

MEDICAL NEWS

News in Brief

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KEESLER AIRMAN NAMED TO TOPS IN BLUE

By Steve Pivnick
81st Medical Group Public Affairs

KEESLER AFB, Ms. — Almost 26 years of singing have paid off for Airman 1st Class Hansil Jules, who learned Feb. 17 that he had been selected as a member of the 2010 Air Force Tops in Blue unit. He begins rehearsals Monday for the 2010 tour that starts in late May.

Airman Jules, a dental technician with the 81st Dental Squadron here, auditioned for the group Jan. 17-26 at San Antonio's Lackland AFB.

The classically-trained singer from New York City said he's been singing all his life.

"My mom said I started singing at 2 years, even before I talked," he observed.

The 28-year-old Airman trained in opera at New York's School of Performing Arts and then studied performance arts at City College of New York. He's two semesters away from obtaining a degree, having taken courses at the University of Southern Mississippi last semester.

Airman Jules noted that a major factor motivating him to enlist in the Air Force was the opportunity to one day audition for Tops in Blue, an all-active duty Air Force special unit made up of talented amateur performers selected for their entertainment abilities.

"New York is tough for an artist," he said. "It's also very expensive to live there. I couldn't save any money.

"I decided to join the Air Force and serve with the God-given talent I have."

He's served for a little over two years now, the past 18 months at Keesler.

The talented Airman said he doesn't limit his music only to opera. He also has sung gospel as well as rhythm and blues.

Airman Jules was pleasantly surprised to dis-

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The Shattered Marine

By Cpl. Katie Densmore
Combat Correspondent

MARINE CORPS BASE CAMP LEJEUNE, N.C. — "I was killing myself without even knowing it," said Pvt. Travis Westhoven, an inmate at the Camp Lejeune Brig.

However, this is not where Westhoven's story begins, only where it almost ended.

As a lance corporal, he was a machine-gunner with Company B, 1st Battalion, 8th Marine Regiment, 2nd Marine Division, who was looking forward to his first deployment to Iraq.

The deployment began during September 2007 and started out smoothly. Westhoven had always wanted to travel and see different cultures. He was enjoying his experience overseas, but that would change with two incidents mere weeks apart.

"I was really excited to deploy," he said, almost with a smile. However, the glimmer of a smile quickly faded as he began to talk of the dark memories that would change his personality. "We didn't have any problems at first. The road we used for convoys was called Black Alley. The road got its name because it was filled with potholes from improvised explosive devices that had gone off in the past."

Although the road had an ominous name, it had seemed to be a fairly quiet route that was swept every day for IEDs with none being discovered until Jan. 4, 2008.

Westhoven was part of a convoy driving back to his forward operating base after helping train Iraqi police, when an IED went off behind his vehicle and just in front of the next.

"That woke me up," said Westhoven sharply. "I was dazed and confused. There was dust everywhere. The worst part was we drove over that thing for four months and never knew it was there. Later, we found out it was 120 mm mortar round packed full of explosives and buried under two feet of concrete."

The shock of being hit drastically changed Westhoven's perspective and outlook on the deploy-



(Photo courtesy of Cpl. Chad Tompkins)

Lance Cpl. Travis Westhoven, machine-gunner with Company B, 1st Battalion, 8th Marine Regiment, 2nd Marine Division, poses for a picture while on deployment in Iraq. Westhoven witnessed a suicide-bomber kill one Marine and maim another. This experience caused Westhoven to develop post traumatic stress disorder which directly lead to his incarceration in the Camp Lejeune Brig and demotion to private.

ment, but the most solid hit he took was to his confidence as turret gunner.

"It hit me so hard because as the turret gunner, I am

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★ Airman

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cover that the Mississippi Gulf Coast community enjoys opera. He has been involved in a number of musical programs around the Coast, including the Gulf Coast Opera, a performance of "Oliver Twist" at the Saenger Theater and the Gulf Coast Messiah Association.

He recently sang for a Greater Mississippi Boys and Girls Club function in Moss Point and the Italian-American Association in Baton Rouge, La. He's performed the National Anthem at a number of official base functions as well.

Airman Jules will spend the next year touring the world. Preparation for the program is arduous. He had a taste of it during the 10 days of auditions in January, waking at around 5 a.m. and going to bed late at night.

However, he termed it a wonderful experience, noting, "I met so many great people!"

