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# For God & Country

*A Journal for Seventh-day  
Adventists in Military and  
Public Service*





# WHEN HEAVENS FALL

By Dr. Mario E. Ceballos, Director/Endorser

World Service Organization, General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists

**I**n the world, you will have tribulation”<sup>1</sup>

Seventh-day Adventists worldwide serve their nations as guardians of law and order. These groups include law enforcement officers and military personnel. Others wear the uniform of “angels” coming to the rescue of civilians, and include firefighters and first responders. Some individuals wear the uniform of prison guards. Each of these public servants are exposed to traumatic events during the course of their work.<sup>2</sup>

I vividly remember the first time I

attended a funeral. I was a child and the funeral was for another child who was the victim of a car accident. For many months after the funeral I woke up nightly with nightmares. Often in my dreams I stood in the funeral home looking at the pale face of the young boy in the casket.

With time, I learned how to cope with the dreams until they faded. Since then I have attended many other funerals. I witnessed the death of one of my brothers, my grandparents, and my father. I have ministered to several dying patients. After more than fifty

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For as long as we live on this earth, we will face tribulation. Many of you are called to pick up the pieces as officers and first responders etc.

years, even today, the image of that boy lying in his little casket is still very vivid in my mind.

Regardless of your branch of service, you will be exposed to people in great distress, suffering, pain, and even death. This exposure will affect you in unimaginable ways. There are many terms to describe the consequences of traumatic events that affect our minds, souls, and body. One of those terms is Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD).<sup>3</sup>

John P. Wilson, Ph.D., is one of the research pioneers in the subject of PTSD.<sup>4</sup> “The Forgotten Warrior,” his 1976 project, was one of the first formal studies of returning Vietnam veterans, before PTSD was identified as a psychiatric diagnosis.

PTSD is not new. In other wars, it has been called “shell shock.”<sup>5</sup> The disorder affects primarily military in combat, police,<sup>6</sup> firefighting personnel<sup>7</sup> and rescue personnel<sup>8</sup> when exposed to multiple casualties of people of all ages, of auto and plane accidents, fires, etc.

Traumatic events cause mental “scars”<sup>9</sup> that must be treated to avoid causing permanent damage affecting moods and creating disorders that can lead to death and suicide. Lives are changed in an instant. Husbands and wives become widowers. Children become orphans. Parents

bury their children. These moments are when their “heavens fall.” For as long as we live on this earth,<sup>10</sup> we will face tribulation. Many of you are called to pick up the pieces as officers and first responders etc. It is of paramount importance for you to become familiar with PTSD, to learn tools and skills when called to serve persons affected by this traumatic event during your responsibilities.

I hope that the articles in our magazine not only will inform you and prepare you to help others, but they will also stimulate your desire to learn more about PTSD and its consequences on you.

<sup>1</sup>John. 16:33

<sup>2</sup><https://www.ptsd.va.gov/public/ptsd-overview/basics/what-is-ptsd.asp>

<sup>3</sup>[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Posttraumatic\\_stress\\_disorder](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Posttraumatic_stress_disorder)

<sup>4</sup><http://www.istss.org/education-research/traumatic-stresspoints/october-2015/life%E2%80%99s-work-of-john-p-wilson-an-overview.aspx>

<sup>5</sup>[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Shell\\_shock](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Shell_shock)

<sup>6</sup><http://lawofficer.com/special-topics/suicide/police-officers-face-cumulative-ptsd/>

<sup>7</sup><https://grievingbehindthebadgeblog.net/2014/06/24/firefighters-at-risk-sweeney/>

<sup>8</sup>[http://www.traumacenter.org/resources/pdf\\_files/First\\_Responders.pdf](http://www.traumacenter.org/resources/pdf_files/First_Responders.pdf)

<sup>9</sup><http://www.officer.com/article/11544474/ptsd-and-cops>

<sup>10</sup> John. 16:33



By Captain John Michael Hakanson,  
CHC (Chaplain) United States Navy



# PTSD AND HOW YOUR CHAPLAIN CAN HELP

**H**ave you ever asked yourself the questions, “I wonder if I have PTSD? If so, who should I seek help from to find out?”

Today, the United States military and coalition forces in Afghanistan are about one-tenth of what they were just a few years ago. Currently, our role is primarily one of training other nations to combat terror rather than engaging in direct, intentional conflict. I remember just a few years ago when combat-related stress injury was all too familiar.

The fact that we do not hear about Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) as regularly does not mean that people are not suffering from PTSD. Many individuals suffer in silence, for various reasons. Perhaps they do not want to admit they have a problem. Or, they do not want a documented medical issue that could derail their career. Others simply do not know where to turn and who can help them.

