



Meridian

Jan./Feb. 2007

Magazine of the National Naval Officers Association (NNOA) - Gateway to success

CNO presents Memorandum of Understanding to NNOA

By Chief of Naval Operations
Public Affairs

WASHINGTON (NNS) -- In a ceremony at the U.S. Navy Memorial in late November, Chief of Naval Operations Adm. Mike Mullen presented a signed Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) to the National Naval Officers Association (NNOA).

The memorandum, signed by Mullen and then NNOA National President Rear Adm. Manson K. Brown on Sept. 30, 2006, re-affirmed a cooperative relationship between the NNOA and the Navy to achieve mutual goals for diversity in the workforce.

"What NNOA is at a high-level, and trying to get done, is representing and advocating for the most positive qualities of a diverse officer corps for all of the sea services," Mullen said to members of the Washington, D.C. chapter. "I was proud and delighted to sign this memorandum."

Specifically, the MOU calls for developing, implementing and improving strategies for the achievement and management of a diverse workforce of Navy officers and enlisted personnel; establishing and maintaining a positive image of the Navy in NNOA's communities of influence; and providing personal and professional development, training opportunities and positive experiences.

"I have felt for a long time, as



Chief of Naval Operations (CNO) Adm. Mike Mullen speaks during a presentation of a Memorandum of Understanding to recognize the cooperative efforts and the relationship between the National Naval Officers Association and the U.S. Navy at the U.S. Navy Memorial. U.S. Navy photo by Mass Communication Specialist 1st Class Chad J. McNeeley

someone very committed to the diversity of our Navy, that it's a compelling imperative for the future," said Mullen. "It is very much tied to how I view our responsibilities."

The MOU commits NNOA to becoming more involved in Navy recruiting and retention efforts and in providing opportunities for Navy personnel to participate -- in a private capacity -- in outreach and community-based programs.

"This is not just about young people being mentored from the minority standpoint, this is about all of us pitching in," Mullen said. "NNOA is a special group. Their outreach is important."

"This presentation represents a significant chapter in the history of NNOA," said current NNOA National President Capt. Bernard Jackson. "The members of NNOA look forward to responding to the challenge before us and doing our part to bring about a more diverse workforce in the Sea Services."

The Navy, in turn, will identify regional and local recruiting offices to coordinate with NNOA chapters

across the country; include NNOA members in Navy-sponsored training and career development programs when applicable; and designate the Chief of Naval Personnel's Diversity Directorate as the service's liaison with NNOA on major matters.

The CNO said he was eager to get started.

"I am anxious to do it at a very high pace and that we make as much happen as quickly as we possibly can," he said. "It's not me, it's us. From the leadership, we are all very, very committed to that."

Established in 1970, NNOA is composed of active duty, reserve and retired officers and civilians who actively support the sea services in the development of a diverse workforce through recruitment, retention and career development. The organization is sanctioned by the Secretaries of the Navy and Transportation and is a member of the Navy and Marine Corps Council. NNOA has members of all ranks and ethnic groups.

NNOA Board of Directors

National President - CAPT Bernard L. Jackson, USN - Washington
Immediate Past President - RDML Manson Brown, USCG - San Francisco Bay Area
National Secretary - 1LT Ayanna Harrison, USMC - 29 Palms
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Western Region VP - CAPT Donald H. Flowers, USN (Ret) - San Francisco Bay Area
Central Region VP - LCDR Lamar Johnson, USCG - Bayou
Far East Region VP - CDR Derek K. Ross, USN - Tidewater

NNOA Mission Statement

National Naval Officers Association actively supports the Sea Services in the development of a diverse officer corps through recruitment, retention, and career development. NNOA is essential in maintaining operational readiness by providing professional development, mentoring, and support of cultural awareness. NNOA establishes and maintains a positive image of the Sea Services in communities and educational institutions.

NNOA Vision Statement

NNOA is the "Gateway to Success" in the Sea Services. We are innovative thinkers committed to a shared vision of leadership, professional exchange and networking. We are the premiere professional development organization in the Sea Services. Our members are empowered with the skills necessary to achieve their full potential. We are an invaluable partner in the Sea Services in the achievement of their recruitment, retention and readiness goals. We recognize our responsibility to our community as we promote and foster American ideals.

