USO CONCERT
Grammy Award-winner
Michael W. Smith

LIFE AS A YOUNG SAILOR
A look into
Wihide’s World

FAREWELL
SGM Barnes
departs 525th

31 HEROES
CrossFit community bands together for the fallen

Snook season is here!
Comparing to our brothers and sisters that served in Vietnam, those of us who wear the uniform today enjoy tremendous support from the American people. The veterans who returned home from fighting that unpopular war were ignored, yelled at and spat upon, and those same veterans have led the effort to ensure that today's troops are welcomed, honored and cared for. Today in America you can see the flags, welcome home signs, yellow ribbons and the “Thank You for Your Service” statements from strangers in any airport across our country.

This support cannot be taken for granted. Today, fewer than one percent of our female citizens serve in the military. Two generations removed from the draft, many people simply have no direct connection to their nation’s armed forces. How do we instill in the next generation of Americans an understanding of military service?

Sometimes, it takes a little creativity to make a point. In September of 2005, on the first day of school, students of Martha Cothren, a social studies school teacher at Robinson High School in Little Rock, Arkansas, were taught a lesson they would not soon forget. Her students arrived to a classroom with no desks.

She challenged them to tell her what they had done to earn the right to sit at a desk. As the day wore on, Ms. Cothren’s classes came in and out, taking their seats on the floor; at a desk.

During the final class period, Martha Cothren opened her classroom door, and in walked 27 U.S. veterans, all in uniform, each one carrying a school desk. The vets placed the school desks in rows, and then formed a line along the classroom wall. As the last Soldier set the final desk in place, those kids started to understand, perhaps for the first time in their lives, just how the right to sit at those desks had been earned.

Martha said, “You didn’t earn the right to sit at these desks. These heroes did it for you. They placed the desks here for you. Now, it’s up to you to sit in them. It is your responsibility to learn, to be good citizens, to be great citizens. They paid the price so that you could have the freedom to get an education. Don’t ever forget it.”

We who wear the uniform pay the price of freedom today, but we owe a debt of honor to those who went before us. They not only fought for our freedom, they helped restore a place of honor for our in our society.

We can repay that debt by realizing that we are the standard bearers today. That not only means serving the nation and defending the Constitution, it means doing so with honor, courage and commitment. It’s not just THAT we serve, it’s HOW we serve that counts.

As always, continue to take care of each other and do the right thing, even when no one is looking.

It’s not just THAT we serve, it’s HOW we serve that counts.

The Wire

Air Sunshine offers full refunds

Personnel who purchased tickets to Air Sunshine flights that were cancelled due to the airline’s recent suspension can request a refund.

To get the refund, simply return your ticket to the local office in GTMO or the Air Sunshine ticket counter at Fort Lauderdale International Airport.

For more information, email queries to email@airsunshine.com, or call Dwight Henninger at 74915.

Volunteer everywhere!

MWR needs talented people just like you! MWR is seeking volunteers to teach and help out with exciting classes such as basic and advanced pottery, basic hand drasing, oil painting, and scrapbooking. Share your favorite hobbies and earn volunteer hours!

For more information on how to volunteer, contact Andrea at 84435.

North East Gate Tour

Want to learn about the history and lineage of the North East Gate and the United States Marines at Naval Station Guantanamo Bay! Meet at the Marine Hill Parade Deck at 11 a.m. on the third Friday of every month for the North East Gate Tour.

For more information, call 2344.

Feds Feed Families

The 2012 Feds Feed Families food drive is going on right now! A collection table for each donation box will be located in the NEX Atrium from 11 a.m. to 3 p.m. on Saturdays until Aug. 31. A donation box for nonperishable food items is located inside the NEX. Do your part to help those less fortunate!

For more information, call HMI 1 Barrio or NDC Bolen at 4444.

Rise, all R/C fans!

Like remote-controlled cars, boats, planes and helicopters, GTMO R/C enthusiasts are looking for other remote control enthusiasts to come out and play! Would you like to know more? Email mwr_r_c_club@yahoo.com.

MANDATORY FUN

Is your unit or group having a party? Reserve a cabana or pavilion in person at the Morale, Welfare and Recreation Marina! Locations include Hospital Cay, Cable Beach, Windmill Beach, Chapman Beach, Ferry Landing, Ocean View Park, and Phillips Park.

For more information, call 2345. Operators are standing by to take your call.

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Safe Ride!

Out drinking? Thinking about driving? Put the keys down! Save your life, the lives of others, and your career.