The truth is, if you do have this disorder, or you know a friend or loved one who does, they may not



get better without help. Without professional care, many lose their careers and their relationships. Some have thought about ending their lives. Sadly, others saw this as the only solution to their pain.

A chaplain is a great place to start if you think you might be dealing with PTSD. Typically, chaplains do not have the required certification to diagnose, but they can usually tell if you are having a problem that needs referral. Chaplains are the perfect individuals for an Adventist Christian to have on their team, to help walk through the process of resolution. If chaplains are not specialists who can “cure” it, why do they know about PTSD?

Here are five reasons that the chaplain, whether military, health care, campus, or law enforcement,

or family member die, sexual assault/rape, witnessing a major catastrophic event, or the aftermath or suffering caused by an event.

Often there does not need to be a real danger, just the potential for death, significant injury, or fear.<sup>1</sup>

When I served as a law enforcement chaplain, I provided ministry to Jane.\* Years before I met Jane, she had attended a party where she became the victim of a prank. After passing out at the party, Jane woke up alone on an autopsy table, locked in a morgue. A real-looking, but fake, corpse covered with a sheet lay on the table beside Jane. Traumatized by the event, Jane developed severe PTSD, to the point that she couldn't sleep through the night without intrusive dreams and other symptoms.

## THE FACT THAT WE DO NOT HEAR ABOUT PTSD AS REGULARLY DOES NOT MEAN THAT PEOPLE ARE NOT SUFFERING FROM PTSD.

understands PTSD and will stand ready to be a part of a comprehensive team to assist with your post-traumatic stress recovery.

### PTSD TRAUMA TRIGGERS

Combat-related stress injury is only one way someone can develop PTSD. Although the effect of combat on military service members may be the reason so much research has gone into PTSD recovery, any traumatic event can trigger PTSD. Some notable examples include watching a friend

### SUPPORT THROUGH COMMUNITY

Chaplains are confidential members of the community you find yourself in, regardless of their denominational affiliation. In military communities, chaplains have confidentiality far beyond any other helping professional. So, you have not risked anything if you are worried that your commander might find out that you are seeking help.

The chaplain may walk alongside military, police, or campus students, but wherever you find them, they

are there to serve all. We have the unique ability to enter into the world of the traumatized person as “one who understands” the community. Chaplains wear the uniforms, learn the languages, are part of the community, and know more than an “outsider” what it is like to live and work in our unique vocations.

### PRE-WIRED BRAINS

Research indicates that the brain seems to be pre-wired to utilize spirituality to bring hope and healing, and that is what we do!

Humans are indeed fearfully and wonderfully made. The brain responds in amazing ways when spiritual concepts are considered. Going way back, we have known that no one has ever accessed a larger amount of grey matter than Buddhist monks, who were contemplating “Unmerited Grace.”<sup>2</sup>

Most recently, University of Utah researchers monitored specific regions of the brain being accessed by young Mormon students when contemplating their “Spiritual reward.”<sup>3</sup> Those closed to anything that does not confirm Adventist theology will be disappointed. Personally, I believe that these are early evidences confirming that the brain is not an evolutionary football. Instead, it is indeed pre-wired for the work that chaplains do, as we engage

with people who have faced traumatic situations and who are looking to understand them in the context of their belief systems.

### CHAPLAINS ARE EMOTIONAL FIRST RESPONDERS

Chaplains entered chaplaincy to “be present” as Christ was present.

This almost needs no explanation. We are privileged to minister as first responders in all types of crises. Jesus met people where they were and in their time of need. I have found that in our post-denominational culture, there are all kinds of “sheep without a shepherd” for us to have compassion on without a hidden agenda.

Will the seed we plant bear fruit by His Spirit? The chaplain must be content with the verse, “So then neither he who plants is anything, nor he who waters, but God who gives the increase.”<sup>4</sup>

A wise church administrator once noted that, “all chaplains are pastors, but not all pastors can be chaplains.”<sup>5</sup> We are there to be first responders to human suffering, and likely, not primarily for our own church members.

People seem to recover faster when involved in a multi-disciplinary approach to help and healing.

I was assigned back in the 1980s to the Intensive Care Unit during my in-residence CPE training at South

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Bend Memorial Hospital in South Bend, Indiana. The nurses in our unit knew something anecdotally that has become common knowledge. A positive, encouraging, emotional, and mental outlook was vital for their patients to foster their recovery.