Now the hard work begins. He expects rehearsals to go on practically seven days a week until the tour begins.

Cast members also act as stage hands, setting up equipment prior to each show. In addition to singing, he'll have to learn dance moves.

"I've always wanted to learn to dance but I never had the money," he said.

"Finally, I get to learn for free!"

Airman Jules mentioned he's the only member of his family with any singing ability -- his mother, brother and two sisters don't share his talent.

His brother is in the Army, stationed at Fort Know, Ky. His mother and sisters reside in New York.

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P.O. Box 3234
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Phones: (630) 655-6099
 (312) 368-4860
 Fax: (630) 655-6076

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★ Marine

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the eyes of the vehicle,” he said with tears welling in his eyes because years later he still holds the guilt in his heart for hitting the IED. “You have your driver and assistant driver, but the window is three inches thick, covered in dirt and all scratched up. They can barely see through it. All you’ve got is your turret gunner.”

This was the moment Westhoven began to exhibit symptoms of post traumatic stress disorder.

“After that, I got really nervous going out,” he said. “I started not wanting to go out and dreaded putting on my gear. I was afraid, always wondering where the next one would be.”

The amount of trash on the road made the convoys difficult because Westhoven began to make the humvee stop for trash piles, despite the rest of his team’s protests.

“I started having anxiety problems. We would be driving down the road, and I would make the humvee stop for every little thing. They would tell me not to worry, that it’s nothing. I would reply, ‘But what if it is,’” he said animatedly with gestures signaling his buddies’ frustration with his overprotective behavior.

IEDs had now become an overbearing distraction in Westhoven’s daily routine, especially with the locals pointing them out every day. However, things began to settle back down. So much so, the battalion held a soccer game with the locals, Jan. 19.

“During the soccer game, I was in the turret watching the perimeter toward the Euphrates (River),” Westhoven said recalling one of the few moments since the blast he felt safe. “All kinds of people were out there playing. The Iraqi police, children, and I think even our first sergeant was out there playing. It was a peaceful time.”

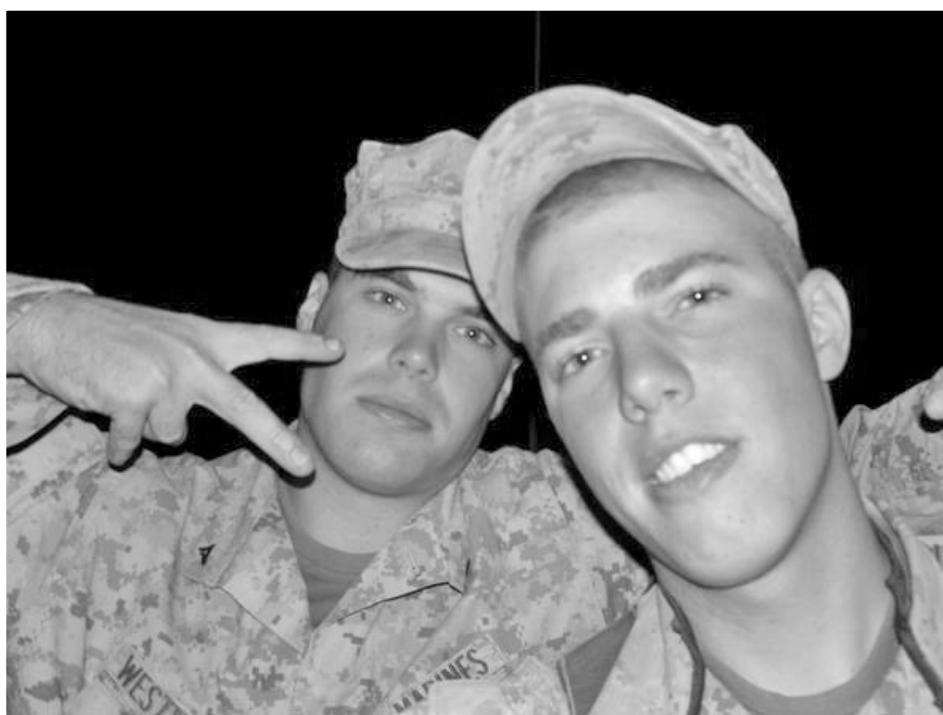
The peace was quickly broken by unexpected machine-gun fire off in the distance. Then the radio call came in. Second platoon was engaging insurgents and was being hit by multiple suicide bombers.