Call 84915/84781.

Fall sports!

MWR offers a men’s and women’s kickball league and a coed indoor volleyball league this fall! Register at DeniCh Gym for free by 7 p.m. Aug. 17. Registration is open to those 16 and older.

The kickball league is scheduled to have a coaches meeting Aug. 22 at 5:30 p.m. at the DeniCh Gym. Volleyball has a coaches meeting at 6:30 p.m. also at the DeniCh Gym.

First and second place teams in each league will earn a trophy for their efforts!

For more information, call Alana at 2113.

Firefighter Ball

You’ve bought the T-shirts and gone to the fundraising events. Now it’s time for the main event! Naval Station Guantanamo Bay’s fire department is holding its Firefighter Ball 5:30 p.m. Aug. 25 at the Windjammer. For tickets or more information, call 4577.

Learn to read music!

Want to learn what all of those weird arcane symbols on sheet music mean? There’s a class for that! Each week a basic music theory for adults class begins Sept. 14 at the W. Sampson High School band room. Class runs from 5:30 to 6:30 p.m. and costs $128. Register by Sept. 7 at the Child Development Center to secure your seat.

For more information, call 77302.

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Trooper to Trooper

Personalities and Progress

SENIOR CHIEF CHARLES CANADAY
COMMAND SENIOR CHIEF, MEST

Our leaders’ personalities play a huge role in how a unit progresses. One’s personality – especially one in senior leadership – greatly affects how people view that person’s unit and how that senior leader’s peers and subordinates act and react. If a leader is approachable, people are more likely to seek out that person for guidance with questions and concerns. If a leader is rigid and over-bearing, then people will go elsewhere for the questions and guidance they need. In saying this, though, some may think, “Oh, well let’s all just be kinder and gentler,” but that is not the point.

A good leader with an approachable personality is a leader who will be trusted to advise without bias. Individuals who seek assistance from such a leader know they will receive a straight answer that is given with respect, not retribution. Such leadership allows those persons to progress with respect, not retribution. Such recognition will be formed through both their own perception and through their peers’ perception of the unit’s leadership. We as leaders should strive every day to have a personality that makes us approachable but not gullible. Peers and subordinates should be able to request assistance and guidance without fear of retribution or persecution for their ideas or questions. This will create a unity and trust among the leadership that is seen by junior personnel and will be emulated throughout the unit. I have experienced the effectiveness of this type of atmosphere first-hand from different units I have been fortunate enough to serve in. When a unit progresses in this manner, its servicemembers are seen by higher commands as stellar performers.

One trusted leader who comes to mind is Sir Ernest Shackleton, an Antarctic explorer in the early 1900s. This man was not known just for crossing Antarctica, but more for the fact that his ship became frozen in the ice on his second crossing. He managed to keep his crew alive in a desperate situation for 21 months without losing a single man. Shackleton’s personality played a huge role in how the men reacted to him and saw him as a person and a leader, ultimately allowing them to keep the utmost faith in his abilities.

Newcomers will quickly recognize who they can and cannot approach. This recognition will be formed through both their own perception and through their peers’ perception of the unit’s leadership. We as leaders should strive every day to have a personality that makes us approachable but not gullible. Peers and subordinates should be able to request assistance and guidance without fear of retribution or persecution for their ideas or questions. This will create a unity and trust among the leadership that is seen by junior personnel and will be emulated throughout the unit. I have experienced the effectiveness of this type of atmosphere first-hand from different units I have been fortunate enough to serve in. When a unit progresses in this manner, its servicemembers are seen by higher commands as stellar performers.

Boots on the Ground

What has been your best time on island?

Jasmine Wells
Sgt.
Logistics Specialist 2nd Class

“Joining my unit’s basketball team and playing on the weekends.”

Jasmine Mejia
Spc.

“Screaming while watching scary movies outside at the base movie theater.”

Jared Martinez
Logistics Specialist 2nd Class

“Enjoying my off time playing all the different sports.”

Jasmine Wells
Sgt.

“Having the chance to fly my wife down here with me for Thanksgiving.”

垩

Christian artist rocks the bay

By Sgt. 1st Class Jerome Grant

Troopers from Joint Task Force Guantanamo, along with personnel and residents of U.S. Naval Station Guantanamo Bay, gathered in the Windjammer Ballroom Aug. 6 to see Grammy Award winning singer/songwriter Michael W. Smith conduct his first-ever United Service Organizations/Armed Forces Entertainment tour.