National Naval Officers Association, Inc.
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Alexandria, VA 22310-0871
Phone: 703-997-1068



2007 NNOA Fundraiser Trip Update

**Rondel Village, Negril,
June 7-11th, 2007
(4 nights, 5 days)**

Cost: \$724 per person, double occupancy, all inclusive (Includes meals, room transfer, entertainment, and water sports)
(Air Fare not included)

Accommodations:

Garden rooms are located across the street from the beach and have either 2 Double beds or 1 Queen size bed. Superior rooms are on the beach side and have 2 Double beds. All rooms have air conditioning, ceiling fan, small fridge, Cable TV, telephone, in room safe (\$3.00 per day rental) and CD player.

Two and three bedroom villas are fully air conditioned and have, on the ground floor: balcony, living room, equipped kitchen, small bathroom off the living room, master bedroom with in suite bathroom and private whirlpool spa. The living room also has a TV and DVD player. The stairs take you up to the 2nd and 3rd bedrooms which are adjacent to each other on the second floor. Each bedroom has its own TV, air conditioning, bathroom, balcony, small fridge, in room safe and CD player.

Payment details:

A 50% deposit to confirm reservations is due by February 28, 2007. Final payment is due by April 23, 2007.

Any rooms not under deposit will be released on March 1, 2007.

Payments can be made by Cashier or personal check, Visa, MasterCard, American Express and Discover Card. For credit card payments, our credit card authorization form will need to be completed and signed. There is no charge for using credit cards. The following information will be needed for credit card payments:

Name (as it appears on the card)

Card number

Type of card (VISA/MC/AMEX/DISCOVER)

Billing address for the credit card.

This info can be given in advance and the completed authorization forms sent to us after final payment has been collected. Cmdr. Denise McCallaCreary will collect all the payments and forward them to us.

A refundable security deposit of \$100.00 per room will be collected upon arrival and will be refunded, upon departure, if there is no damage, lost keys, etc.

A valid passport is required to travel.

For more information, contact CDR McCallaCreary, 408 268-2933 or retired-rep@nnoa.org. Additionally more detailed information on the trip can be found on the NNOA website at www.nnoa.org.

From the NNOA president

Happy New Year to each of you. These past six months have really been an exciting and historical period for the National Naval Officers Association. Since the last publication of the Meridian, we have witnessed the passing of the last member of the "Golden Thirteen", Mr. Frank Sublett, Jr. Mr. Sublett's service in the United States Navy was a pivotal moment for African Americans and established the bedrock upon which NNOA was founded. The courageous steps the "Golden Thirteen" took in 1944 as the first African American commissioned officers in the Navy set a precedent that allowed us to stand on their shoulders. I was honored to inform his wife that we were honoring her husband by making him an honorary member of NNOA.

Last November, as many of you have read, the Chief of Naval Operations (CNO), Adm. Mike Mullen visited with NNOA members to present the Memorandum of Understanding (MOU). During his visit the CNO challenged NNOA to increase junior officer's participation. His challenge is consistent with this year's national conference theme: "NNOA, Developing America's Future Leaders".

My challenge to each of the local chapters is to focus your efforts on increasing your junior officer membership by 3% this year. Our efforts to increase diversity in the officer corps will not be realized if we cannot retain the minority officers and minority officer candidates at NROTC units, service Academies and Officer Candidate School.

It is imperative that we retain enough junior officers to create the critical mass necessary to ensure opportunity throughout the rank structure. My challenge to each member is to reach out to at least two junior officers and let them know there are other officers who "look like them," have similar life experiences, and are successful officers. The chal-



Capt. Jackson

lenge to the National Board is to shape our message to focus on the junior officer. I would appreciate your comments and feedback on what we can do differently.

As I outlined in my inaugural message, the plan for this year's Board is to continue organization discipline by focusing on the principles, procedures, and processes contained in our Articles of Incorporation, Bylaws and the Chapter Operations Manual. I am pleased to announce that as a result of your dedicated efforts we are on track to present a rewritten operations manual at the 2007 National Conference.