The soccer game quickly dissipated as Marines ran to their vehicles to assist their brothers. When they arrived at second platoon’s location, the battlefield was a mess with IPs standing next to insurgents.

“Bullets were flying all over the place,” he said. “They were coming from every direction. I was ducking behind the glass as I heard them whizzing past.”

This is when Westhoven witnessed a horrific sight: the death of one of the Marines from second platoon.

“A suicide bomber was running toward (1st) Lt. (David) Borden and Lance Cpl. (James) Gluff,” he labored to get the words out and tried to suppress his emotions. “Gluff shot him



(Photo courtesy of Cpl. Chad Tompkins)

Left to right, Lance Cpl. Travis Westhoven, machine-gunner with Company B, 1st Battalion, 8th Marine Regiment, 2nd Marine Division, poses with Cpl. Chad Tompkins, also with 1st Bn., 8th Marines, during a deployment to Iraq in 2007. Westhoven developed post traumatic stress disorder while deployed, which directly led to his incarceration in the Camp Lejeune Brig and demotion to private.

twice, but he kept coming. He exploded, and I saw pieces of flack and bodies go everywhere. Gluff was dead and Lt. Borden got his leg blown off.”

Several other Marines were injured in the explosion and a medical evacuation promptly took place. They collected the injured Marines and what they could of Gluff, but Westhoven’s unseen injury would continue to haunt him.

“It was a mental change, not physical,” he said. “I had nightmares right after the incident. It was like someone hit rewind on the tape, rewind on the tape. I started taking sleeping aides. The whole squad did. I was getting hard to deal with.”

The rest of Westhoven’s deployment was relatively quiet, but the damage was done. He tried to put the incident behind him as he prepared to return home, but the memories haunted him.

A moment in his past had now become an uncontrollable demon constantly tearing his mind apart. The demon would shred his sanity with questions of, “What could I have done different, why not me and why didn’t I do something to stop this?”

However, he kept his suffering quiet. He was excited to return home and see his family. Westhoven desperately clung to the idea that when he returned home everything would go back to normal, but normal is not what awaited him.

At the homecoming celebration, his family was excited to be reunited with Westhoven, but they were surprised at the man who stood before them. He was almost unrecognizable.

“I didn’t tell anyone any of this back

home, but my mom immediately noticed a change in me at the homecoming,” he said as he looked off in the distance as if remembering the look of surprise on his mother’s face. “Not just in my size because I lifted a lot while I was over there, but a change in my eyes. She said there was a force behind them. It wasn’t there before.”

When the command released Westhoven to be with his family, they headed out to dinner. But this was not the happy occasion he and his family were expecting.

“I had an anxiety attack as we were driving down the road,” he said. “I began smoking cigarette after cigarette. I did not have a weapon on me. I was on the ground and not in the turret. In Iraq you were surrounded by the unknown, but at least you had protection.”

For Westhoven’s mother, Maylia Marshall, the change in her son was overwhelming and immediately recognizable.

“I noticed the first day how nervous and anxious he was,” she said. “When we sat down in the restaurant, he had to make sure he could see all the exits. He kept reaching to the side like he was reaching for his weapon.”

Shortly after being seated, Westhoven ordered his first beer. This simple, seemingly natural act was the beginning of Westhoven’s downfall.

“When the beer started kicking in, I started feeling alright,” he said unabashedly, knowing this first attempt at normalcy is what indirectly led to his imprisonment. “I finished six or seven before our food got there. We got our check early, because I was falling

asleep at the table. It was the first time I didn’t have control over how much I drank. On the way back to base I was hanging my head outside the car puking.”

The ruined family dinner was a sign that Westhoven’s hopes of simply putting his deployment behind him were not attainable on his own. Westhoven like many others in his battalion, was starting to exhibit signs of post traumatic stress disorder through drinking and behavioral problems.

Unfortunately this is when the command rotated and new leaders came in. They had not deployed with the battalion and only saw the Marines’ problems without knowing the cause.

“We went from black collar to shiny collar,” he said with subtle angry undertones. “Guys were having issues with their marriages and drinking, but the command had no idea what we went through.”

Westhoven began telling his section leaders that he had a problem about five months after he returned from deployment, but the new command was not sympathetic. His desperate cries for help were falling on deaf ears.

“I was told I don’t have PTSD because I don’t jump when mortars or rounds go off, but I was having difficulty handling everyday situations,” he said. “If anyone would approach me, I would feel threatened. I felt so small and fragile inside of a big tank of a body. I felt like everything was going to hurt me.”

