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Community of Christ

# The Peacekeepers



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Association for Ministry to Military Newsletter

December, 2005

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## Curt's Column

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Time is passing rapidly for Joyce and me. It seems like we just arrived in Arizona for the winter and it is already time for the December newsletter. Well, not quite. At this writing it is just a few days before Thanksgiving but I want to get this in Mary's hands so she has plenty of time to get it done and ready for mailing.

In this newsletter most of you on active duty will be getting a postcard along with the newsletter asking that you bring us up to date on your status. We are interested in any promotions that you might have had and your current station, also anything else you can tell us about you. I know there have been many experiences that have taken place with each of you. Let us know about them so we can share it with the rest of the group.

At this time of year I'm especially appreciative of your efforts throughout the world. I know that you are away from your loved ones and surroundings that are joyous. I also know that the media focuses on the bad aspects of what is going on rather than all the good that you are doing and most of us here at home hear only what the media believes will sell.

It is my firm belief that the good news is far more acceptable than all the rotten stuff that seems to come out. Every now and then we hear from someone who takes the time to tell what good they are doing. That's what we would like to hear as well.

The season we are now entering reminds us of the fact that many years ago a great event took place—the birth of Christ. We celebrate that event at Christmas time and not just a winter holiday. We need to remember the reason for the season. As for me personally I am very appreciative of the God that saw fit to give us a model that we can follow to achieve a chance to be with Him after we leave this planet. It is not possible for me to understand the events that took place at the time of Jesus. Sure historians have told us of what was going on but to actually understand the situation is beyond my comprehension because I have never been placed in a situation such as existed.

I long for each one of you to have a good experience wherever you are and at the end of the conflict you will



be able to return home and earn the accolades of a job well done. Each one of us who are not at the active duty state pray for your safe return and hope that you in one way or another can witness of Jesus Christ our Lord. May He keep you from harms way and have a good Christmas season.

I have to apologize to Mim Cory. In the last newsletter I said that I would write the obituary of Del Cory. Del was a very staunch supporter of our efforts with the peacekeepers. He was a graduate of Annapolis and served for some time in the Navy before he became a chaplain. The last few years of his life he had to have a motorized vehicle to get around but even with this disability he spent a great deal of time at the association's booth. Please accept my apologies Mim.

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## “Extra hours in proper perspective” By Tim "K9" Kunzweiler

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September 2005 was, as they say, a “rush!” On Sept 1st I was called into the Air Force Materiel Command (AFMC) Crisis Action Team (CAT) to provide support for hurricane rescue and recovery activities. No one really knew what the scope of AFMC's involvement would be on that date. Let's just say that I remained “pretty busy” right through the last day of September. It wasn't just to address one hurricane either. First there was Katrina, then there was Ophelia, then there was Rita...and the season's not over. The good news: It's 3 October and I was able to spend the day back at my regular desk, addressing my regular job, and addressing the “regular” deluge of e-mails that arrived in my inbox while I was otherwise occupied.

When I signed back on with the Air Force as a civilian I might've fantasized that any days of dealing with “crisis and contingency” were behind me. After all, I was no longer wearing “the bag” (flight suit) and was not even in a deploying billet. (You may recall that I am otherwise involved with readiness exercises for AFMC. In the big picture, the exercise world practices so that when real emergencies hit the military is prepared to act and respond).

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**The Community of Christ Association for Ministry to Military Personnel  
is dedicated to bringing ministry to military members on active duty throughout the world.**

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Flash: It's 2005 and there are few (if any) personnel in the US military that don't get involved in some way when real emergencies hit. A civilian exercise POC with a Command and Control background can certainly expect to have a service to perform in times of need and the call doesn't involve the word "practice." No news to anyone: this was no exercise.

Well, days in the CAT dragged into weeks and I have to admit that I caught myself thinking more than once that I'd put in some long and frustrating hours. However, since we monitored some of the news channels when we were not otherwise engaged in preparing briefings or working short-notice coordinations for rescue or recovery support, reality checks came frequently.