Smith, who is between shows from a world tour that started in Brazil, went to Australia, Europe twice and will include a trip to South Africa a couple of weeks after the Guantanamo Bay visit, is a big fan of America’s armed forces.

“Our nation’s troops and military families are among the bravest and most selfless people I know,” said Smith. “We as a nation, owe them not only our respect and gratitude, but also our time. I am just honored for the opportunity to travel to Guantanamo Bay with the USO and extend our nation’s thanks for their service.”

The crowd was treated to the instrumental song “The Patriot” inspired by Smith’s admiration of servicemembers and an instrumental tribute called “Heroes” in honor of the first responders who gave their lives on Sept. 11, 2001. Among the other songs Smith performed during the hour long concert were his hits “I Will Be Here For You,” “Friends,” and “Place in this World.”

“The concert was awesome,” said Spc. Leslie Almanza from the 314th Military Police Company. “There were so many songs I wanted to cry; there were moments when I felt like when I first became a Christian. I felt like I wanted to surrender all over again.”

“His music has been a blessing to my church,” explained Spc. Jeremy Maddux, also of the 314th MP Company. “I have always loved his style of worship. To have a chance to hear [Smith] live and in person and having a spiritual pick-me-up here is awesome.”

USO President Sloan Gibson was pleased to bring Smith to Guantanamo Bay.

“It is a real privilege to be working with Michael W. Smith, who has accomplished so much in music and is beloved by millions of people around the world for his spirit lifting music and literary works,” Gibson said.

“I know there have been other USO events here,” Maddux said. “But having something like this really helps us spiritually. I’d love to see other Christian bands here as well.”
A service member who has spent time in the 525th Military Police Battalion area knows Sgt. Maj. Mike Barnes. According to Lt. Col. Dave Overbay, 525th commander, “If there were troops in the area, Sgt. Maj. Barnes was close by.” A command sergeant major of the military police battalion, Barnes took a stake in the care of his Vigilant Warriors. He referred to them as the lifeblood of the Joint Task Force Guantanamo Bay mission. Whether his troops were standing guard in the camps or checking identification cards in the searching sun, he emphasized the importance of remaining professional at all times, because in this environment a mistake is not an option. “For them it’s a no-fail mission,” Barnes said. “This is one of the few places where the actions of a private first class on a Friday night are briefed to the President of the United States on Saturday morning.”

With a mission as demanding as theirs, Barnes was always vigilant when it came to stress in his battalion. As the command sergeant major for more than 900 troops, he relied on his noncommissioned officers to be his eyes and ears and charged them to take care of the troops. “I think we are in a world of micromanagement, and I allowed my subordinate leaders to manage their Soldiers as they saw fit while I provided them guidance and mentorship,” Barnes said. Barnes preached one overall theme and that is “one team, one fight.” Having said it in his entire noncommissioned officer career, he believes that in this place the motto’s intent needs to be met. “Being away from family, we have become a family,” Barnes said.

He passionately stated that being part of a family, you have to give your all, and he did. From sporting events to barbecues, and everything in between, Barnes was always there. On several occasions Barnes surprised Troopers by throwing them the football he always seemed to have in hand.

“There is no greater reward than being provided the privilege to care for the sons and daughters of this great nation,” Barnes said. Like the troops in his battalion and across the services, he left his family in service of the nation. With each deployment, he appreciates the role that military spouses play. “These Soldiers who come down here on a hardship tour, and their families [who] stay home and maintain the home front, I have a special appreciation for them,” said Barnes. “They take care of the home front so well that it allows these Soldiers to focus on the mission.”

For Barnes, this mission was not the same old song and dance. This mission is brought new challenges. A military police Soldier by trade, Barnes took charge of a battalion full of military correction specialists. He devoted time to getting to know the job and the troops that performed it day in and day out.

During his change of responsibility ceremony, Overbay stated during her speech, “He was not an expert in corrections, but through his drive and determination to take care of Soldiers, he learned the standard operating procedures for detention operations.” “[Soldiers] strive to do their best no matter what they do, and they do it each and every time,” said Barnes. At the end of the day, Barnes feels that his Troopers work, train, and play hard. With a professionalism echoed throughout the entire Army, Barnes is very proud of the Soldiers of the 525th Military Police Battalion.
After being closed for three months, snook season is finally open at Guantanamo Bay, and it’s time to cast our lines for some of the best sport fishing around.

