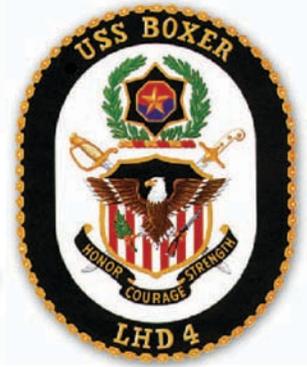




# BARK OF THE BOXER

AMERICA'S GOLDEN GATOR



VOLUME: XVI ISSUE: 6

EARLY MAY 2011

## Boxer pays respects to lost family members

By MC3 Anna Kiner

A memorial service was held aboard amphibious assault ship USS Boxer (LHD 4) May 7 to allow the ship's Sailors and Marines to honor family members who had passed away during the current deployment.

Since Boxer departed San Diego on February 22, 13 crewmembers have lost members of their families and were unable to return home to attend memorial services.

"The service is for those who received Red Cross messages but could not go home," said Lt. Cmdr. Marc DiConti, the Chaplain for the embarked 13th Marine Expeditionary Unit (MEU). "It is a way for them to say goodbye and an opportunity for them to pay their respects."

During times of family emergency, such as the death of a family member, communications are passed to the ship through the American Red Cross (AMCROSS). In the case of immediate family members such as parents or siblings, the Department of Defense and AMCROSS will work together to help the military member get home for emergency leave. In the cases of extended family members, though, the service member may not have that same opportunity and, like the 13 Sailors and Marines on Boxer, will need to find another way to pay their respects.

"It's been awhile since I've been to a memorial service, or been to the church for the Navy, so it was a big change," said In-



*Boxer chaplain Lt. James Williford (right) leads an assembly in prayer at a memorial service paying respects to crew members' family members who have passed away during the deployment. Photo by MC3 Anna Kiner.*

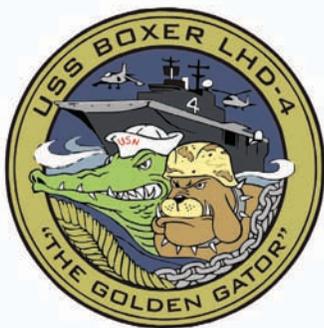
terior Communications Electrician Fireman William Wonderling. "But I liked it. It was good to see the Captain there. I think the Chaplains did a great job. They knew what I was going through, that I was grieving. It made me feel a lot better."

## Torch is Lit!

*Machinist's Mate 3rd Class Brittany Kujawski prepares to insert the burner man's torch into the number two boiler to light the fires after conducting a bottom blow.*

*The boilers are secured periodically to remove sediment and build-up from water in the boilers. Photo by MC3(SW) Trevor Welsh*





## Bark of the Boxer Editorial Staff

**Public Affairs Officer**  
MCC(AW/SW) Mike Lorey

**Editor**  
MC1(SW) Fletcher Gibson

**Media Staff**  
MC1(SW) Donald Walton  
MC2(AW) Oscar Espinoza  
MC3 Anna Kiner  
MC3(SW) Trevor Welsh  
MCSN Brian Jeffries

This newspaper is an authorized publication for military members on board USS Boxer (LHD 4). Contents of Bark of the Boxer are not the official views of, or endorsed by the U.S. Government, the Department of Defense or the United States Navy.

## FIND GATOR!



We've hidden GATOR somewhere in this issue. The first three readers who find him and send an e-mail to the editor with the page number and location win a prize from MWR.

## Other than family and friends, what do you miss most from home?



*"The thing I miss most about home is having weekends off and Taco Tuesday at PB Bar & Grill."*

OSSA Samad Khan

*"I miss the luxury of being a civilian such as going to parties and setting my own schedule."*

YNSN Meghan Beaston



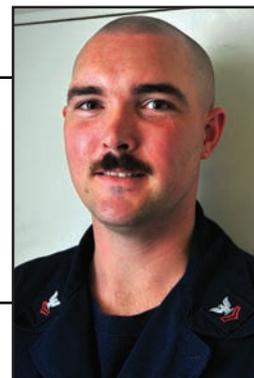
*"What I miss most about being home is watching 'The Office' every Thursday."*

Ens. Thereasa Black



*"I miss simply rest and relaxation. There is nothing like some good R&R."*

IC2 Owen Reagan



## Ombudsmen's Corner

By Shondra and Laila

### BOXER BOUNCING BABIES

For all the expecting parents in our Boxer family, we want to be sure you are registered with the Ombudsman Team. You don't want to miss out on video teleconference opportunities and, more importantly, your little one's first meeting with Daddy on Homecoming Day.