Plans for the 2007 conference are progressing very nicely. CAPT Don Flowers and the San Diego Chapter have done an amazing amount of planning and coordination and the 2007 conference promises to be amongst the best ever.

2007 key events

1. President's & Founders Day Reception, 1800 - 2100, 16 July 07, Club Coronado Ballroom.

2. Coast Guard Day Luncheon, 1130 - 1300, 17 July 07, Club Coronado Ballroom.

3. Navy Day Luncheon, 1130 - 1300, 18 July 07, Club Coronado

4. Youth Day Program, "Yes I Can", 0800 - 2030, 19 July 07. 32nd St. Naval Station & Admiral Baker Recreation Field

5. Marine Corps Day Luncheon, 1130 - 1300, 19 July 07, Club Coronado Ballroom.

6. Spousal Workshop, 1315 - 1600, 19 July 07, Club Coronado Amphibian Room

7. Prayer Breakfast, 0800 - 1000, 20 July 07, Club Coronado Ballroom

8. Awards Banquet, 1800 - 2400, 20 July 07, Club Coronado Ballroom & Amphibian Room

9. Worship Services; 0730 - 0755; 17, 18 & 19 July 07. NAB Chapel.

I look forward to seeing you and a record numbers of junior officers at the 2007 conference.

I regret to inform you that due to unforeseen job commitments, Cmdr. Richelle Kay has resigned her position as Central Regional Vice President. The Board accepted her resignation and voted to appoint Lt. Cmdr. Lamar Johnson as the new Central Regional Vice President. Lt. Cmdr. Johnson is the President of the Bayou Chapter. I would like to publicly thank Cmdr. Kay for her service and welcome aboard Lt. Cmdr. Johnson. I encourage chapter presidents to ensure the regional vice presidents have updated information on you and your chapter officers.

If you have questions or concerns, please contact us via our website, www.nnoa.org.

Regards,

**Captain Bernard Jackson,
Executive Board President
Email: President@nnoa.org**



Lt. Gen. Coleman Promoted to Third Star

Makes Marine Corps history with recent promotion

By Lt. Col. Dawn Harrison

In May 2006, Ronald S. Coleman was frocked to the rank of major general. In September, only five months later, he was appointed to the rank of lieutenant general. Coleman is only the second African American to be appointed a lieutenant general in the United States Marine Corps. He began his military career in the United States Navy in 1968. Following a tour in Vietnam and his discharge in 1970, Coleman attended Cheney State University and was commissioned a second lieutenant in December 1974. He has held several supply, logistics, and command billets to include service on the Joint Staff.

As a general officer, Coleman has served as the commanding general, 2nd Force Service Support Group; deployed in support of Operation Iraqi Freedom as the commanding general, Special Purpose Marine Air Ground Task Force; deployed as the commanding general, Combined Joint Task Force Haiti in support of Operation Secure Democracy; and served as the director, Personnel Management Division, Manpower



Lt. Gen. Coleman receives a briefing from his aide-de-camp, Capt. Rhonda Martin. Photo by Sgt. Brian J. Griffin, USMC.

and Reserve Affairs. Coleman currently serves as the deputy commandant for Manpower and Reserve Affairs.

Hundreds of family, friends, and guests attended the October 27th promotion ceremony to include retired Marine Corps Lt. Gen. Frank Petersen, the first African American to attain the rank of lieutenant general in the Marine Corps. Petersen participated in the ceremony by pinning on Coleman's new stars. Also in atten-

dance were guests who have had an impact on Coleman's career. Coleman specifically made mention of the mentorship and guidance he received from retired Marine Corps Col. Gerald Turley who not only led him as a Marine but treated him like a son. Coleman also acknowledged the mentorship he

received from fellow NNOA member Maj. Gen. Walt Gaskin. He spoke of the first piece of advice Gaskin gave him- to shave his mustache. He then commented on the periodic calls he would receive from Gaskin stating, "Walt, you can still call me. You just have to call me 'sir.'"