Cpl. Chad Tompkins, who also deployed with Company B, 1st Battalion, 8th Marine Regiment, 2nd Marine Division, said he saw a huge difference in Westhoven over the deployment. However, he saw many changes in other Marines in the battalion and to a certain degree changes in himself.

“I had no idea how bad things really were for him,” Tompkins said. “A lot of guys were drinking heavily and having problems. I even found myself just trying to live a little more.”

Tompkins, who has known Westhoven since recruit training, was only seeing the surface of his problems. He had no idea how deep they truly ran.

Westhoven’s nightmares began to seep into the day blending reality with his personal hell. They were so bad he would wake up tired and soaked in sweat not knowing where he was, if he was able to sleep at all. He began to feel as though he had lost control over his own mind.

All of his old hobbies were tossed to the side in pursuit of alcohol. Now he only drove to get alcohol and back to his barracks. He was terrified that the rage, which sat just at the edge of his consciousness, would overcome him, and he would hurt or possibly even kill someone. Just for saying the wrong thing.

★ Marine

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As Westhoven's drinking increased, his life began spiraling out of control. When he went home on leave in October 2008, he almost didn't make it back. He overdosed on alcohol and Oxycotton. To this day, he does not remember most of the evening, or taking the drug.

"I woke up three days later. I was strapped to a hospital bed. I had IVs on top of IVs and a very painful tube down my throat. My family was all around me, but for some reason I was deaf and couldn't hear anything," he said as his right hand traversed his left arm from wrist to shoulder in remembrance of the IVs.

As he slowly regained his hearing, friends, family and doctors filled in the blanks in his memory about what had happened.

"I guess I passed out on my back," he said with little emotion merely repeating what he was told. "I vomited and it went into my lungs. When my friends found me I was cold and blue. My heart was only beating about five or six times a minute. They didn't think I was going to make it."

Despite beating the odds and living through the overdose, Westhoven was extremely depressed. Horrible thoughts of death clouded his mind as he was recovering.

"I felt guilty. I just kept wishing they would have found me a little later, or I threw up sooner, so it would be all over," he said with a hint of remorse and shame for his thoughts. "The nightmares and hell I was living would stop. My life didn't matter anymore."

Westhoven said he wasn't suicidal, but he wouldn't care if a lightning bolt struck him down either.

The overdose may have seemed like his 'rock bottom' moment, but unfortunately for Westhoven things were far from over.

The overdose, which nearly took Westhoven's life, landed him a lengthy hospital stay. The time he spent healing was not his own; it was time he owed the Marine Corps. He was late returning from leave.

His command was unforgiving of this offense and he received a nonjudicial punishment. However, it was a wake up call for Westhoven's leaders. They realized his desperate cries for help could no longer be ignored.

Westhoven was immediately sent to see the substance abuse rehabilitation program counselors aboard Camp Lejeune. There they determined that his drinking was so severe he needed inpatient-treatment.

For the first time, Westhoven was making some headway in battling his personal demons in alcohol rehabilitation. He believed he was taking the first steps toward conquering his addiction. It appeared as if he was going to recover, but the 28th day came much

too soon.

"I begged them to let me stay," he said, referring to both his unit's leadership and staff at the treatment facility. "I knew I needed more treatment, but the command wanted me back. As soon as I got back to Lejeune, I started drinking again."

Westhoven had fallen back into his old routine of drinking to block-out the world. He was then sent for outpatient-treatment and finally doctors saw the underlying cause, post traumatic stress disorder, which in turn created insomnia and depression.

Although he had known deep-down the deployment had caused a complete shift in his personality, an answer and treatment was not enough to slay the addiction that was consuming him.

However, there was one glimmer of hope left in Westhoven's heart, the chance at redeploying with his unit. He continued to grasp at the idea that if he just immersed himself in his job he could simply overcome his problems.

In preparation for the Marines' upcoming deployment, the battalion went to Marine Corps Air-Ground Combat Center 29 Palms, Calif., for Exercise Mojave Viper.

Westhoven's doctors strongly recommended that he stay behind and focus on his treatment; however, the doctors' recommendations were treated as such and he went with his unit to the desert.

His experience at Mojave Viper destroyed what little hope he had of returning to normal and continuing to do his job.