Today, health care chaplains are routinely a part of multi-disciplinary teams reviewing with medical providers the comprehensive needs of the client. What about those of us chaplains who do not work in the health care field? Should we work to prove ourselves a useful part of an integrated team with those that we care for in industry, law enforcement, campus and military?

Many times, well-meaning psychologists and social workers haven't been trained in what chaplains can bring to the table. They simply discount our help. They may have had personal bad experiences with non-chaplain-like religious individuals. It is up to us to show them a different side of helping professionals of faith.

In the Marine Corps, where I am currently serving, I am one of at least three multi-disciplinary teams focusing on resiliency. If we have studied and understand our role as a faith-base care provider and if we are known for staying in our lane, we will be seen as adding one more advantage to the PTSD treatment protocol.

So, do you think chaplains are a good place to start, to help a person understand what might be going on, and if they indeed are dealing with PTSD? I hope so.

*\*Jane is a pseudonym.*

<sup>1</sup>Lilienfeld, Scott O. and Arkowitz, Hal. "Does Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder Require Trauma?" Scientific American Mind, 1 May 2012.

<sup>2</sup>Gilsinan, Kathy. "The Brains of the Buddhists." at <https://www.theatlantic.com/health/archive/2015/07/dalai-lama-neuroscience-compassion/397706/>, Accessed 23 February 2017.

<sup>3</sup>Kiefer, Julie. "This Is Your Brain on God: Spiritual Experiences Activate Reward Circuits." <https://unews.utah.edu/this-is-your-brain-on-god/>, Accessed 23 February 2017.

<sup>4</sup>1 Corinthians 3:6-8

<sup>5</sup>Paul Anderson, 2015 Adventist Chaplains World Congress banquet, San Antonio, Texas, June 30, 2015.







# Cumulative Stress in Law Enforcement



**By Chaplain Claudio Consuegra, D.Min.**  
Prince George's County Police Department  
Family Ministries Director, North American Division of the  
Seventh-day Adventist Church  
and

**Pamela Consuegra, Ph.D.**  
Associate Family Ministries Director, North American  
Division of the Seventh-day Adventist Church



*"May the day perish on which I was born, and the night in which it was said, 'A male child is conceived.'" Job 3:1-3 (NKJV)*

**M**y wife and I share a very dubious distinction: Both our youngest brothers committed suicide.

The circumstances were different, but the fact remains the same—they both ended their lives.

### PAMELA'S STORY



Roger Napier

Pamela's brother, a police officer, was sexually molested for several years as a young boy by a Pathfinder director. What resulted was a perfectionistic, almost manic-compulsive personality,

dressing impeccably, cleaning and washing his police car daily, maintaining and fixing his house so that it would be flawless.

In his second marriage and facing bankruptcy, the straw that broke the camel's back was when road work damaged his house beyond repair. He told no one in the family, left no note, but after his wife and her son left the house, early in the morning, he used his service gun to end his life. He was only 33-years-old.

### CLAUDIO'S STORY

When Claudio's brother was seven-years-old, their dad died suddenly of a massive heart attack. In one day, the children's entire world turned upside down. Of the six siblings, two were married, one was living in the United States, and three brothers were still living at home and going to school.

Jorge, the oldest of the three boys still at home, watched their father fight for his life, and heard his pleas that Jorge not to let him die. As a college student, Jorge's friends surrounded and helped him through this traumatic experience.

Fifteen-year-old Claudio, a high school student, enjoyed the support and encouragement of friends in his neighborhood.

Their mother plunged into the depths of her grief. For that first year, for all practical purposes, three boys did not have a mother.

Pedro, the youngest brother, was the most deeply affected by his father's death. His grief over the loss of his father and the emotional absence of his mother were overwhelming. Later



Pedro Consuegra

**They both worked in law enforcement, and yet, both appeared to be mostly happy on the outside.**

# What is almost overwhelming to some is a series of losses.

Pedro faced another life transition with a move to the United States to start a new life, in a new land, with a new language, a new culture, and within a year, a new religious faith.

After high school, Pedro joined the Air Force, got married, and had ten tumultuous years in that relationship. He then became a police officer, got a divorce, and moved in with and later married his second wife. After twelve years of challenges, discouragement, and stress in police work, he became an Air Force Reserve recruiter. But Pedro was never happy. After a brief affair, conflict at home, and one attempted suicide, Pedro, too, used a gun to end his life. He was fifty-years-old.

## TWO LIVES, SO SIMILAR

As we look back at the life of our two brothers, they had so many things in common. Two marriages, one divorce. Two children each, a boy and a girl. They were both successful and appreciated in their respective jobs.

