

“Sir, yes, sir!” becomes a Devil Pup’s ready response while avoiding direct eye contact with Marine escorts shouting questions in loud, rapid-fire fashion just inches away.



IMAGE: JOHNNY WANDERWACH

Devil Pups Challenges Teens: Who Can You Become In 10 Days?

By Mary D. Karcher

“There’s something that I wish more young people understood about respect—and they certainly get it from a program like Devil Pups—that it has to be earned. It’s not a given until it is earned. You just don’t get it; it’s not a civil right.”

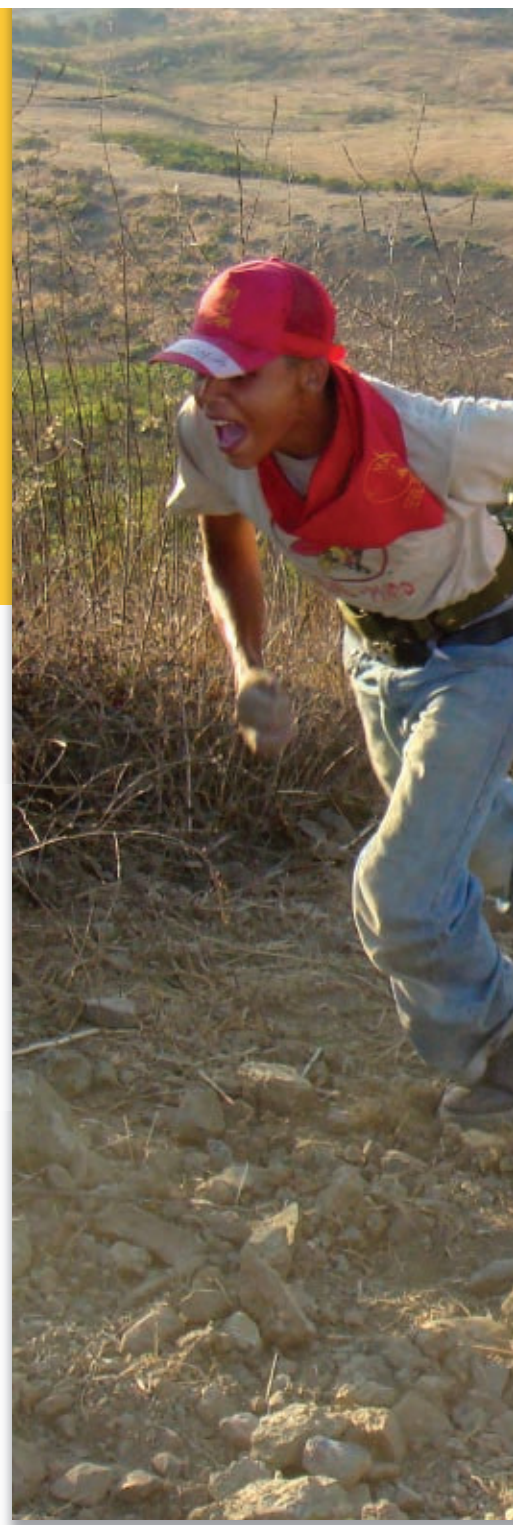
—Tom Selleck
actor and former Devil Pup

Each summer 600 teenagers voluntarily have the world as they know it turned upside down for 10 days. They have no control over when they wake up, go to sleep, or any of the activities that occur in between. Yet at the end of those 10 days, they discover that they are capable of things they had never imagined be-

fore, are filled with self-confidence and have a clear understanding of the rewards born of hard work and discipline. These are the Devil Pups, and this is no ordinary summer camp.

Devil Pups Youth Program for America derives its name and its principles from the “devil dogs” of the Marine Corps, so named by German troops in World War I because of the Marines’ fierce fighting spirit. While not a recruiting tool, retired Marine Corps Reserve officers created the program in 1954 at Marine Corps Base Camp Pendleton, Calif., with the support of the Commandant of the Marine Corps. Marines who volunteer to help at the summer encampment program become role models for those who attend.

Richard Lindsay, current president and chief executive officer of Devil Pups Incorporated, the nonprofit corporation that supports the organization, described the program as a place where “boys and girls between the ages of 14 to 17 learn coop-



eration, respect and dignity for others, regardless of race, creed or origin.” He added, “As it was in 1954, our goal remains the same today—to develop better citizens based on the philosophy of our motto, ‘Growth Through Challenge.’”

The challenges begin on day one with a disorienting step off a bus onto a grinder at Camp Pendleton as Marines bark orders incessantly at the “Pups.” Just 10 days later after motivational speeches partnered with miles of walking, running, swimming and drilling, the program culminates in a very orderly graduation ceremony with parents and friends in attendance.

