

DI achieves goal, shapes new Marines

BY SGT. SHAWN DICKENS
Chevron staff

He stands contemplating the answer to the question of why he joined the Marine Corps all the while he adjusts his uniform, ensuring it looks perfect.

Before Wiedner came to the depot, he spent time working in the fleet as an administration clerk. He was a motivated young Marine with a goal in mind: he wanted to be a drill instructor.

"I can tell you why I became a drill instructor," said Staff Sgt. Gary Wiedner, senior drill instructor, platoon 3227, Company K, 3rd Recruit Training Battalion.

"I still believe in the legendary drill instructor," said Wiedner. "They are the cream of the crop, setting the standard for others to emulate."

He knew he had what it took to be one of the men who he held in such high regard and proved it by being meritoriously promoted to every rank from lance corporal all the way to sergeant.

His accomplishments didn't go unnoticed.

"I had a first sergeant who was a prior drill instructor who became my mentor," said Wiedner. "He found out my goal of going to D.I. school and made sure I was ready for what was yet to come."

His mentor put him through the gamut of what he would have to do once he made it to drill instructor school. Having to constantly give classes and do close order drill and sword manual filled his schedule, but ultimately it prepared him to succeed once he hit the drill field.

"It was like I went to drill

instructor school before I even got accepted to drill instructor school," said Wiedner. "All the hard work paid off though."

It was that extra attention and having someone to look up to that helped him reach his goal, he said. He hopes to be that inspiration for his junior Marines.

"When I leave here, I am going to do my best to be the example for my junior Marines that my old first sergeant was for me," he said. "I want them to look at the example I set and say, 'I want to be like Staff Sgt. Wiedner.'"

Wiedner's advice for junior Marines thinking about becoming drill instructors is to be humble.

"This job will consume you, so be ready," said Wiedner. "But you will get back what you put in."



Staff Sgt. Gary Wiedner, senior drill instructor, Platoon 3227, Company K, stands in front of his platoon during graduation practice Wednesday. It has been his job, with the help of his fellow drill instructors, to set the example for the new Marines as they go through recruit training. Sgt. Shawn Dickens/Chevron

From the football gridiron to the depot's grinder

BY CPL. JOSE NAVA
Chevron staff

He spoke of wanting to be a Marine since he was a child, but there was a reason his enlistment was delayed for four years; he was an exceptionally good football player. Although Pfc. Cody Walker, Platoon 3227, Company K, did not join the Marine Corps immediately after high school, he still gained valuable lessons from playing football at Mesa

State College of Colorado, Grand Junction, Colo.

Some of the training for football necessitated him waking up at 4:30 a.m. and practicing in six inches of snow, said Walker. His training varied from practice to practice which helped keep the team on their toes, he added.

"He was a good leader who gave everything he had when he stepped onto the field to play," said Joe Ramunno, head football coach, Mesa State College of Colorado. "He was a great guy to be around because he got the team going and

demanding excellence from them."

Walker said that he was too anxious and excited to begin recruit training, therefore, he left college early with just 15 credits left to complete his degree.

"I could not think about working at a nine-to-five job every day out in the civilian world," said Walker. "I wanted to do something different."

Arriving at MCRD San Diego, Walker said that he wanted to feel more confident then he when he met the drill instructors on the yellow footprints.

"With the chaos and yelling, the drill instructors stripped all the 'coolness' from the new recruits our first night on the yellow footprints," said Walker.

Having been put through his coach's tough and demanding physical training, Walker said he found most of the physical activities that took place during recruit training came easily to him.

"Walker was a squared-away individual that was highly motivated, took charge, had initiative, and was more mature than the other recruits," said Staff Sgt. Gary Wiedner, senior drill instructor, Platoon 3227, Company K. For these reasons he was meritoriously promoted to the rank of private first class, said Wiedner.

But recruit training was not always an easy task for Walker. One of the things he found difficult was close-order drill. Close-order drill is marching while in formation to instill instance and willingness obedience to orders.