E-mail the Ombudsman Team for more information at [Ombudsman@USS-BoxerFamily.com](mailto:Ombudsman@USS-BoxerFamily.com).



### TREASURED LETTERS

Modern technology is amazing the way it keeps us in touch with our Sailors in "real time." Although it is great to communicate instantly, there is something to be said for an actual letter you can hold from a loved one.

This month, take a little extra time and send a handwritten letter to your loved one. While instant communication is convenient, a handwritten letter can be cherished for years.

# Unleash the BEAST

## One MC's first-hand account of surviving the LCAC experience

By MC3(SW) Trevor Welsh

The buzzing sound of warming turbines fills the dark, damp, hot cave these beasts sleep in. Their size becomes daunting as I make my descent into the lair of monsters. Yet despite their massiveness, comfort is found in the safety of what can surely be perfect structural integrity. These are not untamed ravenous creatures; they are quite literally well-oiled machines. Before I board the craft, I take a moment to examine it, noticing undeniable markings tattooed on the side of the giant. First, an identifier, "LCAC 76", obviously the name of the colossus. Next, a symbol of freedom recognized throughout the world: the American flag. Lastly, "U.S. NAVY"... a force to be reckoned with.

Stepping into what looks to be its gaping mouth, squeezing between the load of dominance and potential destruction it hauls, I am guided by one of its attendants into the very heart of the machine: the cockpit. After stowing my gear, I take my place and put on a headset to be educated on the duties and responsibilities by the men who are well-trained in every aspect of controlling their brutish cargo-bearer.

To my left, the Navigator. Through trials and tribulations, this man has become a living compass. Along with his instinct, a wide array of dials, RADAR displays and charts lay before him to aid him as he makes directional recommendations to his leader. In the middle sits the Engineer. With a platter of flashing lights, dials, meters, gauges and switches, the engineer monitors and controls the life force of the craft as if it were capable of breathing. On the right is the leader: the Craftmaster. Some might even call this man a pilot because of the three sets of controls required to maneuver the machine. Although the other positions are vital, they merely make suggestions to the Craftmaster. He is the master. His instinct, ingenuity and knowledge are responsible for taming the craft.



*At full throttle, a loaded LCAC can reach speeds of 40 knots across the water while carrying up to 75 tons of transportation equipment, personnel and their gear. Photo by MC3(SW) Trevor Welsh.*



*MC3(SW) Trevor Welsh tries his hand at the reins of an LCAC. It takes more than one person to master the monster, and even maneuvering it calls for three sets of controls. Photo by QM2 Jorge Cossio.*

After the crew explains their duties and a few intricacies of the craft, the order comes to start the engines. I listen through the headset as orders are given and received, switches flipped and dials turned. My head buzzes and my body shakes... they have awoken the sleeping giant. The craft rises. It rises like a giant bird would lift off for flight. Then it hovers.

The craft beats against the sides of the cave, begging to be set free, begging to fly on the open water. The Craftmaster maneuvers the giant backward, and daylight floods into the once dimly-lit cockpit. I feel the fluid motion of open water underneath the craft as the Craftmaster turns the beast around and the cave disappears out of sight. My mind races and my pulse quickens as the Craftmaster opens the throttle and the beast machine seems to roar with intensity and excitement to be set free. I am surely in for the ride of my life.

It's near impossible to contain my excitement as I speed across the water. What once seemed like a ferocious craft does not fight the waves crashing against the bow, it now moves as one with the water. This beast is at home on the high seas, like a mustang is at home on the flat fields and open plains, running free.

The ride seems to be coming to an end as quickly as it began. I see land and structures growing closer as I gaze out of the cockpit windows, through the eyes of the giant. I feel the flowing motion of water slip out from underneath the beast as it crawls on to dry land and comes to a stop. The machine's roar turns to a growl and then to a quiet moan as it sinks off its inflated belly and comes to a well-earned rest.

I exit the cockpit and walk out of the mouth of the beast. I find my balance on solid ground; a feeling once lost and forgotten after an eternity at sea. After I take a few steps, before I continue on my mission, I turn to look at the beast, now back in a quiet slumber under the warm sunlight.



HONOR · COURAGE · STRENGTH



MC1(SW) Fletcher Gibson



MC3 Anna Kiner



MC3 Anna Kiner



MC1(SW) Fletcher Gibson



MC1(SW) Fletcher Gibson



MC3 Anna Kiner