In the month of September in the 2005 hurricane season MANY real people have gotten killed. MANY real people lost homes and property and loved ones. MANY real people were impacted and will remain impacted for months—if not for years to come. Some of these are people I know personally – Community of Christ members.



This Elder needed to do some self-reminding about the "Big Picture" whenever he felt a little "taxed." Some of the comparisons that helped me grasp that I had nothing whatsoever to complain about:

- \* 14 hour days in the CAT (vs.) two weeks in an attic
- \* Missed lunch (vs.) no clean water or food at all
- \* Couldn't do my regular job (vs.) place of employment wiped out; no prospects for its return
- \* Getting up at 4:45 AM (vs.) not able to sleep at all because of the need to fend off thieves
- \* Only getting to see the family for a couple hours a day (vs.) seeing your family being swept away by flood waters

Those realizations humbled me significantly and put my few "extra hours" in a more proper perspective. It doesn't matter whether I'm on duty or not.

I am called to be the Body of Christ in my focus. The reminder: I have nothing to complain about and need to be focused on how a part of my call is to do anything that I can to minimize the suffering of another brother or sister in Christ. This past Sunday's theme was "Press On" and we were reminded of the need to continue in our walk with the Lord. Our reaching out to others in need may be a crucial aspect of their being able to take their next steps toward "pressing on."

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## The Gingham Dress Story By Malcolm Forbes

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A lady in a faded gingham dress and her husband, dressed in a homespun threadbare suit, stepped off the train in Boston, and walked timidly without an appointment into the Harvard University President's outer office.

The secretary could tell in a moment that such backwoods, country hicks had no business at Harvard & probably didn't even deserve to be in Cambridge. We'd like to see the president," the man said softly. "He'll be busy all day," the secretary snapped. "We'll wait," the lady replied. For hours the secretary ignored them, hoping that the couple would finally become discouraged and go away. They didn't, and the secretary grew frustrated and finally decided to disturb the president, even though it was a chore she always dreaded.

"Maybe if you see them for a few minutes, they'll leave," she said to him. He sighed in exasperation and nodded. Someone of his importance obviously didn't have the time to spend with them, and he detested gingham dresses and homespun suits cluttering up his outer office. The president, stern faced and with dignity, strutted toward the couple.

The lady told him, "We had a son who attended Harvard for one year. He loved Harvard. He was happy here. But, a little over a year ago, he was accidentally killed. My husband and I would like to erect a memorial to him, somewhere on campus."

The president wasn't touched. He was shocked. "Madam," he said, gruffly, "we can't put up a statue for every person who attended Harvard and died. If we did that, this place would look like a cemetery."

"Oh, no," the lady explained quickly. "We don't want to erect a statue. We thought we would like to give a building to Harvard."

The president rolled his eyes. He glanced at the gingham dress and homespun suit, and then exclaimed, "A building! Do you have any earthly idea how much a building costs? We have over seven and a half million dollars in the physical buildings here at Harvard."

For a moment the lady was silent. The president was pleased. Maybe he could get rid of them now.

The lady turned to her husband and said quietly, "Is that all it costs to start a university? Why don't we just start our own?" Her husband nodded.

The president's face wilted in confusion and bewilderment. Mr. and Mrs. Leland Stanford got up and walked away, traveling to Palo Alto, California where they established the university that bears their name, Stanford University, a memorial to a son that Harvard no longer cared about.

You can easily judge the character of others by how they treat those who they think can do nothing for them.



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## Jesus Loves Me by Jerry Seiden

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Right before the jetway door closed, I scrambled aboard the plane going from LA to Chicago, lugging my laptop and overstuffed briefcase. It was the first leg of an important business trip a few weeks before Christmas, and I was running late. I had a ton of work to catch up

on. Half wishing, half praying I muttered, "Please God, do me a favor; let there be an empty seat next to mine, I don't need any distractions."

