

## Wounded Warriors: Camp LeJeune 2012



*Wounded Warriors*, was the result of a visit to Camp LeJeune (2011). My brother, a U.S. Marine, was serving as a swim instructor. My visit was spent at his pool witnessing and photographically capturing the beautiful and surreal sight of survival swim testing.

*Wounded Warriors*, records how we prepare those for war, as well as heal those who have returned. It reflects on, and intertwines, a haunting scene of beauty with the underlying fear of death.

Marines in heavy protective gear and weaponry were transformed into weightless, floating, warriors. These swimmers were captured in moments of graceful proximity, as well as moments of unbroken solitude.

The base at Camp LeJeune contains an Olympic sized pool, and was filled with light from enormous skylights. Outside, the temperature on a December day, was crisp and cool, a world filled with Marines drilling, running, marching, and standing at attention in long straight lines. In contrast, the aquatic center was a warm and safe private incubator. Yet the specter of death was ever present, as Marines floated down the pool lanes on their backs, their faces blank and still.

The pool was divided into two sections. On one half, Marines were being tested as they prepared for deployment to Afghanistan. On the other half, wounded warriors were being rehabilitated, after returning from Iraq and Afghanistan. I asked a lifeguard if the two groups were always in the pool at the same time. He replied, "every week . . . it's something, isn't it?"

Megan Rye, March 2012