The Devil Pups program began after

Leatherneck—On the Web

Hear Patrick Brent interview Tom Selleck at www.mca-marines.org/leatherneck/selleck

Devil Pups persevere up the steep, sandy trail of Old Smokey at the culmination of a two-day Crucible exercise. The first to the summit was Christian Emery, 16, who then descended halfway down the mountain to help others. "I got pride out of it; the feeling of accomplishment and pride," said Emery, whose father, Rod, was a Devil Pup in 1986. (Photo by Steve Pettit)



STEVE PETTIT

Inset: Katie Bielman from Riverside, Calif., receives the Company Honor Pup award for being the No. 1 Pup out of 300 during 2008's second encampment graduation at Camp Pendleton. Presenting the award is the chairman emeritus, Duncan Shaw, son of the Devil Pups' founder. Observing (from left) are the president of Devil Pups, Richard Lindsay; the base commander, Col James B. Seaton III; and the encampment staff operations officer, 1stSgt Jim Zinn.

retired Marines and businessmen witnessed a flag-burning at a Los Angeles high school. They swiftly developed a program under the guidance of retired Marine Colonel A. Duncan Shaw reflecting their philosophy that "a normal boy could be rough and tough as any situation calls for, yet remain a mannerly gentleman, physically and mentally clean, who has respect for himself and others, for his flag and constituted authority." What started as a program to prevent "irresponsible juvenile actions" evolved into a citizenship development program for both boys and girls aged 14 to 17 years.

Today's program relies on volunteer li-



EGLE JOHNNY MANDERNACH

Rasheen Waters, 3d Platoon's Honor Pup, carries the guidon as the platoon passes in review at the graduation parade. Marine Sgt Chardon McPherson (right) commanded the platoon.

aisson representatives (LRs) to select youths from four states: California, Arizona, Nevada and New Mexico. Currently 79 LRs screen the 600 young men and women chosen to attend one of the two 10-day encampments held at Camp Pendleton each summer.

Patty and Chuck Norris, who retired from the Los Angeles County Sheriff's Department, volunteered as liaison repre-

sentatives for 26 years and currently are LR coordinators who train and support area LRs. Patty Norris explained that each LR is given an allotted number of slots to fill. The LRs must make sure that the youths meet certain requirements to be considered for the program. Applicants must pass a physical fitness test, have no medication needs, and have a genuine desire to participate in Devil Pups.

Norris said that representatives publicize the program through sheriffs' and fire departments, retired Marines, churches, schools and community organizations.

Beginning in April until camp begins in July or August, LRs stay in touch with potential candidates to make sure they are getting into shape, breaking in their shoes, and truly committed to showing up to board the bus to Camp Pendleton. A no-



EGLE JOHNNY MANDERNACH

During "Recon Day," Pups learn about using mud for camouflage (above), carrying fellow team members with simulated injuries up a hill, egressing stealthily across a beach and navigating rubber boats.



EGLE JOHNNY MANDERNACH

Every minute of a Devil Pup's day is filled with activities to improve skills, including this marksmanship exercise using paintball guns and hay bale targets.

show not only means the position cannot be filled by another potential candidate at the last minute, but it also may reduce the number of future slots that LR is allocated. With only 600 total Devil Pups selected each summer from four states, the coveted slots are justifiably protected.

There have been 47,151 participants since the program's inception 55 years ago. Each Devil Pup receives free of charge his or her bed and board, uniform items including a hat, scarf and T-shirt, and gear necessary to participate in the physical activities. Devil Pups live in Marine Corps barracks and eat Marine Corps food, either in the chow hall or MREs (meals, ready to eat) in the field. Their costs are all covered by Devil Pups Inc., which raises \$400 per child, totaling \$240,000 a year, according to Linsday.

The program thrives through the support of Marine volunteers, 20 trustees, four paid staff members during 40 days each summer, one administrative person who works part-time year round, and many volunteers, some of whom are prior Devil Pups, known as "Eagles," who dedicate their time and experience to the program. The nonprofit organization receives financial support from individuals, corporate foundations and fundraisers held during the year.

Sand, Water, Sweat and Something Called Persistence

Col Raymond Blum, USMCR (Ret), the commanding officer of the Devil Pups encampment, tells the participants in their field training manual: "During your 10 days here you will learn everything from teamwork and determination to discipline and endurance. . . . Going through the Devil Pups program, you will undergo a major transformation. As a Devil Pup, you will be confident and ready to become a role model in your community."

From the first day of the encampment, Devil Pups learn that they are expected to push beyond whatever limits they believe they have. Using physical challenges and situations that require thinking under pressure, coupled with a full schedule beginning before dawn each day, the instructors gradually guide the Devil Pups to persevere and recognize the positive outcomes of teamwork.