Aug. 1 marked the opening day for fishing enthusiasts to legally keep three snook per person per day. A minimum length of 22 inches is required, and individuals are only allowed to keep one snook longer than 40 inches per day. Spear fishers can keep one snook per day at the same length limit.

The season has been closed since the beginning of May to allow the species time to spawn. Anticipation of the reopening has been on many anglers’ minds.

“Snook fishing here in GTMO is probably one of the seasons I look forward to the most,” said Michael McCord, U.S. Naval Station GTMO public works environmental department director. “The fish are fairly plentiful, good to eat and they’re fun to catch.”

Many North American fishers are familiar with the techniques used in bass fishing, and snook can be hooked with similar methods.

“Snook is a bass on steroids,” said McCord. “They’re ambush feeders, so they like to hide. The traditional place to catch snook is the mangroves in the river.”

Also like a bass, snook will feed on local bait fish species or artificial lures that resemble them. On the Guantanamo River, this means mullet, pinfish and herring. Where these species are found, snook will be close by.

“You don’t have to catch bait to catch snook,” said McCord. “Almost every fish in the bay can be caught on artificial lures.”

As with fishing anywhere in the world, we all share one resource. It’s important that everyone adhere to the rules and limitations placed on each species so we allow them to survive for future GTMO residents and don’t overfish the population.

For more information about GTMO fishing regulations, check out the NAVSTA GTMO Instruction 1710.10b; Joint Task Force personnel can view it on the SharePoint site under “GTMO MWR”. NAVSTA personnel can find it on the intranet site under “Local Instructions.”

By Mass Communication Specialist 1st Class Keith Simmons

Hey ya’ll, I’m Seaman Hannah Wilhide. And since I’m new here and have no friends or life down here yet, I just Facebook creep. I’ve been here about a month now, since the beginning of July and already I’ve met a lot of… people, very unique. Which is why I have decided to Facebook stalk. I decided to start with a certain Sailor here in public affairs. He’s very into fishing, not sure why. I went fishing with some people from work over the weekend and he was among the people fishing. See, this was my first time fishing, my very first time. I couldn’t even bait my own hook or cast my own line out the first few times and this very kind petty officer showed me the way. I even caught a fish! Two actually, but one was too small to keep, so we threw it back. ANYWAY, my great catch, which was the biggest catch of the day for our little group by the way, was blamed on “beginner’s luck.” I say that’s baloney! What’s even funnier is that same petty officer that’s all about fishing, always talking about it, and giving fishing advice, didn’t catch anything! My question is, how are you going to give fishing advice when you can’t even catch a fish? You can’t blame it on the lack of resources, because bears need fish to SURVIVE and they do just fine with nothing but their paws. Another thing, how do you think the cavemen caught fish? They didn’t have fancy bobbers or ten different kinds of bait.

Well, that’s all in the World According to Wilhide, ME! Come back next week to see how my sailing trip went! And remember; watch what you post on Facebook, because I’ll be watching you! Bye!
O n August 6, 2011, a Chinook helicopter carrying 31 Americans was shot down by insurgents in the Wardak province in Afghanistan. 30 service members and one military dog were killed in the crash. More than a year has passed since 31 of our nation’s heroes paid the ultimate sacrifice. They gave their lives on route to a special operations mission to reinforce an engaged unit of Army Rangers.

The mission still continues for those in uniform, but for the families who lost their fathers, brothers, friends, soul mates, and loved ones, life will never be the same.

Mackenzie Tobin embarked on a mission in the wake of the tragedy. She and one of her partners, Amanda Justus, knew they had to act to show their support for the 30 families and used their CrossFit backgrounds for inspiration. The two military spouses along with two other partners who served in the military worked together to show their support for the 30 families in the wake of the tragedy. She and one of her military partners was lifted with two other partners who served in the inspiration. The two military spouses along with two other partners who served in the military worked together to show their support for the 30 families.

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Story and photos by Army Sgt. Ryan Halleck

Four weeks after the day of the crash, the non-profit organization hosted a CrossFit event to benefit the families. It soon became an international event and was held at more than 430 gyms worldwide with more than 10,000 participants from the CrossFit community. $300,000 was raised and given directly to the 30 families.

“I am incredibly humbled by the military families I interact with on a regular basis,” said Tobin. “They never complain about the sacrifices, and there is always a sense of pride in either their direct service, or that of a family member. The families are the reason we get up every day and do this work!”

