

THE GREAT ESCAPE



Rob Gerardi and Angie Garritson are cuffed and blindfolded at beginning of the gameshow “The Great Escape.” The two credit their training and experiences as independent duty corpsmen for winning the summer television series. (Photos courtesy of Rob Gerardi and Angie Garritson)

Story from Naval Center for Combat & Operational Stress Control Public Affairs

A career in Navy Medicine often leads to many rewards after retirement, but usually it’s not a \$100,000 cash prize won on a nationally televised show.

That was the scenario for Angie Gar-

ritson and Rob Gerardi, who credit their training and experiences as independent duty corpsmen – plus a keen competitive spirit – for capturing the big money on “The Great Escape,” a summer series that aired on TNT.

The couple were a natural for the

series. This past spring, the show’s producers singled them out at a Tough Mudder event, a 13-mile obstacle course designed by British Special Forces. A year earlier, both had completed Ironman Arizona 2011.

The premise of “The Great Escape” isn’t nearly as physically demanding as the pair’s usual competitions, but it does require stealth and steady nerves. Here’s how it works:

Three teams of two contestants are escorted blindfolded to an undisclosed location – for Rob and Angie, it was an abandoned Titan Missile silo outside of Tucson, Ariz. Each team is locked in a zone that includes a hidden map. When the game starts, teams must find the map, free themselves from the zone and follow instructions through four stages

**THE FIRST TEAM TO COMPLETE
THE STAGES AND ASSEMBLE
AN ESCAPE KEY WINS
THE \$ 100,000 PRIZE.**



Rob Gerardi and Angie Garritson (dressed in green) and their fellow “The Great Escape” competitors are led into the Titan Missile Silo to begin the gameshow that aired this summer.

– each of which requires solving a puzzle to advance. Throughout the game, teams must avoid detection by “guards”; if caught, it’s back to square one. The first team to complete the stages and assemble an escape key wins \$100,000.

In the episode that ran July 15, viewers saw a calm and cool Angie and Rob pitted against two teams whose members were considerably more vocal and excitable.

“The producers thought that as a couple we’d argue. I think that’s why they picked us,” says Angie. “But we didn’t, not once. We knew we needed to work together.”

“We’ve learned in our athletic competitions that when you do events, you’re competing against yourself,” Rob added. “You don’t worry about the competition. You don’t give them a thought. That’s how we approached this show.”

Their quiet but deliberate strategy

paid off. The pair didn’t make any puzzle-solving mistakes and they were not “captured” by the show’s guards.

Rob and Angie agree that the qualities that earned them the big money on “The Great Escape” are attributes acquired through their careers as independent duty corpsmen, one of the most challenging ratings in the Navy.

“As an IDC, you need patience, calmness under extreme pressure and quick decision making,” says Angie, who retired Oct. 1 as a chief hospital corpsman. She plans to pursue a master’s degree in public health.

“You have to be resilient to be a successful IDC,” Rob adds. “You’re often responsible for 350 people at sea by yourself with limited resources, no x-rays, no lab services and sometimes no communication with a doctor.”

Resilience is a favorite theme for Rob, who retired as a master chief hospital

corpsman in 2009. Now a curriculum and outreach specialist for the Naval Center for Combat & Operational Stress Control, based at Naval Medical Center (NCCOSC) San Diego, he’s spearheading the center’s design for a Navy-wide resilience program under a BUMED directive.

“In outlining the NCCOSC program, the definition that we use for resilience is to adapt and to grow in the face of challenge and adversity,” Rob says. “That’s what it takes to succeed in today’s Navy and that’s what it took us to succeed on the TV show.”

There was another happy ending to this segment of “The Great Escape” story. In addition to winning a handsome sum of cash, Rob and Angie were married in September. They plan a November honeymoon in Mexico, where they will compete – no surprise here – in Ironman Cozumel. +