Near the end of the encampment, the Pups participate in two intense days of physical and mental challenges, similar to the "Crucible" in the Corps, which concludes with a climb up Old Smokey, the highest peak at Camp Pendleton. Exhausted yet proud, the Pups each receive a Devil Pup coin and a handshake from their Marine escort just as the sun sets on the horizon, signaling the end of an en-



Eagle Rachael Jeauxdevine, nicknamed "Wonder Woman," provides motivation and physical assistance to Devil Pups climbing Old Smokey.

Once an Eagle: Teens Return to Support Devil Pups Program

Starting the morning off early at 0430 is not anything unusual. Working a 16-hour shift is not extraordinary. Having responsibilities is nothing unorthodox either. PTing, aiding in supply, assisting, motivating and encouraging others is all in a day's work.

What's strange though is that 17 teenagers volunteered for this kind of work with no pay. These teens have graduated from a youth citizen and leadership program called Devil Pups. Young people, ages 14-17, may join Devil Pups, and after having completed the encampment period, they may return the following summer to volunteer as Eagles.

Eagles aid the Marines working with Devil Pups at Marine Corps Base Camp Pendleton, Calif. An Eagle has many jobs during the Devil Pup encampment. Assisting the corpsman may include escorting injured "Pups," fetching water and carrying medical supplies. Working with the platoons involves motivating the Pups and aiding the Marine instructors.

Administrative work for an Eagle involves updating the records of each Pup (600 Pups total) and processing those who could not complete the program. Eagles should have a good work ethic and not be afraid of working long hours. While Eagles are not paid for their work, they do have all expenses paid for them, from food to rooming on base.

Eagles return to the Devil Pups program for many reasons. "I came back because I believe in the Devil Pups program," said Eagle Kelley Sherwood of Dana Point, Calif. Corey Lycopolus' reason for returning was, "I wanted to help the new Pups; also to prove to myself that I could do it again and do it better than before."

It is uncommon to see people wake up early, excited about work and proud of the job they are doing. By working for highly motivated Marines, the Eagles learn powerful lessons in leadership and ethics. A program like Devil Pups instills important values in today's youth.

The Eagles, who volunteered more than 24 days of their summer vacation, gained more than any monetary reimbursement would have brought. They learned the importance of getting a job done and done right. They learned how to become more efficient in their given tasks. They also learned the meaning of "Make it happen." It is this uncommon quality not ordinarily found in society today that makes these young people ready to lead a team and work hard.

They are equipped with the tools to prepare them for the world ahead of them. They are the few who will heed the call, be as tough as a situation calls for, yet still remain a well-mannered individual. All of these characteristics resulted from the guidance and support of the Marines who also volunteered for the Devil Pup program.

—Kaylen Reilley
Devil Pup Eagle



EAGLE JOHNNY MANDERNICH

Each step in the knee-deep sand tests the stamina of Pups during “Recon Day,” conducted by reconnaissance Marines from Naval Base Coronado, Calif., at Camp Pendleton’s Del Mar Beach.

campment, but the beginning of a new perspective on their lives.

According to former Devil Pup Nick Richardson, who received the Duncan Shaw Founders Award for Company Devil Pup runner-up for overall excellence during the second encampment in 2008, “The hardest part was the culture shock for the first couple of days. Waking up at 0430, having to get your tired body out of bed for fire watch, and being ‘moti-

vated’ for any little mistake. That was the hardest part. Most people think the Crucible at the end is the hardest, but once you’ve formed a family within your platoon, the weight is shared, and it’s easier to accomplish everything.”

The “culture shock” Richardson describes can be intense. Devil Pups arrive at camp much like Marine recruits, with much yelling and hurrying, getting an earful—and often a face full—of com-

mands involving getting “off my bus” and keeping one’s eyes straight ahead. Before they realize what they have gotten themselves into, most Pups figure out that it’s more valuable to stop thinking and start listening to everything the Marine escorts are saying, answering every question loudly with “Sir, yes, sir!”

Each day begins at an hour unfamiliar to most teens, especially in the summertime, and includes some form of physical exercise. Initially running a mile, the Devil Pups complete a 5 1/2-mile run by day seven. They visit the pool several times over the course of the encampment and conquer their fears as they jump into the pool from a 15-foot, 25-foot and, for some truly brave souls, a 35-foot tower.

Whether running, swimming, drilling, navigating the obstacle course, doing push-ups and crunches, or competing in the fun but exhausting beach field meet, the Devil Pups are frequently in motion. They train in their platoons, broken down further into squads, forging bonds and receiving support from fellow Pups, which helps them succeed as a team throughout the course of the encampment.