The project has grown and spread to gyms all around the world, and now to Guantanamo Bay for the second annual event honoring our fallen. Coast Guard Petty Officer 2nd Class Jonathan Henderson took the reigns and organized the 31 Heroes Project at GTMO after members from his unit approached him to bring the event to the CrossFit community. “I would like to know that my family’s taken care of if I were to get killed in the line of duty.”

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The money the CrossFit community raises will now go divided to further support even more families who have lost loved ones. One third of the donations will go to the memorial fund for the 30 families, one third will go to The Travis Manion Foundation, and one third will go to the Snowball Express, foundations whose mission is to assist the families of fallen heroes.

The 31 Heroes Project at GTMO brought 22 CrossFit athletes and weekend warriors together to support the cause and raised $951 when the workout was finished.

This year’s “workout of the day” as it is known in the CrossFit community is a 31 minute, high-intensity, can’t-quit, as many repetitions as possible workout.

“31 minutes of CrossFit is pretty intense,” said Coast Guard Petty Officer 3rd Class Thomas Shaughnessy, a boat crew member with the MSST. “Hearing the cheers from the sidelines and remembering what you’re doing it for helps push you through it. Those were 31 silent heroes that you never hear about, who put their lives on the line every single day they went out.”

Next in the athletes’ way of the finish line were six 15-foot rope climbs followed by 11 box jumps. The rope stretched high into the blazing sun, which dared those strong hearted enough to reach the top. Whichever partner was on the ropes, weights, or boxes, the other was embracing the suck on the run. The workout is a constant testament to the sacrifices, and there is always a sense of pride in either their direct service, or that of a family member. The families are the reason we get up every day and do this work!”

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“One team, one fight.” The motto lived within, the one begging them quit, to give up the sweat pouring out of their bodies, cooling them down as the temperature approached 95 degrees Fahrenheit by midmorning. It’s a competition against their inner resistance, the sweat, blood, and sometimes tears, that we hear about, who put their lives on the line every single day they went out.

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“This event provides us all the opportunity to honor and remember the incredible service members who have made unbelievable sacrifices for all of us.”

– Mackenzie Tobin, co-founder of 31 Heroes
Staff Sgt. Chinon Thome

“It is easy to conclude that Air Force Staff Sgt. Chinon Thome exists in two different worlds: the one at work and the one at home. She keeps them both very separate, with those at work likely not knowing much about who Chinon is but thinking they know a lot about what kind of Airman Staff Sgt. Thome is.

“‘There’s two people. There’s Sergeant Thome and then there’s Chinon Thome. We’re two different people,’ said Thome. ‘When I’m away from work, I’m a totally different person.’

“She says ‘most people, they don’t think I’m approachable, they don’t think I’m nice…they say I look mean,’” said Master Sgt. Tila Barrino, Thome’s supervisor. “She says it’s hard for her to either make friend sometimes or come out of her shell, so she’ll often have a set group of people she’ll be comfortable with in a group setting.”

Thome is the way she is because of the experience she had with her very first supervisor. The soon-to-be technical sergeant joined the military at the young age of 17. With youth comes a natural naiveté, and Thome said she soon saw that being open about her home life at work was working to her detriment; she remembers wondering why her supervisor disliked her so much, and so she made the decision to leave every piece of her personal life at home.

“When I first came in as a young Airman, I think I kind of didn’t have that divide, and it would kind of hurt me in a way, because my supervisor didn’t really agree with my work ethic. The way I did things. So I guess I just changed because I thought that was the way I needed to be,” said Thome of the experience. “At work it’s business; nothing more. I mean, you have friends while you’re at work too, but…business is business, “I may not like every single Airman that I worked with, I may not like their personality but business is business,” said Thome. “‘They’re an Airman, you’re a [noncommissioned officer]. You still have to look out for them, you still have to take care of them. It’s not personal.”

Here at Guantanamo, Thome has the heavy responsibility of keeping accountability of all the Troopers in the Joint Task Force. She reports directly to the Chief of Staff. Barrino says Thome hit the ground running from the very beginning.

“Eventually they’re going to put you in a position where they know you’re either good or not good. And she’s good,” said Barrino. “I can’t always have my hands in all of [the office’s] programs, especially with [Thome’s job],” said Barrino. “I have no problem with her being out of the office for a meeting or whatever, knowing that she’ll do her job without setting right there next to her. She’ll run with it, without anybody telling her she has to.”