"They took my weapon from me and wouldn't let me train with the Marines," he said as he stared at the ground in shame. "That was the hardest part. All they had me doing there was meaningless tasks."

Cpl. Chad Tompkins, who was with Company B, 1st Battalion, 8th Marine Regiment, 2nd Marine Division, witnessed Westhoven at Mojave Viper and believes he should have never gone with the unit.

"He should not have gone to California," Tompkins said emphatically. "When he got out of rehab he still needed to be watched. It was a really hard situation because he wanted to deploy so bad, but needed to stay and focus on treatment."

Tompkins believes the doctor's orders should have overruled Westhoven and the command.

Westhoven came back from the desert bitter and heartbroken. He was merely a shell of a man. He thought he could take no more, but then he was then hit with the news he dreaded. He wasn't deploying, but it was much worse than what he expected. He was also being transferred to medical platoon, 2nd Marine Regiment to stay behind.

Westhoven felt powerless he was being left behind like a discarded piece of trash. At first, he was in denial.

"After (1st Bn., 8th Marines) left, I stayed in their old barracks like a homeless guy," he said. "I would go to the formations and then head back to my old room. I stayed there as long as I could until another battalion moved in, and I was forced to go to my new barracks."

When he finally moved to the barracks he had two new roommates. Westhoven worried about having to deal with new people let alone living with them. However, he was surprised by the almost instant bond he had with one of his roommates, Lance Cpl. Douglas T. Baumgardner.

"We started hanging out and drinking," he said with a slight smile on his face that was overshadowed by the sadness in his eyes. "We got to know each other very quickly. We didn't have friends outside of each other. I loved him because of his past, and the way I bonded with him over the use of drugs and alcohol. He told me things that not even his brother knew. We had instant trust. We just clicked."

Westhoven's new found friendship allowed him to feel closer to normal than he had in a while, but also fueled his addictions. Westhoven's and his roommate's habits escalated into disaster that culminated in tragedy.

It was a regular Tuesday night. Westhoven and Baumgardner were drinking and getting high as normal, while their other roommate managed to slumber through the commotion.

"Right before our other roommate woke up, I watched Doug do some Heroin," Westhoven said. "He seemed fine. Then I used mine. Of course, I didn't (care) if I woke up or not."

Westhoven and Baumgardner decided to skip the morning formation because they were too stoned to go. They told their other roommate they were going to medical instead.

"Right before I passed out Doug told me he loved me and he is never going to forget me," he said regretfully. "At the time I didn't think anything of it."

They never went to medical, and no one ever checked on them to see if they were alright. It wasn't until 3 p.m. that Westhoven woke up. By this time, he had missed the afternoon formation as well.

At this point Baumgardner was still passed out, but Westhoven began to sense something was not quite right.

"I feel so guilty," he said holding back tears. "I should have called an ambulance right then, but I thought he was OK. He was slouched beside the bed in an awkward position, so I put him on the bed lying on his stomach. I had learned from my experience not to put him on his back. I took his shirt off and put a fan on him."

Westhoven was concerned about his roommate, but he was still breathing and had a pulse. Westhoven had taken the same drugs, so he went about his

normal waking routine, while at the same time checking his roommate's pulse and breathing periodically.

"I began doing all of my morning stuff, except it was the middle of the afternoon," he said. "I shaved, washed my face, brushed my teeth and covered the needle marks from the night before; just my normal morning stuff."

Part way through brushing his teeth, he noticed his roommate had stopped snoring.

"I walked over to make sure he was alright," he said. "There was wetness around his mouth, his lips were starting to turn blue and his eyes were wide open. (Our roommate) walked in, and I sent him to get help. I started doing a crappy job of (cardio pulmonary resuscitation.) Vomit was coming out of his mouth, but I didn't care."

The paramedics quickly came and immediately tried to revive him, but they could not. He was gone.

The horror of seeing his closest friend's life slip away before his eyes woke Westhoven. He was reborn with a passion to relearn what living is like instead of being entombed in a zombie-like trance.

"It was like a weight was taken off my shoulders," he said. "Finding Doug like that, it was truly my rock bottom. When I overdosed I didn't care if I died, but seeing someone else like that affected me. I was seeing from an outside view what my family had with me."

He finally saw the pain he had caused his family and friends. He now knew he was not just killing himself, but his pain had spread like a disease to those who he cared for the most.