I was on the aisle in a two seat row. Across sat a businesswoman with her nose buried in a newspaper. No problem. But in the seat beside mine, next to the window, was a young boy wearing a big red tag around his neck: Minor Traveling Unattended.

The kid sat perfectly still, hands in his lap, eyes straight ahead. He'd probably been told never to talk to strangers. Good, I thought.

Then the flight attendant came by. "Michael, I have to sit down because we're about to take off," she said to the little boy. "This nice man will answer any of your questions, okay?"

Did I have a choice? I offered my hand, and Michael shook it twice, straight up and down.

"Hi, I'm Jerry," I said. "You must be about seven years old."

"I'll bet you don't have any kids," he responded.

"Why do you think that? Sure I do." I took out my wallet to show him pictures.

"Because I'm six."

"I was way off, huh?"

The captains' voice came over the speakers, "Flight attendants, prepare for takeoff."

Michael pulled his seat belt tighter and gripped the armrests as the jet engines roared.

I leaned over, "Right about now, I usually say a prayer. I asked God to keep the plane safe and to send angels to protect us."

"Amen," he said, then added, "but I'm not afraid of dying. I'm not afraid because my mama's already in Heaven."

"I'm sorry." I said.

"Why are you sorry?" he asked, peering out the window as the plane lifted off.

"I'm sorry you don't have your mama here."

My briefcase jostled at my feet, reminding me of all the work I needed to do.

"Look at those boats down there!" Michael said as the plane banked over the Pacific. "Where are they going?"

"Just going sailing, having a good time. And there's probably a fishing boat full of guys like you and me."

"Doing what?" he asked.

"Just fishing, maybe for bass or tuna. Does your dad ever take you fishing?"

"I don't have a dad," Michael sadly responded.

Only six years old and he didn't have a dad, and his Mom had died, and here he was flying halfway across

the country all by himself. The least I could do was make sure he had a good flight. With my foot I pushed my briefcase under my seat.

"Do they have a bathroom here?" he asked, squirming a little.

"Sure," I said, "let me take you there."

I showed him how to work the "Occupied" sign, and what buttons to push on the sink, then he closed the door. When he emerged, he wore a wet shirt and a huge smile

"That sink shoots water everywhere!"

The attendants smiled.

Michael got the VIP treatment from the crew during snack time. I took out my laptop and tried to work on a talk I had to give, but my mind kept going to Michael. I couldn't stop looking at the crumpled grocery bag on the floor by his seat. He'd told me that everything he owned was in that bag. Poor kid.

While Michael was getting a tour of the cockpit the flight attendant told me his grandmother would pick him up in Chicago. In the seat pocket a large manila envelope held all the paperwork regarding his custody. He came back explaining, "I got wings! I got cards! I got more peanuts. I saw the pilot and he said I could come back anytime!"

For a while he stared at the manila envelope.

"What are you thinking?" I asked Michael.

He didn't answer. He buried his face in his hands and started sobbing. It had been years since I'd heard a little one cry like that. My kids were grown -- still I don't think they'd ever cried so hard. I rubbed his back and wondered where the flight attendant was.

"What's the matter buddy?" I asked.

All I got were muffled words "I don't know my grandma. Mama didn't want her to come visit and see her sick. What if Grandma doesn't want me? Where will I go?"

"Michael, do you remember the Christmas story? Mary and Joseph and the baby Jesus? Remember how they came to Bethlehem just before Jesus was born? It was late and cold, and they didn't have anywhere to stay, no family, no hotels, not even hospitals where babies could be born. Well, God was watching out for them. He found them a place to stay; a stable with animals."