Gray entered Thome’s life not too long ago as her daughter. Things with the 19-month-old aren’t so black and white. The only black and white present is the unconditional love Thome has for her child and the knowledge that she’d do anything for her baby. It’s gray because Thome is a “softy” for her daughter’s every action; she is very rarely a softy for anyone. Gray because, even at such a young age, Thome sees her daughter being just like her—assertive and set in her ways. What do you do when your daughter is as stubborn as you are?

Thome knows she will find out. Already, child has taught mother patience.

“I want to say it was a month before I had to come here. That’s when it really started sinking in,” said Thome. “I was rocking her one night I remember, and just thinking about leaving her made me want to cry.”

Although thoughts of leaving military life so she doesn’t have to be away from her daughter have entered Thome’s head, she says staying in is as much for her daughter as it is for herself. She wants to continue excelling in the Air Force and she also wants to provide a good example for her daughter. Thome is looking forward to returning home to Texas and seeing her husband and daughter again.
I am quickly approaching a milestone in my life that I have planned and re-planned for the last two decades, and not being able to coordinate wedding details in New York presents unique challenges. Especially when your fiancé is in Afghanistan and you're determined "to involve him!"

So my goal while I am at GTMO is to make thousands of little decisions: cake, music, invitations, flowers, favors and table centerpieces and on and on. With Matt's input… of course.

I find myself stunned and often overwhelmed at the options available. Every time I come across some charming idea, I jump from my seat and yell through my computer to Matt, "We must have this!" Then I immediately add it to my Pinterest page. I draw doodles of reception centerpieces; collect photos of things I love.

I look at bridal magazines and often find myself day dreaming of things like "is it OK for bridesmaids not to wear matching dresses" and "it's not controlling of me to have a no-music playlist for the reception."

As Matt, I received a few objections about some of my grand ideas, and I conceded that I won't loudly voice my opinion about what the groomsman will wear. I (well, Matt and I) have made a lot of progress. Being especially in love with planning, I wrote a five-page operations order to include Faxed spreadsheets to keep us organized. They help us manage spending, payment deadlines, the guest list, RSVPs, and it includes a four-page detailed timeline of events for Jan. 19.

We now have the right invitation design (and wording), floral displays, and have registered for wedding gifts. There are a few more things to cross off the to-do list. I'm an impatient person, I'm sure we'll list. I'm an impatient person; I'm sure we'll have everything complete very soon.

When I arrived at Guantanamo, I weighed in at a hardly 215 pounds. Not tall, but nothing I was extremely proud of. Being that I'm 6 feet 2 inches tall, 215 isn't as bad of a number as it seems, but it could be better. My two bad knees and shins only made my weight that much more difficult to manage, but I had a few ideas in mind to drop 25 pounds and get back to a weight I could be proud of.

My first attempt at losing the weight was working out with bands every morning while most other people would run. This worked for the first several months, but it quickly got stale and I lost interest. Waking up to roll out of bed, turning on the music and trying to mimic free weights just wasn't doing it at five in the morning.

Next I thought maybe I could bike. It's cardio and I used to love it as a kid. I quickly learned that some of the things I loved as a kid aren't as much fun as I thought they were. And I don't ever remember bike seats being so uncomfortable. I rode it for about a month.

The small hills around GTMO felt like the Adirondack Mountains, and after I was graduated from boot camp at Great Lakes, Ill., $800 went to that initial Best Buy credit card. Each purchase felt better than the last, for a time anyway. I usually started regretting the minute I walked out of the store, but no matter, I didn't have to worry about paying for it until later. THAT day, I enjoyed myself and my purchases.

Debt wasn't the reason I joined the Navy, but it played a part. I had about $300 when I graduated from boot camp at Great Lakes, Ill., $800 went to that initial Best Buy credit card. Over the years, I've lived and learned, but hardly ever at the same time it seems. Before I arrived at Guantanamo Bay, I had just over $8,500 in credit card debt. That had huge mental and emotional impact. Half the reason I took this individual augmentation billet was to pay off debt, and I am happy to say that by the time this is printed, all that debt will have been entirely paid off. For the first time in almost a decade, I'm credit card debt free, and it feels amazing.

I'll continue to save during the remainder of my deployment. GTMO is where, at least financially, I grew up, and for that, it will always hold a special place in my heart.

2. ????
3. PROFIT.
4. Live life of ease.

I have, what I consider to be a very unique goal to accomplish during my time at Guantanamo Bay. Prior to my deployment, I designed a new product for the outdoor sporting goods market.