The relationships Coleman has built over his years of service reflect one of the goals of NNOA - mentorship. He became a member of NNOA as a captain in 1982 after then Maj. Clifford Stanley and Capt. Doris Daniels encouraged him to join the organization. Stanley went on to attain the rank of major general prior to his retirement in 2003. Daniels went on to become the first African American female to attain the rank of lieutenant colonel in the Marine Corps.

Coleman credits his participation in NNOA as being a factor in his attaining his current rank.

"The association with fellow naval officers was as important as the mentorship," said Coleman. "It was the Marines and Sailors taking care of Marines and Sailors."



Lt. Gen. Ronald Coleman, deputy commandant for Manpower and Reserve Affairs, is pinned with his third star by his wife Jane, and his mentor, retired Lt. Gen. Frank Petersen during Coleman's promotion ceremony at The Clubs At Quantico. Coleman is the second black Marine to become a three-star general. Petersen was the first.

See Coleman page 6



Naval Officers Association Training Conference

The San Diego Chapter of NNOA in beautiful, sunny San Diego will host the 35th NNOA Conference. The conference chairman, retired Navy Capt. Don Flowers and the members of the San Diego Chapter have coordinated with Navy Region, Southwest to host the five-day conference at the Naval Amphibious Base Coronado. The conference dates are 16-20 July 2007.

The 2006 NNOA Conference at Quantico was a big success, with more than 300 participants, guests and associates. The conference chairperson and committee expect an event larger turnout for 2007 in San Diego and is planning an excellent venue which includes visits from each of the Sea Service Chiefs, Coast Guard, Marine Corps, and Navy, prominent



guest speakers, professional development seminars and sessions, and much, much more.

City of San Diego attractions include the world famous San Diego Zoo, Lego Land Park, Balboa Park, Coronado Island, Marine World, and of course the beautiful and majestic beaches and gaslight district of the San Diego.

The conference committee is busy

working with Service reps, retired reps, and the Executive Board on conference schedule and training programs. The committee and National President have plans to visit the facilities in February 2007 in preparation for the July conference. More detail information on conference cost, etc. will be located on the NNOA web page at <http://www.nnoa.org>

New NNOA Eastern Regions VP

Dear Eastern Region Membership,

Please allow me to introduce myself as your National Naval Officers Association Eastern Region Vice President, elected at the 34th Annual NNOA Conference at Quantico, Virginia. I am an eighteen-year Life Member of the NNOA. I served as the Public Affairs Officer from 1994 through 1995, was the first Golden Pen Award winning in 1989, and am presently the immediate past president of the San Francisco Bay Area Chapter.

As Eastern Region Vice President, I thank you for electing me to this prestigious post. I would also like to express my sincere appreciation for the outstanding affords of preceding national boards to restore the honor and respect of NNOA. Again we enjoy the creditability with the Sea Service Chiefs that enable NNOA to continue to aid with officer career development and professional growth.

I am poised to continue the



progress made by preceding national boards. I am available to help your chapters with membership, professional development, career counseling, and general administrative needs, and I will represent your organizational concerns to the national executive board.

I am enthusiastic of the direction our new president, Capt. Bernard Jackson, has set for NNOA. Taking his cue from Rear Adm. Manson Brown, immediate past president, Capt. Jackson's primary focus is on leadership and nurturing of junior and orga-

nizational discipline, focusing on the principles, procedures, and processes contained in our Articles of Incorporation, Bylaws and the Chapter Operations Manual.

Furthermore, Capt. Jackson wants to establish a means to be able to better illustrate the Association's effectiveness to the Sea Services, addressing attrition, accession, retention, and professional development. I strongly believe these goals are attainable and fully support Capt. Jackson's vision, and encourage each member to do likewise. Through his leadership and with your assistance, I believe NNOA will continue to enjoy its outstanding reputation as the premier Sea Service professional development organization with the leadership of the United States Marine Corps, United States Navy, and the United States Coast Guard.