"Wait, wait," Michael tugged on my sleeve. "I know Jesus. I remember now." Then he closed his eyes, lifted his head and began to sing. His voice rang out with a strength that rocked his tiny frame. "Jeeesus looooves me--thiiiiis I knowwwwwww. For the Biiiiible tells meeeeeee soooooo...."

Passengers turned or stood up to see the little boy who made the large sound. Michael didn't notice his au-



dience. With his eyes shut tight and voice lifted high, he was in a good place.

"You've got a great voice," I told him when he was done. "I've never heard anyone sing like that."

"Mama said God gave me good pipes just like my grandma's," he said. "My grandma loves to sing, she sings in her church choir."

"Well, I'll bet you can sing there, too. The two of you will be running that choir."

The seat belt sign came on as we approached O'Hare. The flight attendant came by and said we just have a few minutes now, but she told Michael it's important that he put on his seat belt. People started stirring in their seats, like the kids before the final school bell. By the time the seat belt sign went off, passengers were rushing down the aisle. Michael and I stayed seated.

"Are you gonna go with me?" he asked.

"I wouldn't miss it for the world buddy!" I assured him.

Clutching his bag and the manila envelope in one hand, he grabbed my hand with the other. The two of us followed the flight attendant down the jetway. All the noises of the airport seemed to fill the corridor.

Michael stopped, flipping his hand from mine, he dropped to his knees. His mouth quivered. His eyes brimmed with tears.

"What's wrong Michael? I'll carry you if you want."

He opened his mouth and moved his lips, but it was as if his words were stuck in his throat. When I knelt next to him, he grabbed my neck. I felt his warm, wet face as he whispered in my ear, "I want my mama!"

I tried to stand, but Michael squeezed my neck even harder. Then I heard a rattle of footsteps on the corridor's metal floor.

"Is that you, baby?"

I couldn't see the woman behind me, but I heard the warmth in her voice.

"Oh baby," she cried. "Come here. Grandma loves you so much. I need a hug, baby. Let go of that nice man." She knelt beside Michael and me.

Michael's grandma stroked his arm. I smelled a hint of orange blossoms.

"You've got folks waiting for you out there, Michael. Do you know that you've got aunts, and uncles and cousins?"

She patted his skinny shoulders and started humming. Then she lifted her head and sang. I wondered if the flight attendant told her what to sing, or maybe she just knew what was right. Her strong, clear voice filled the passageway, "Jesus loves me -- this I know..."

Michael's gasps quieted. Still holding him, I rose, nodded hello to his grandma and watched her pick up the grocery bag. Right before we got to the doorway to

the terminal, Michael loosened his grip around my neck and reached for his grandma.

As soon as she walked across the threshold with him, cheers erupted. From the size of the crowd, I figured family, friends, pastors, elders, deacons, choir members and most of the neighbors had come to meet Michael. A tall man tugged on Michael's ear and pulled off the red sign around his neck. It no longer applied.

As I made my way to the gate for my connecting flight, I barely noticed the weight of my overstuffed briefcase and laptop. I started to wonder who would be in the seat next to mine this time...And I smiled.

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## The Miracle by Bill Richer

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A man now, he narrated this story, as he was a boy at the time in 1944. The Battle of the Bulge was at its height. A German cook who was with the German Army there had left his wife and the above-mentioned little boy in a shack way in the woods seemingly far from harm's way.



It was December 24<sup>th</sup>, Christmas Eve and it was a very cold night. Many soldiers on both sides became lost from their units and were looking for a place to stay. Three American soldiers were lost around the area where the shack was. They saw the light from the shack and the smoke from the chimney. They saw their chance to warm up. They knocked at the door and asked if they could come in. The German Lady had a small chicken cooking for them but invited the Americans to warm up and for the Christmas meal. One of the American Soldiers was wounded and the lady tried to make him comfortable. There was a language barrier for a time till one of the soldiers found out the lady could speak French as well as German! So everything was going well and the Americans were feeling right at home!