It was at this point Westhoven made a decision. He decided to own up to his role in Doug's death. He knew there would be an investigation and they would quickly find the drugs. He made no effort to hide or destroy them. He wanted to get caught.

"He had plenty of time," said Cpl. Chad Tompkins, who served with Westhoven in Company B, 1st Battalion, 8th Marine Regiment, 2nd Marine Division. "He could have flushed all of the evidence and claimed he had no idea what happened, but he didn't. He gave it to (the police.) I really respect that. It says a lot about his character."

Westhoven was court-martialed and sent to the brig for his role in Doug's death. He is currently serving an eight-year sentence.

For most Marines going to the brig would be a terrible experience, but ironically for Westhoven it was one of the best things that could have happened to him.

"When I visited him in the brig, I noticed an awesome change," said Tompkins.

"He explained to me he was leading a double life, at least to some extent. It

★ Marine

Continued from page 4

wasn't until it all came out that I could see how bad off he was, but now he's doing stellar. He is getting the counseling and the proper medications he needs."

For months Westhoven was unable to contact his family. The first time he was able to call them, all he could tell them was he was in the brig.

In later calls, he began to slowly reconnect with his family. He was finally able to swallow his pride and expose the depths of his drinking problem and his experiences in Iraq.

"He has really opened up," said Maylia Marshall, his mother. "He has been able to block out the memories and is looking forward to moving on. He accepts responsibility for his actions and now he is able to communicate with us. He has really grown up."

She added Westhoven's incarceration may have physically separated them, but it has also brought them closer than they had ever been. She feels she finally has her son back.

Westhoven offered advice for anyone who may be silently suffering or trying to drown their problems in alcohol.

"Take what other people say seriously," he said. "If everyone is telling you that you have a problem, you probably do. If you are embarrassed or afraid of being singled-out, Military One Source gives you a few visits to a psychologist for free. Take care of yourself. No matter what get help."

Westhoven regrets what has happened, but has accepted the consequences of his actions. His focus now is on healing not only himself, but helping fellow inmates who are also struggling with PTSD. He hopes to be able to speak to different commands about his experience and the importance of seeking help.

"I wish I would have known what I know now," he said. "That is why I want to tell my story to everyone to prevent anyone from experiencing all the pain, terror and horror I went through. I don't wish that on anybody. If it saves one life, all the time I spent in the brig and everything else is worth it."



(Photo-illustration courtesy of Cpl. Chad Tompkins)

Lance Cpl. Travis Westhoven, machine-gunner with Company B, 1st Battalion, 8th Marine Regiment, 2nd Marine Division, as his close-friends saw him while drinking. Westhoven came back from a deployment with post traumatic stress disorder. In order to cope, he began drinking heavily and abusing drugs. He is now incarcerated in the Camp Lejeune Brig and has been demoted to private.



(Photo courtesy of Maylia Marshall)

Left to right, Maylia Marshall poses with her son, Lance Cpl. Travis Westhoven, machine-gunner with Company B, 1st Battalion, 8th Marine Regiment, 2nd Marine Division, in the airport as he prepares to return to Camp Lejeune from leave before deploying to Iraq. Westhoven was later incarcerated in the Camp Lejeune Brig and demoted to private.

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For More Information: Andrea Borchers, MS, RN, (937) 512-2939 or andrea.borchers@sinclair.edu

The Online RN Reentry Program, Sinclair Community College, is totally funded through a \$729,000 Nurse Education, Practice and Retention Grant from Health Resources and Services Administration of the US Department of Health and Human Services.

Sinclair Community College (OH-101/7-1-12) is an approved provider of continuing nursing education by the Ohio Nurses Association (OBN-001-91), an accredited approver by the American Nurses Credentialing Center's Commission on Accreditation.

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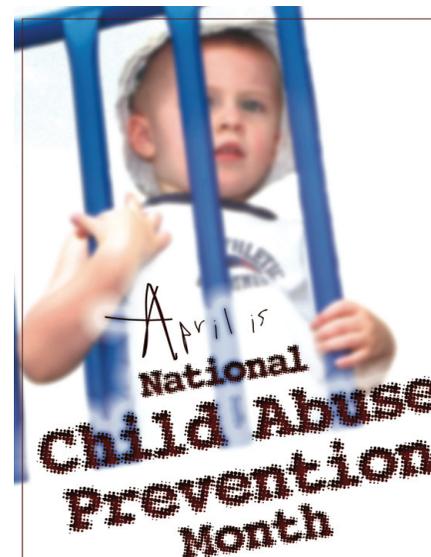
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Nurses

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(U.S. Air Force photo by Senior Airman Tiffany Trojca)

Senior Airman Kahliha Love checks the vital signs of a Chilean child at the expeditionary hospital. She's an aerospace medical technician assigned to the 81st Medical Operations Squadron.