Sincerely,

**Commander Adolph Keyes
Eastern Regional Vice President
National Naval Officers Association**

Okinawa Chapter Re-established

By Maj. Chester McMillon

In early September 2006, two officers put out a call to reestablish the previously dormant Okinawa Chapter of the NNOA. Cmdr Derek Ross, Far East Regional vice president, and Navy Lt. Tiffany Scott put together information packets and sent out an invitation to various officers across the island. Approximate 20 officers attended the initial meeting and immediately took steps to elect a chapter executive board. Two weeks later a board was in place.

Those elected to serve were: Marine Corps Maj. Chester McMillon as chapter president, Navy Chief Warrant Officer Tikishia Smiley as vice president, Marine Corps Capt. Steven Andrews as treasurer, Marine Corps Capt. Tharpe as master-at-Arms, and Navy Lt. Winston Paulk as chaplain. Since the initial election of the chapter executive board, others have volunteered to serve to include Marine Corps Maj. Craig Grant as membership director, Marine Corps Capt. Tony Scoffield as public affairs officer and Marine Corps 2nd Lt. Reginald Sealey as the webmaster.

Building a solid membership base and providing that membership professional development, mentorship, and fellowship is the primary focus of this year's Okinawa Chapter's executive board. Due to the geographic isolation of the island, the chapter has sought to open its membership to Army and Air Force officers to allow greater opportunities for development and networking.

While operational commitments, to include individual and unit augments in support of Operation Iraqi Freedom and training exercises continue, the chapter has seen solid turn out for meetings and functions. In the past few months, the chapter has held a membership holiday social and participated in several volunteer events to include the Island's Department of Defense Schools' Consolidated College Night and the Thanksgiving

dinner for Single Marines and Sailors.

Upcoming events include a Black History Month Prayer Breakfast on February 9, 2007, an art auction to raise money for the chapter's scholarship fund, a senior leader's panel, and the award of a scholarship to a college-bound high school senior in 2007.

The dedicated service of two officers was the impetus of getting the chapter back on the NNOA map. The members of the chapter are serving proudly and will ensure that the Okinawa Chapter is one the brightest stars on that map for years to come.

Coleman from page 4

Coleman went on to say NNOA provided a venue for frank conversation up and down the chain of command.

"NNOA facilitated Marines sitting down and talking to you, telling you the way it is," Coleman added. He recalls that Maj. Gen. Stanley was the first person to give him the advice to "bloom where planted" and "seek the hardest jobs."

When asked to comment on those officers who shy away from participating in events like the Bayou Classic and the CIAA tournament because they don't want to be singled out, Coleman responded that this mindset is the exact opposite of the way officers should feel.

"It is important that the youth see our officers, said Coleman, "It is more important that they see junior officers."

Coleman continued, "It is the responsibility of every officer to be a recruiter. It is our responsibility to increase our numbers."

Coleman expressed his gratitude for NNOA, but acknowledged that it is the involvement of its membership that will ensure its success

"NNOA is a great organization, but it is only as great as we make it."



Mess Night at Camp Lejeune

The Camp Lejeune / Cherry Point chapter of the National Naval Officers Association will be hosting a Mess Night on Saturday 10 February 2007 at 1800 at the Officers Club aboard Marine Corps Base Camp Lejeune. Guest of Honor is Lieutenant General Ronald Coleman, Deputy Commandant for Manpower and Reserve Affairs.

Military and civilian guests are cordially invited.

Ticket prices are \$50 for O-4 and above; \$40 for O-3 and below, and civilians.

Attire:

Field Grade Officers:

Evening dress "B", dinner dress blue Jacket

Company Grade Officers:

Blue dress "A"

Dinner dress blue

Civilians: Black tie

All proceeds go to the Camp Lejeune NNOA Scholarship Fund

To reserve a seat, please make checks payable to "Camp Lejeune NNOA Chapter," and send to:

National Naval Officers Association
PO Box 8683
Camp Lejeune NC 28547-8683

Please enclose the names and ranks of all guests and an email address if receipt confirmation is requested. For more information, contact L. Elizabeth Thomas at email Elizabeth.Thomas@med.navy.mil or 1st. Lt. Shana Wright at email Shana.wright@usmc.mil

Sea Service Pioneer:

Captain Bobby C. Wilks
United States Coast Guard

Bobby Charles Wilks, born in St. Louis, Mo., attended Charles Summer High School and received his bachelors degree in 1954 from Stowe Teachers College. He was very active in college, finishing his senior year as president of the class, the choir, and Alpha Eta Chapter of Alpha Phi Alpha, as well as captain of the track team. He received his masters degree in Education Administration from the University of St. Louis in 1955.