An unexpected jump from the Navy Reserve back onto active duty required me to accelerate my creative process. However, I still managed to complete the concept and have a few tangible examples manufactured. Currently I am working very hard to produce a business proposal to market my design to larger corporations. I have written up a letter and graphically portrayed my idea, paired with these companies’ existing products.

I realize that this description of my goal might sound a little vague to the reader, but it is a necessary precaution. Though I do hold copyrights for a few variations of my invention, one can never be too careful. As soon as my proposal and graphics have been peer edited by a few of my business savvy friends, the presentations will be printed and assembled. The final product will be nicely packaged with one of the aforementioned tangible items.

The first company that I am going to approach with my concept is Nike. It is obvious that I am swinging for the fences, and yes, I might be out of my league, but when it comes to personal goals, why not strive for greatness?
Knitknitknit

I spent more time picking out which craft supplies I wanted to deploy with than any other item on the packing list. Army gear was easy—it’s all stored in one spot in my house. Picking civilian clothes was easy too—I have a small wardrobe. But the yarn? Tears were shed over how much stash yarn I would have to leave behind.

If you can’t tell by now, I’m a knitter and lifelong crafter. I spend lots of time turning miles of string into finely stitched fabric. Prior to deployment to Joint Task Force Guantanamo, my skill level limited my project prospects to large flat things. The yarns I packed with me were mostly destined to become throw blankets and shrugs. Knitting them gave kind of a bonding really fast, and not because it’s a sedentary activity usually ascribed to grandmas. I have patterns for zombie action figures and a giraffe print hat complete with ears and horn. Proof positive that there is more to knitting than large flat things. I suddenly had to learn a new skill first. By Army 1st Lt. Amelia Thatcher

To learn a new skill first. But I had in abundance, and absolutely had to make this stuff from me, the favorite auntie. I had just friend’s child was about to enter this chilly Piecing! All of these things at the same time! I on edgings! Sweater construction! Short rows! Cables stitches! Lacework! Knitted—than large flat things. I suddenly had to learn proof positive that there is more to knitting present? I had a fancy blankie for a tiny squalling hu-

Not to mention a deadline loomed. A dear friend’s child was about to enter this chally realm, and good golly if he wasn’t going to be spoiled with warm and snuggly handmade stuff from me, the favorite auntie. I had just fallen in love with a pattern which used cables in abundance, and absolutely had to make this (still large and flat) thing for this kid. But I had to learn a new skill first.

Cables are the intricate braids and knot-work and crisscrossing details one usually sees on heavy winter sweaters and cardigans. As a still-novice knitter upon my arrival here, their construction eluded all comprehension. So I picked up my needles and my yarn and figured it out. The written instructions were slightly wonky and the YouTube tutorial took three times longer than normal to download, but in one afternoon, I was cabling! Within a month, I had a fancy blanket for a tiny squalling hu-

Sometimes you just have to sit down and muscle through a challenge, even if it’s just a matter of overcoming the mental gymnastics of a complicated set of instructions. You have the time between assignments and shifts here to get things done—what better time than the present?

By Sgt. 1st Class Rick McNamara

Most of us have no issue with a sugar cookie, and if you’re anything like me, you’d appreciate it even more with a tall glass of milk. Several Olympic teams would beg to differ. Prior to this year’s Games, U.S. Olympians trained with the Navy SEALs to step up their training. What do sugar cook-

Dr. JoAnn Dahlkoetter, director of Performing Edge Coaching International Association says “only one person can push yourself when you’re tired and alone, or work out despite countless distractions.”

“Sometimes, all we need to improve our physical fitness is a shift in our mindset. Look at each morning as an opportunity to be like an Olympian. Leave it all on the track, in the pool, or on the pull-up bars, and walk away knowing you did your best. It doesn’t matter if you’re the weakest or slowest now; change your mindset, and in a month you won’t be the slowest or weakest anymore. Think like an Olympian and look for ways to separate yourself physically from the rest. Change up your routine, set a goal, get out of your bed-

We are all part of an elite group that can call themselves Olympians.

Military members aren’t Olympians, for the most part—even though we do have a few in the Games—but we are part of a small section of the population that has the drive to stay a step ahead of most, physically, mentally, and spiritually. That doesn’t mean that we all have it in us to be Olympians, because we simply don’t. However, we can dedicate a little more time training to reach a physical goal.