Chilean, Air Force medical teams share knowledge, experience

ANGOL, Chile — Air Force and Chilean medics are transitioning duties while sharing knowledge at the emergency medical support hospital here March 22.

In its first 10 days of operation, Chilean and Air Force medics worked side-by-side to treat more than 130 patients and perform 16 surgeries.

For many of the Airmen here, working in this field hospital with Chilean medics isn't much different from working in a hospital in the U.S.

"It's crazy how similar we are, but only separated by a language," said Senior Airman Alexander Balok, a surgical technician from the 81st Surgical Operations Squadron who participated in the first surgery with Chilean and Air Force surgeons. "It was very interesting seeing how they do things, compared to how we do things back home."

According to Maj. Yekaterina Karpitskaya, an orthopedic surgeon from the 81st MSGS, who participated in the first surgery in the EMEDS hospital, some techniques were so similar she and the Chilean surgeon would ask for the same instrument at the same time, but in English and Spanish.

The similarities ease the transition for Chilean medics to take over the hospital, but the differences create an environment for sharing knowledge between medical professionals.

Lt. Col. (Dr.) Peter Drewes, a urology/gynecology surgeon from the 81st MSGS, said he and his Chilean counterpart may use different equipment and different techniques, but it's the same surgical principles.

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Bar codes used to track surgical instruments

KEESLER AIR FORCE BASE, Miss. — A research project at the 81st Medical Group Hospital, sponsored by the Office of the Air Force Surgeon General, has added a new application.

The project, which uses automated identification and data collection applications, seeks to improve clinical and business processes. AIDC includes technologies such as radiofrequency identification, ultrasound, bar codes and infrared that allows an item to be identified nearby, in the case of bar codes, or at a distance, using RFID.

A proof-of-concept recently started in the hospital's central sterile supply. It involves surgical tray and instrument tracking under the guidance of Capt. Yvonne Hill, 81st Surgical Operations Squadron. It uses two-dimensional bar codes that are electrochemically etched into the stainless steel surgical instruments. The 2D bar codes, approximately 4 mm square, uniquely identify each instrument as well as its type and are linked to information in the system data base.

As technicians assemble a tray for surgery, each instrument is scanned and compared against a count sheet for that

particular type of surgery. An alert is given if the incorrect instrument has been chosen or if an instrument may have reached its expiration date -- some instruments have an expiration date and must be discarded after a certain number of uses. Once the tray is assembled, an auto-clavable RFID tag is affixed to the tray and, following sterilization, the tray and contents may be quickly and accurately located in storage as the need arises.

This system ensures that all trays are complete and that no instruments have exceeded their expiration date. Since scanning also allows the computer to present the instrument's picture and manufacturer's specification, it's particularly useful when training student surgical technicians.

The 81st MDG Hospital is a Phase II training site for this and several other Air Force enlisted medical specialties.

Matthijs Uijterschout, Shipcom Wireless, Inc., and Larry George, senior telemedicine consultant and project manager for the Center for Partnerships in Research and Technology, Medical Modernization Directorate, Office of the Air Force Surgeon General, contributed to this report.



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An enthusiastic and passionate natural medicines developer and educator, Mr. Paradise's quest to find an intelligent 21st Century form of pain relief started more than 35 years ago as he suffered from a severe case of bi-lateral Carpal Tunnel Syndrome (CTS), a debilitating nerve-related problem that affects the hands with burning, tingling pain. Frustrated and desperate for relief he put his knowledge of physiology and natural medicines to the test. The result: Topricin®.

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From his own experience with CTS, Mr. Paradise has an appreciation for the plight of chronic pain sufferers and understands that pain is more than an inconvenience. "[Pain] can turn life upside down physically, emotionally, socially and financially. Every human being deserves the right to live vibrantly and celebrate life, and not be a prisoner of pain." Like Marybeth Hanson, Linda Rayborn was living in extreme pain due to a severe case of Fibromyalgia. "I tried Topricin® and I got the first full night's sleep I had had in years! I was literally in tears of joy!"

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