He began his Coast Guard career with his enlistment in the Reserve on October 10, 1955. Immediately following his enlistment, he was ordered to Officer Candidate School at the Coast Guard Academy in New London, Ct. After graduating, he received an Ensign commission in the Reserve on February 24, 1956. His first officer assignment was at the Coast Guard Group Office at Baltimore, Md.

In March 1956, he was assigned as flight student at the Naval Air Basic Training Command, Pensacola, Fl., and later at Naval Air Station Corpus Christi, Texas where he graduated and was designated Coast Guard Aviator No. 735 on March 25, 1957. Ensign Wilks reported in August for his first tour of duty as an aviator at Coast Guard Air Station, San Francisco, Ca., and soon thereafter was promoted to Lieutenant Junior Grade. Between search and rescue



Flight student



Capt. Bobby Charles Wilks

flights from that station, he was temporarily assigned to four months of helicopter training at Pensacola, earning the designation of Coast Guard helicopter pilot no. 343 on September 16, 1959.

In July 1960, he was assigned to the Coast Guard Air Detachment at Sangley Point, R.P., where in addition to piloting aircraft on search and rescue and logistics flights he served as Head of the Administrative Section for the Commander, Philippine Section and the Air Detachment.

From September 1961 to March 1962, he was stated at Coast Guard Headquarters, Washington, D.C., as Assistant Cadet Procurement Officer during which he traveled throughout the United States to inform young black men of the opportunities in competitive examinations for cadet appointments to the Coast Guard Academy.

He served his next tour of duty as Aviator and Senior Operations Officer at the Coast Guard Air Station, Floyd Bennett Field, Brooklyn, N.Y., for three years. While there, he was assigned temporarily during the summer of 1963 to the Coast Guard Air Station Miami, Fl., where he carried out many rescue missions. These ranged from landing an HU16E amphibian "Albatross" plane in the ocean off Cay Sal Banks to rescue an injured man from the USS MILLS, to piloting a helicopter, hoisting to safety three men trapped in the Everglades, as well as patrolling off the

Florida coast on the lookout for Cuban refugees, many of which he assisted in their rescue efforts.

CAPT Wilks was selected for flight safety training, attending the specialized course taught at the University of Southern California. After completing this training he was reassigned to Floyd Bennett Field as the Flight Safety Officer.

From March 1965 to July 1968, he served as Executive Officer of the Coast Guard Air Station at Naples, Italy, where his duties included logistics flights in support of a chain of Coast Guard Loran Transmitting Stations covering the Mediterranean. He flew extensively throughout the Mediterranean and Europe.

During the following two years, he served as Operations Officer at the Coast Guard Air Station Salem, Massachusetts. While at Salem, CAPT Wilks received the Federal Aviation Administration's special "We Point With Pride" plaque award (February 19, 1970) for rescuing civilian student pilot Richard Wharton of Coventry, Rhode Island, who became lost over the Atlantic during a night flight from Providence to Tauton, Massachusetts, on October 8, 1969. Using a helicopter, CAPT Wilks guided the lost flyer to the shore and safe landing. The student pilot landed with only five minutes of fuel remaining.

Continued page 8



Helicopter pilot

Wilks from page 7

In September 1970, he reported at Coast Guard Air Station Barbers Point, Hawaii, for duty as Chief of Operations as well as Aviator. While there, he won "The Air Medal" for meritorious achievement while acting as aircraft commander of an HH-52A helicopter that executed a perilous medco evacuation of a heart attack stricken master of a Russian vessel, 116 miles east of Hilo, Hawaii, in gale force winds and seas on the night of December 9, 1971.