They both worked in law enforcement, and yet, both appeared to be mostly happy on the outside. At the same time, they were both deeply traumatized and in pain for most of their life until they made their final, tragic decision, and put an end to their lives with a gun, a weapon with which they were both very familiar.

## NOT ONE BIG EVENT

It was not one incident that led our brothers to the point of ending their life, but rather a series of events. Most

of us would probably be able to handle a loss, as bad or painful as it may be. What is almost overwhelming to some is a series of losses.

The Scriptures give us one of the best examples of cumulative stress in the life of Job. We read in the first chapter of the book that bears his name about his first significant loss. *“The oxen were plowing and the donkeys feeding beside them, when the Sabeans raided them and took them away—indeed they have killed the servants with the edge of the sword; and I alone have escaped to tell you!”*<sup>1</sup>

More loss followed. *“While he was still speaking, another also came and said, ‘The fire of God fell from heaven and burned up the sheep and the servants, and consumed them; and I alone have escaped to tell you!’”*<sup>2</sup> In one vast sweep, the Sabeans took a large part of Job’s income. The loss of income, investments, property, or savings has driven many men to despair and deep depression.

Next, Job learned of the loss of his employees, beings much more valuable emotionally than animals or property: *“While he was still speaking, another also came and said, ‘The Chaldeans formed three bands, raided the camels and took them away, yes, and killed the servants with the edge of the sword; and I alone have escaped to tell you!’”*<sup>3</sup>

It is one thing to lose your employees, even if you care deeply about them, but it is another when death touches your family members. At this point in the story, Job receives

the worst news of all. “While he was still speaking, another also came and said, *‘Your sons and daughters were eating and drinking wine in their oldest brother’s house, and suddenly a great wind came from across the wilderness and struck the four corners of the house, and it fell on the young people, and they are dead; and I alone have escaped to tell you!’*”<sup>4</sup>

In Job’s experience, one thing added to another and another until he felt an overwhelming weight he couldn’t lift. But because of the close connection he already had with God,<sup>5</sup> Job turned to Him and worshipped Him<sup>6</sup> so those painful losses didn’t crush him, “And he said: *‘Naked I came from my mother’s womb, and naked shall I return there. The LORD gave, and the LORD has taken away; blessed be the name of the LORD.’*”<sup>7</sup>

### “I’M NOT DONE WITH YOU”

One more challenge remained lurking for Job—the loss of his health.

*“Satan went out from the presence of the LORD, and struck Job with painful boils from the sole of his foot to the crown of his head. And he took for himself a potsherd with which to scrape himself while he sat in the midst of the ashes.”*<sup>8</sup>

In the moment when Job most needed support and encouragement, his wife, who was probably in as much grief as he was, could not help him, but instead insisted, “curse God and die.”<sup>9</sup>

### THE SWEET, COOLING BALM OF FRIENDSHIP

There’s nothing sweeter than the gift of friendship, particularly when we’re going through painful circumstances. Job had lost everything—property, employees, children, and even the support and encouragement of his wife. He needed someone to help him walk with him through this dark valley of pain, sickness, and despair. The Book of Job



CAUTION CAUTION CAUTION



tells us that, *“when Job’s three friends heard of all this adversity that had come upon him, each one came from his own place—Eliphaz the Temanite, Bildad the Shubite, and Zophar the Naamathite. For they had made an appointment together to come and mourn with him, and to comfort him. And when they raised their eyes from afar, and did not recognize him, they lifted their voices and wept; and each one tore his robe and sprinkled dust on his head toward heaven. So they sat down with him on the ground seven days and seven nights, and no one spoke a word to him, for they*

*saw that his grief was very great.”*<sup>10</sup>

Herein lies a critical remedy for a heart that is heavy with trauma, pain, and sorrow. Job’s friends heard of his distress, and they came to be with him. When they saw him, they cried with him. In their desire to help him, they sat with him seven days and nights. No words were spoken; they simply sat there for an entire week, kept him company, ministered to him through their presence. What a powerful lesson for us to learn. During those painful moments through which friends or loved ones

**...our presence, a willing ear, and a caring heart may be a healing balm to their troubled souls.**



may be traversing, there are no words we can say to help them feel better, but our presence, a willing ear, and a caring heart may be a healing balm to their troubled souls.