Most of us spend 12 to 16 hours a day dedicated to our jobs. Whether it’s working as a guard, an administrative specialist, or a commander, we all have a job we need to do, and we need to do it well. Our mornings are always packed with work and crisscrossing details one usually sees on heavy winter sweaters and cardigans. As a still-novice knitter upon my arrival here, their construction eluded all comprehension. So I picked up my needles and my yarn and figured it out. The written instructions were slightly wonky and the YouTube tutorial took three times longer than normal to download, but in one afternoon, I was cabling! Within a month, I had a fancy blanket for a tiny squalling hu-

Sometimes you just have to sit down and muscle through a challenge, even if it’s just a matter of overcoming the mental gymnastics of a complicated set of instructions. You have the time between assignments and shifts here to get things done—what better time than the present?

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Think like an Olympian

By Mass Communication Specialist 1st Class Keith Simmons

ONLY AT GTMO by Mass Communication Specialist 1st Class Keith Simmons

Saturday morning at Gold Hill Gallery... Mind, Body & Spirit

MIND, BODY & SPIRIT

Get some!

Have no GTMO Goals? Get some!

Mett your GTMO Goal? Get me!

GOING TO YARNIA

KNIT ALL THE YARNS!!

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When they reach the first checkpoint at the Chernobyl Exclusion Zone, the military doesn’t allow them inside. Unbeknownst, Yuri drives the group to an unmanned check point in the woods and gets them into Pripyat anyway.

After what looks like an amazing time exploring the ruined town, the group has a close encounter with a bear in one of the dilapidated buildings. They decide it’s time to go home.

When they get to Yuri’s rattletrap van, it won’t start. The wires to the starter have been “chewed through;” actually, just sabotaged. Yuri can’t scare anyone on his radio, and it’s getting dark. The group will have to wait until morning and hike out.

Things don’t go according to plan, and members of the group are soon fighting for their lives against unseen enemies that pick them off one by one.

Before I get into why this is a one-rot movie, I think I’ll say why it has one rot instead of half a rot. The location team did a great job finding locations in Serbia and Hungary that could pass for Pripyat. I don’t know if eastern Europe just happened to have a bunch of abandoned buildings, or if the set dressers did a great job, but the shooting locations are marvelous. It’s a shame the rest of the movie can’t be as creepy as the locations they used.

Now that I’ve pointed out the part I liked, it’s time to get out my poison pen and tear this movie apart.

If you want to build suspense in a movie, you need characters the audience will care about. The only character in this movie that I found remotely likeable was Yuri. He must have had the patience of a saint to deal with these annoying tourists making a mockery of one of the worst disasters in his country’s history, and he exuded competence from every pore. He’s the first to be killed.

When the movie opened with home videos of the group touring through Europe, I thought it would be a movie of “found footage” like “The Blair Witch Project.” It’s not—but apparently nobody told the cameraman. Hey filmmakers! If the camera isn’t being held by a character in the movie, stop treating it like it is! Yes, out-of-focus shots and shaky camera work abound, so if you’re prone to motion sickness, congratulations! This film can actually make you physically ill!

Now let’s talk about the “unseen” menace attacking our unlikely protagonists. The movie dances around showing them to us. This has actually been a pretty good trick in some movies, whether done for artistic purposes or just for technical reasons, as seen in “Alien.” In Ridley Scott’s epic film from 1979, they don’t show the alien very much because it was hard to make it move realistically.

The difference is that when they did show it, it had an iconic and creepy character design by H.R. Giger. In this movie, they weren’t showing whatever is killing the hapless tourists, and I started respecting the filmmakers a smidge. Then suddenly we do see them, and they’re just hideous, ugly mutants. Not ugly in an “Oh god, the horror! The Horror!” way, mind you. Just ugly, as in bad character design.

I like horror movies. I even like bad horror movies. When I’m not reviewing movies, I like horror movies. I even like bad horror movies. When I’m not reviewing movies, I like watching low-budget, cheesy ‘80s horror movies. Ask me about “Troll 2” someday, and I’ll tell you about one of the funniest unintentional comedies I’ve ever seen. I am a supporter of the genre, and I’m accepting of failure.

This movie, though, isn’t scary. It doesn’t have any comedy, but it isn’t even unintentionally funny. It is “so-bad-it’s-good.” It’s just bad. I respectfully disagree with the person who told me it was a two-rot movie, but only because I rate it one death and irradiated banana rat. Treat it like a nuclear disaster and avoid it at all costs!
It's simple math, so make the right decision.

DON'T DRINK AND DRIVE!!!!!!