Wilks was next stationed on Governors Island, New York; where he first served as Executive Officer of the largest Coast Guard shore unit, Coast Guard Base, from September 1973 to July 1975, and then as Chief,



Search and rescue

Search and Rescue Branch in the Third Coast Guard District office for the next two years.

In July 1977, he returned to Hawaii to assume duty as Chief, Boating Safety Division at the Fourteenth Coast Guard District in Honolulu.

After a two-year tour, he once again returned to New York as the Commanding Officer of Brooklyn Air Station.

On September 1, 1977, Commander Bobby Wilks was promoted to Captain, becoming the first African American to achieve this rank in the Coast Guard. Capt. Wilks has accumulated over 5000 flight hours (2000 in helicopters). He has qualified in single- and multi-engine airplanes as well as single- and multi-engine helicopters, and held a commercial pilot's license. Capt. Wilks retired from the Coast Guard on July 1, 1986 and has since resided in Fairfax, Virginia.

Subject: Tomorrow NNOA National Chaplain

READ THIS. LET IT REALLY SINK IN. THEN CHOOSE HOW YOU START YOUR NEW YEAR 2007.

Michael is the kind of guy you love to hate. He is always in a good mood and always has something positive to say: When someone would ask him how he was doing, he would reply, "if I were any better, I would be twins!"

He was a natural motivator. If an employee was having a bad day, Michael was there telling the employee how to look on the positive side of the situation. Seeing this style really made me curious, so one day I went up to Michael and asked him, "I don't get it! You can't be a positive person all of the time. How do you do it?" Michael replied, "Each morning I wake up and say to myself, you have two choices today. You can choose to be in a good mood or you can choose to be in a bad mood. I choose to be in a good mood. Each time something bad happens, I can choose to be a victim or I can choose to learn from it. I choose to learn from it.

Every time someone comes to me complaining, I can choose to accept their complaining or I can point out the positive side of life. I choose the

positive side of life. "Yeah, right, it's not that easy," I protested. "Yes, it is," Michael said. "Life is all about choices. When you cut away all the junk, every situation is a choice. You choose how you react to situations. You choose how people affect your mood. You choose to be in a good mood or bad mood. The bottom line: It's your choice how you live life."

I reflected on what Michael said. Soon thereafter, I left the Towe Industry to start my own business. We lost touch, but I often thought about him when I made a choice about life instead of reacting to it. Several years later, I heard that Michael was involved in a serious accident, falling some 60 feet from a communications tower. After 18 hours of surgery and weeks of intensive care, Michael was released from the hospital with rods placed in his back. I saw Michael about six months after the accident. When I asked him how he was, he replied. "If I were any better, I'd be twins. Wanna see my scars?"

I declined to see his wounds, but did ask him what had gone through his mind as the accident took place. "The first thing that went through my mind was the well-being of my soon to be born daughter," Michael replied. "Then, as I lay on the ground, I remembered that I had two choices: I could choose to live or I

could choose to die. I chose to live." "Weren't you scared? Did you lose consciousness?" I asked. Michael continued, "...the paramedics were great. They kept telling me I was going to be fine. But when they wheeled me into the ER and I saw the expressions on the faces of the doctors and nurses, I got really scared. In their eyes, I read 'he's a dead man.' I knew I needed to take action."

What did you do?" I asked. "Well there was a big burly nurse shouting questions at me," said Michael. "She asked if I was allergic to anything. "Yes, I replied." The doctors and nurses stopped working as they waited for my reply. I took a deep breath and yelled, "Gravity." Over their laughter, I told them, "I am choosing to live. Operate on me as if I am alive, not dead." Michael lived, thanks to the skill of his doctors, but also because of his amazing attitude. I learned from him that every day we have the choice to live fully. Attitude, after all, is everything.

"Therefore do not worry about tomorrow, for tomorrow will worry about itself. "Each day has enough trouble of its own." Matthew 6:34.

After all today is the tomorrow you worried about yesterday.

Lt. Carl Barnes
email:chaplain@nnoa.org