East Coast of the United States.



The second event had to do with leadership. Recognizing the need for top notch talent to run the museum, the Corps was fortunate to hire Mrs. Lin Ezell as the first Director of the Museum in July, 2005. Mrs. Ezell came to the job with 20 years experience at the Smithsonian Institution, where she led the team that designed and built the Air and Space Museum's Udvar-Hazy Center in Dulles, Virginia. She has degrees in public administration, literature and history, and has published six books. Her strong leadership earned her many awards at the Smithsonian, and she put her experiences to work immediately to ensure that the exhibits in the new Marine Corps museum were installed and ready for opening day.

Opening day, however, was only a beginning!

The Heritage Center is conceived as much more than just a museum. It is a complex that includes Semper Fidelis Memorial Park, a chapel, an artifacts restoration facility, a large theater, an onsite hotel and conference center, a parade ground, and partial restoration of the historic Kings Highway that runs through the property. The museum building itself is only two thirds complete, and awaits build out that will include a permanent gallery for display of the Corps' combat art collection, other additional gallery spaces, and office facilities for both museum staff and Heritage Foundation staff. The chapel has been built, and much of Semper Fidelis Memorial Park has been developed with walking trails bordered with thousands of memorial bricks donated by supporters of the Heritage Center. A children's play park has been installed on the campus, and the parking lot expanded. And in June, 2010, three new galleries inside the museum were opened that display the early years of the Corps, and the pivotal battle of Belleau Wood in WW I. The museum welcomed its two millionth visitor in the summer of 2010.

But so much more remains to be done. So the Heritage Foundation, which began by offering a \$10,000 annual research grant back in 1979, is now engaged in a \$105 million capital fund raising campaign to complete the vision. Once again the Heritage Foundation finds itself in the right place at the right time.



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performance by the Marine Corps Drum and Bugle Corps, Silent Drill Platoon, and Color Guard; along with tours of the Ranch House and Las Flores adobe. I wish I could say that the latest tour was the brainchild of your Board of Directors. In fact, the idea came from one of our members. If you have an idea for a historical adventure in the San Diego area, I encourage you to share your ideas. Send them to Board Member Don Gressly (marinedag@sbcglobal.net). If we can, we will make it happen.

Planning is well underway for our Saturday, June 25 fundraiser at the Ranch House. The hours will be from 2:00pm to 5:00 pm. I hope to see many of you there.

Thanks once again for your continued support. I look forward to reporting to you again in our next edition of "Groundbreaker."

Richard B. Rothwell

Who was the first Marine to be awarded the Medal of Honor?

It was Corporal John Mackie on May 15, 1862, during the civil war. Cpl. Mackie fought valiantly from the deck of the USS GALENA under heavy confederate fire near Richmond, Virginia. In recognition of his brave deeds, Mackie was awarded the Medal of Honor, making him the first Marine to receive America's highest decoration for military valor. Over the next 140 years, the medal has been bestowed 295 times and 23 times for Navy personnel serving with the Corps.



Membership Levels

Active duty military can join the Camp Pendleton Historical Society for only \$35 a year. Visit the CPHS web site at www.camppendletonhistoricalsociety.org for more information or send your check with your name, rank, branch of service, street address or post office number, city, state, zip code, and email address to: *Camp Pendleton Historical Society, Inc., Attn: Don Gressly, 1840 Goldenrod Lane, Vista, CA 92081-5341*

Vaquero	\$ 50 donation	Ranchero	\$ 100 donation
Commander's Circle	\$ 250 donation	General's Board	\$ 500 donation

Information on the different levels is also available on the Society web site.

Stay Tuned

We invite our readers to contribute stories of their experiences aboard Camp Pendleton for publication in future issues. Humorous pieces would be particularly welcome. Please e-mail your 300 words or less to marinedag@sbcglobal.net, subject line "CPHS." Submissions may be subject to editing.



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