

Human relations makes Garcia's day

Story by

AE3 / JO Dennis K. Bohannon

Something different took place in Coronado Sunday, July 14th. Twenty-five children, ages 6 to 13 years old, attended an unusual party.

What made this party unusual? Three things first, the 25 guests of honor were supplied by "Advocates for Youth", an organization that deals solely with underprivileged children; second, the party wasn't held to celebrate anyone's birthday or any special event; third and maybe most unusual, the host was a 29 year old bachelor Marine stationed at NAS North Island, Sgt. Daniel Garcia.

Garcia and several of his friends decided to throw the party simply because they wanted to. Cookies and punch were provided and their landlord was talked into allowing the entire group use of the swimming pool.

For many of the children it was the first party they had been to.

It was not, however, the first time Sgt. Garcia had come in contact with "Advocates for Youth." As a matter of fact, since Garcia arrived at North Island four months ago he has dealt with nearly every community organization in San Diego, rehabilitation centers, centers for the blind, handicapped centers, hospitals, the police department, and many others.

During Garcia's working day he is responsible for improving human relations within the Marine Barracks. However, it goes far beyond being an ordinary job.

Garcia says, "Human relations doesn't only mean relations between black and white, but cooperation between all people, black, white, poor, rich, blind, homeless, military, civilian, ... all people."

Garcia doesn't teach human relations in a manner that you would normally expect. He holds a week long class, about 20 men at a time, for the Marines stationed at North Island's Marine Barracks. During this one week Garcia transforms a Marine who may or may not really care about human relations to a Marine wishing classes could be extended.

Garcia starts by simply talking about the different types of human relations, religious differences, Government, male/female relationships, every type of people dealing with people relations. But not all of the teaching is inside a room with Garcia instructing. Marines go into the community to see and deal with human relations.

"I don't dwell on the black and white problems," Garcia said. "That's not all there is to human relations."

"During the first couple of days in class I try to figure out a man's weakness, if he's prejudiced against the police for instance, I'll

send him out riding around with the San Diego Police Department, then he can see things from their point of view."

Garcia went on to say, "Every student, sometime during the week, is placed in an environment different than his own."

"I've sent Marines to blind centers around San Diego, others to hospitals where they can see life beginning and ending, I've sent men out to centers where they can work with retarded children, we've even arranged to put men in the Tijuana jail for two or three days with only the commissioner of

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police and the marines knowing who they are."

On Fridays, the last day of the human relations course, Sgt. Garcia takes his men into Tijuana, not the main drag filled with bargains, bars, and tourists, but into the real Tijuana, filled with schools, orphanages, and a lot of friendly people.

"Most people only see the tourist side of Tijuana," Garcia said. "I take them off the main drag and let them deal with a variety of life styles. I show them the cardboard huts and then take them through one of Tijuana's \$160,000 homes. Something most of them never dreamed existed in that part of Mexico.

"I also make them deal with the

people. We drop them off and tell them to meet at a certain spot. They really have to deal with the people then just to find their way around."

Sgt. Garcia's human relations classes have been highly successful. Most of the graduates don't forget about the places they have been and most of them continue to visit the various centers, helping where they can on their own time. Many of the marines on North Island regularly take books, pencils, paper, etc to a school in Tijuana. They also spend a lot of time there, on their own, teaching the children sports.

Major C. C. Krulak, C. O. of the Marine Barracks, said. "Our human relations program is so effective that about 80 percent of

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the marines here on base are actively involved in several community programs, 100 percent were involved in at least one program.

Major Krulak also said that when his marines take up a certain project they don't feel as though they are representing the Marine Barracks alone but feel they represent North Island.

The only thing sadly lacking in the San Diego area is greater interest and cooperation.

A few weeks ago the 11th Naval District sent out a message asking for volunteers to take 70 underprivileged children out on a fishing trip. The message stated that only four volunteers from each command would be needed.

When the day of the fishing trip came, four marines from North Island went to the center. From all of the commands in the 11th Naval District those four marines are the only ones who took the time to show up.

"Seventeen children to each man is a little hard to contend with, but we had one heck of a time and we intend to do it every Tuesday and Thursday for as long as they will let us," Garcia said.

The Marine Barracks also have several of their own programs going. Soon, probably within a week or two they are going to organize a beach party for several of the mentally retarded children of San Diego.

The Marine Barracks is a group of people from North Island that are really getting involved with the outside world.

Garcia said that his job really isn't a job at all. His life style doesn't change when 4 o'clock rolls around. He grew up in the ghettos of New York but even if he were rich and retired he'd be doing the same thing he does daily, learning about life and people, in other words . . . human relations.