"The hardest part for me was to keep focus through all the hours of drill," said Walker. Drill for recruits took place on Shepherd Memorial Drill Field, also known as the Grinder.

Another rough patch for Walker was homesickness. Walker said that he got through it with the help of the friends he met during training.

"What I missed was the proximity of family and friends when I played football because they lived in the same town as the college," said Walker. "Besides,

meeting the buddies I did in boot camp, remembering that I came to become a Marine, helped me push through."

Through all of his training, the field portion of it stood out most to Walker. Getting dirty in the mud and sand, firing weapons and eating meals-ready-to-eat were the things he found most exciting while on the Crucible. The Crucible is a 54-hour training exercise in which recruits march 40 miles and navigate obstacles with little food and sleep, to build teamwork.

"A lot of the teamwork I learned while in football transferred over when I joined the Corps," said Walker. "I used that training to help guide me through the Crucible."

Walker said he has thought a lot about his future in the Corps. Not yet done with his bachelor's degree, Walker wants to earn his degree and plans to make the Marine Corps a career.

Following graduation, Walker will report to Infantry Training Battalion, School of Infantry West, Marine Corps Base Camp Pendleton, Calif., where he will train as an infantryman, the job he had his heart set on since he was a child.

Although recruit training is over, Walker is looking forward to continuing his training.

"I do not know what is going to happen to but I am excited to see where the Marine Corps will take me and what I will see," said Walker.



Pfc. Zachary Tanaka, Platoon 3227, Company K, left, watches as Pfc. Cody Walker, Platoon 3227, Co. K, shows him how to properly iron his trousers. Recruits are taught basic maintenance of their uniforms during recruit training. Cpl. Jose Nava/Chevron

Col. Willard A. Buhl

Parade Reviewing Officer

Col. Willard A. Buhl grew up in Los Gatos, Calif., and enlisted in the Marine Corps in 1981. He served as a reconnaissance man and team leader with Detachment 4th Force Reconnaissance Company in Reno, Nev., from 1982 to 1986.

Successfully completing Officer Candidates Class at Quantico, Va., he was commissioned a second lieutenant in April 1986, and trained as an infantry officer. His first Fleet Marine Force assignment was with Battalion Landing Team, 1st Battalion, 9th Marines. There he commanded rifle, weapons and heavy machine gun platoons, and a weapons company, deploying twice to the Western Pacific with Marine Expeditionary Units.

In 1990, he was promoted to captain and trained as an intelligence officer. In this capacity, he served as an assistant regimental intelligence officer for the 1st Marine Regiment and as a battalion intelligence officer and scout sniper platoon commander for BLT, 1st Bn., 4th Marines. In these billets he participated in Operations Desert Shield and Desert Storm and United Nations operations in Mogadishu, Somalia. Buhl also served in the 1st Marine Expeditionary Force future operations section during Operation Iraqi Freedom I, in Kuwait and Iraq. In his most recent assignment, he served as a military assistant in the Office of the Secretary of Defense for Asian and Pacific Affairs at the Pentagon, Washington, D.C.

Buhl is particularly proud of his service with the Marines and sailors of 3rd Bn., 1st Marines, where he served from 2003 to 2005, and participated in Opera-

tion Iraqi Freedom II and Operation Al Fajr, the clearing of the City of Fallujah in November 2004.

Buhl is a graduate of the U.S. Marine Corps Amphibious Warfare School (1993); U.S. Marine Corps Command and Staff College; School of Advanced Warfighting (2001 to 2003); and the U.S. Marine Corps War College (2006). He also taught at the Command and Staff College from 2006 to 2007. He holds a B.A. in history and international relations from California State University Chico (1985), and masters degrees in military science and strategic studies from Marine Corps University (2002 and 2006).

His personal decorations include the Defense Superior Service Medal; the Bronze Star Medal with "V" and gold star; the Meritorious Service Medal with gold star; the Navy and Marine Corps Commendation Medal; the Navy and

Marine Corps Achievement Medal; and the Combat Action Ribbon with gold star.