Then suddenly there was a knock at the door. The American's went for their guns. The Lady went to the door and answered it. There were four German Soldiers who were lost from their unit and they asked the lady for shelter. The lady answered them with this, "Yes, you can come in for Christmas dinner but I have other guests." One German soldier remarked, "Americana." She said, "yes and this was Christmas and there would be no killing on this night." She also told the Germans that would have to lay down their weapons while they came in. She instructed the Americans to do the same!

There they were all in the room together, soldiers who a little while ago were bent on killing each other, now, they were in a room together with no weapons!

Everyone could feel the tension in the air. It was so quiet for about ten minutes. Then one American offered the Germans a cigarette. They obliged! One of the Germans who had medical training asked about the wounded American and made him as comfortable as he could. Suddenly, Christmas dinner was ready and before they ate the lady told them the beauty of

Christmas day and what it all meant. (Of course she spoke in both German and French.)

All the soldiers have tears in their eyes, even the tough German Sergeant. So with that they ate and from an uneasy friendship was built a genuine friendship in Christ that night. Later on the soldiers all sang Silent Night in their own native tongues.

So later on the former enemies all went to sleep under the dame roof. In the morning the Germans built a stretcher for the wounded American and even gave the directions to the Americans on how to get back to their lines. The Germans took the lady and her son back to the German lines, to her husband. So, for one night in a great battle, Christ's peace was in the hearts of these nine people.



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## Bridge by Steve McCrosson

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It was soon to be a sunless morning. The fog was thick around me as I sat in my truck at the gate of a bridge over a wide river, hoping to cross. It was a lonely wait. Only one vehicle was allowed to cross at a time, so I found myself daydreaming about the family Christmas I was about to miss.

It was becoming fairly routine. I was a maintenance warrant officer assigned to the 2<sup>nd</sup> ID in Korea. I operated the communication maintenance shop, and the radar sites along the DMZ were my responsibility. This morning I was returning from a maintenance visit to one of those sites.

My home base was only about twenty minutes from where I was sitting, but it had already taken four hours to cover the first five miles. I was prepared with a carton of cigarettes, even though I didn't smoke. It only took a half hour or so to get to these sites, but with a checkpoint every mile, coming back would take hours. The cigarettes at least got the attention of the Korean guards, and even though they would disappear to "check my pass," I would always get the same guard back if I had cigarettes. This way I wouldn't have to explain why I was

driving in this zone more than once per checkpoint. Nonetheless, it would take hours to move that first five miles.

Now here I was, looking at this foreboding bridge. There had been two bridges at one time, each with one way traffic, but now there was only one. The other bridge had been blown up by mistake by someone with an itchy finger. At least I had been told it was a mistake. This bridge, and a little space of land, separated North Korea from South Korea, and there we were, service members, right in the middle, trying to keep the peace, and this bridge was the only way to get across the river. It always made me feel nervous not knowing whose finger was hovering over that button on this bridge.

Here I was, thousands of miles from my family, just like hundreds of thousands of other service members. And we were all going to miss Christmas with our families. At least this morning I wasn't lying on the dirt somewhere, and at least the truck was warm.

Headlights had come up behind me. I strained my eyes, looking in the rearview mirror, trying to figure out who it might be. It was a Jeep. Someone had gotten out and was walking my way.

I jumped in my seat as this person tapped on my widow. It was a chaplain, "the service member's visible reminder of the All Mighty." He must have also been visiting our service members on the DMZ.

I rolled down the window and smiled. I don't remember his name, but I remember the words: "How ya doin' Chief?" This was an interesting question considering the time and place. "Fine, it's been a long night," I said. "Yes," he said, "stay safe, my prayers are with you. It looks like it's your turn to cross. Merry Christmas." And he was gone, returning to his Jeep.

I was reminded by his gesture and those few words that I wasn't alone, and my fellow service members were included in those sentiments.

*Merry Christmas and Happy New Year.*

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