One team-building exercise is the Leadership Reaction Course, which requires the Pups to work together to figure out



STEVE PETTI

By sundown, the Devil Pups reassemble in formation after the climb up Old Smokey in preparation for the coin ceremony. Each Pup receives a Devil Pup coin (inset). Walt Disney designed the logo on the Pups’ unique shirt and coin in 1954.

the best way to accomplish the defined mission. For example, the team must deliver medical supplies across a bridge that has been partially destroyed by the enemy. The medical supplies are represented by boxes, and the Pups must handle them carefully while on a bridge they construct above the ground using planks. Any gear touching a red area is eliminated. Each person who touches the ground becomes a casualty and must go to the aid station and drag a dummy 150 meters before he can rejoin his team. The team is only as strong as the ability of each member to work with the others and avoid mistakes.

Through the program, Nick Richardson discovered what teamwork really entails: "I used to think that it meant just cheering on your team, or going to practice, or splitting a job to make it go faster. But at my encampment I realized the hard way that it is something completely different. Teamwork is the ability to recognize that one man can't do it on his own, and getting behind him to achieve it together."

Former Pup Nathan Neven said his Devil Pups' encampment was the most physically and mentally challenging week of his life. One of the qualities he discovered that week was courage, since every day presented something he had to overcome. He said the 25-foot tower scared him to death, but he conquered his fear. "The instructors motivated us. I learned so much in 10 days, like you can't do anything unless you have teamwork." He attributes his subsequent receipt of a leadership award at a Los Angeles County Sheriff's Explorer Academy to the lessons he learned at the Devil Pups encampment.

While many lessons such as the value of teamwork are gleaned from physical tasks, the teens also are exposed to motivational speakers who address the Devil Pups throughout the encampment. These speakers reinforce positive behavior, often through stories about their own experiences, whether a Marine who served at Guadalcanal or Iwo Jima, a police chief, an airline pilot or a businessman. Their messages range from avoiding drugs, alcohol and gangs, to achieving success despite obstacles. All of the speakers reinforce the common themes of the camp, which stress personal responsibility, perseverance, confidence, patriotism, hard work and caring for family and friends.

Every day there is an opportunity to review the day's training and think about what the Pups have learned, focusing on the leadership trait that was the theme for the day. The Pups carry a Field Training Manual throughout the week, listing Marine Corps information, such as leadership traits, quotations and "The Marines' Hymn," as well as information about man-



SgtMaj Brian K. Jackson, Depot Sergeant Major, Marine Corps Recruit Depot San Diego, listens to two Honor Pups describe their 10-day life-changing experiences at a pregraduation reception.

ners, nutrition, Devil Pup principles and workbook-style questions to evaluate a Pup's goals in life, strengths, weaknesses and role models.

Former Pup Katrina Herrera said that her Devil Pup experience gave her a greater understanding of what goes on apart from her own world. It made her grateful for what she has and taught her commitment and perseverance. She used lessons from Devil Pups, such as working under pressure, to help her complete the Explorer Academy training with the Los Angeles County Sheriff's Department. Herrera believes her experience as a Devil Pup will continue to help her as she applies to the U.S. Naval Academy in order to achieve her goal of becoming a military intelligence officer followed by a career in foreign policy.

Path to Success

Devil Pups Inc. receives considerable feedback from parents and Pups themselves, sometimes years after they attended the encampment. Parents often comment about how their teenager has gained a new focus and how the camp gave him or her the confidence to overcome any challenge. One remarked that his son said, "If I was selected to be part of a team to climb Mount Everest, the only thing I lack is some additional training and equipment, and I know I would make it to the top."

One letter received this summer—written 22 years after attending camp—described the effect the Devil Pup program had on the writer:

"In 1986, I was a poor excuse for a stu-

dent at a Southern California high school. I had little-to-no motivation and no real ambitions in life to speak of. My sophomore year in high school was a complete disaster academically. Between my sophomore and junior years I attended the Devil Pups program through the good graces of Gunnery Sergeant Ed Kostic (still remember his name) and when I got to Camp Pendleton I was placed in the very capable hands of a Sergeant Hudek (remember his name, too)."

After graduating cum laude from college, the letter's writer went on to work for a Fortune 100 company as a senior field investigator handling fraud detection and investigations for a large region of the northwest United States. He concludes, "Thinking back now, I trace all my success to that short stint with the Devil Pups and the United States Marines who volunteered to help us. Semper Fi."

Author's note: Thank you to Mr. Richard Linsday and Heather Ham, who were instrumental in providing resources for this article, and Mr. P.T. Brent, who suggested the program deserved an article and sent in photos from this summer's camp. To learn more about the Devil Pup program, log on to the Web site www.devilpups.com.



Leatherneck—On the Web

View a video of Devil Pups on top of Old Smokey at www.mca-marines.org/leatherneck/devilpups