

Marines prepare to depart Keowee Key

BY JESSICA SIBLEY
THE JOURNAL

SALEM — Most of the Marines visiting Keowee Key have agreed, when fighting in war, everything happens so fast.

That's what Sgt. Jay Taylor believes, but he was happy to welcome a slower pace during the Returning Warriors program this week.

U.S. Marine Corps soldier, Doug Heady, had a moment of dismay Wednesday afternoon, but not because he had to reflect upon his time in battle, it was because his time at Keowee Key was coming to an end.

"I don't want to leave," he said through a smile. "I know we all have to, but who would want to leave this? After everything everyone has done for us, after marching onto a field to a crowd of people cheering us on, after driving through three towns with people lining the streets waving flags? I don't even get this kind of treatment when I'm able to come back to my own hometown. So, no, I really don't want to leave."

Host David Rosamond had the pleasure of hosting two active duty Marines during their three-night stay.

"We've done it now for two years and this year, our two Marines were stationed together," Rosamond said. "They were already close so it was really nice



As the Marines wrap up a trip on the boats, smiles are exchanged after wake boarding and waterskiing wiped the participants out.

to be around them."

Heady and his bunkmate, Alex Baran, are both avid golfers and agreed that the golf clinic was a great experience.

"It's been incredible," Heady said. "Just when you thought the motorcade couldn't be topped, the event on Tuesday night with the march-in welcome, the music and fireworks topped that. Literally, I try not to expect anything because I know it's just going to be so much bigger and better (if I don't). When I go home to Indiana, my hometown basically says, 'Oh, hey, welcome back.'"

For Taylor, who is from Berea, his time participating has been nothing short of amazing, sort of like the pen that he carries around with him.

As a sniper, Taylor is no stranger to gunfire.

"I took three bullets in my vest, and one bullet got behind my vest and hit a metal pen I had in my pocket," he said. "That last bullet hit the pen and didn't penetrate by body. I don't know if it saved my life or not, but I think it's pretty cool."

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From left, Marine Alex Baran, host David Rosamond and Marine Doug Heady have enjoyed their time getting to know one another. Baran and Heady were stationed together, and Rosamond said it was a pleasure having both of them stay with him and his wife at Keowee Key.



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More water sports entice the Marines onto Lake Keowee on Wednesday afternoon.

MARINES: Guys are 'real deal'

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Following a medical retirement, Taylor opted to go back to school to be an aircraft mechanic technician, which is what he does between two other jobs, raising his 5-month-old baby and being a husband to

his beloved wife.

"All these guys are the real deal," said Alan Funk, Keowee Key resident who helped jumpstart the event in Oconee County three years ago. "They have seen and been through more than most of us retired folks can imag-

ine. Yet, they continue to strive for more, even through injuries and backbreaking, life-threatening work. We are honored to have them here this year and for as long as they are willing to come back."

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