## CUMULATIVE STRESS EFFECTS

In an FBI Law Enforcement Bulletin, Sgt. Robin Klein, of the Long Beach Police Department, said, “It probably won’t be a bullet that strikes an officer down, but the effects of chronic stress.”<sup>11</sup>

One of the factors associated with stress among law enforcement personnel is those incidents outside the range of normal activity. Such critical incidents may include attending to disasters (bombings, plane crashes, school shootings, multiple car accidents, etc.), witnessing death or mutilation, and dealing with abused or maltreated children. In general, police officers have rated these events as highly stressful, and yet they form part of their job, sometimes on a daily basis. While some officers may be able to deal appropriately with one or several incidents, the accumulation of these stressful events, with no intervention, can lead to severe chronic stress, PTSD, and for many, suicide.

## STRESS SYMPTOMS AND MANAGEMENT

Learn to recognize the symptoms of stress. These signs may include headaches, fatigue, pounding heart, upset stomach, teeth grinding, backaches, muscle aches, feeling lightheaded, a lower sex drive, irritability, short temper, over-eating, insomnia, restlessness, muscle tics, rashes, or excessive alcohol consumption.

Drink plenty of water and eat healthy snacks, like fresh fruit and

whole grain breads. Take brief breaks from the incident scene, if possible, and limit on-duty work hours to no more than 12 hours a day. Another way to manage stress is to stay in touch with family and friends.

Talk about your emotions with someone you trust. When you speak about what you have seen and done, it helps you process your feelings. This is considered part of psychological first aid. A chaplain is a good person to speak to. They are trained to listen and provide counsel, while keeping your conversations confidential.

## NO ONE IS IMMUNE

Unlike Job, our younger brothers chose to end their lives instead of choosing to reach out to others for help. Unlike Job, they could not see beyond their pain and problems. Both of us have been able to come to terms with our brothers’ suicides. Neither of us will ever accept their choice to end their lives, and whenever we think of them, it is with great sadness. At the same time, cumulative stress can happen to anyone. We need to learn to recognize it in ourselves and others, and to take steps to manage it before it affects our lives, our families, and our work adversely.

<sup>1</sup>Job 1:14-15, NKJV

<sup>2</sup>verse 16

<sup>3</sup>verse 17

<sup>4</sup>verses 18-19

<sup>5</sup>Job 1:1, 4-5

<sup>6</sup>verse 20

<sup>7</sup>vs. 21

<sup>8</sup>Job 2:7-8, NKJV

<sup>9</sup>vs. 9

<sup>10</sup>Job 2:11-13, NKJV

<sup>11</sup><https://www.policeone.com/archive/articles/77085-Effects-of-Traumatic-Events-on-Police-Officers/>



# A CHOICE WELL MADE

By Colonel Larry T. Councell, United States Air Force,  
with Deena Bartel-Wagner

It's not often someone says that one of their favorite chapters of the Bible is in the Book of Job. For Air Force Colonel Larry Councell, the 29<sup>th</sup> chapter of Job helps define his life purpose.

"I always wanted to be an airline pilot, and was not really interested in joining the military," says Larry. "However, especially after attending Andrews University, I've had a deep conviction to serve a higher calling, and make a difference in this world. I didn't want just to exist or further my own interests."

## FROM CHECKPOINT CHARLIE TO HEZEKIAH'S TUNNELS

His childhood as a military dependent profoundly impacted

Larry. His father served as a U.S. Army chaplain, so Larry's military experience began early. "I remember climbing on tanks and watching military parades. My friends and I eagerly watched helicopters land," says Larry. "While the crews were waiting, we would run over, and they showed us how things worked and let us sit in the cockpit."

For an impressionable young boy, the bigger effect was life as an American citizen living in Europe for several years. "We often travelled through Checkpoint Charlie and saw both sides of the Iron Curtain," says Larry. "I witnessed the evil behind unchecked socialism and communism. World War II had occurred just 35 years before we lived in Germany. As



Colonel Larry Councell with his wife, Barbie, and sons, Jordan and Keaton.

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an avid historian, my father probably took us to every battleground in Western Europe. The socialist fanaticism of Nazis was still visible, and impacts were very real. A lesson that seems lost to the world already in such a short amount of time."

The influence of biblical history played an equally important role in Larry's formation. "We also traveled to Israel twice. We climbed Mount Carmel, sailed on the Sea of Galilee, swam in the Dead Sea, and walked/waded through Hezekiah's water tunnel," says Larry. "We also traced the footsteps of great religious leaders such as Martin Luther, John Hus, and groups like the Waldenses."

While at Andrews University, Larry heard more about service and sacrifice. His professors and his college experience contributed to his character development and decision to serve. "I will always be indebted to those caring mentors," says Larry.

### AN INFORMED DECISION

With study and contemplation about his life work, a growing conviction began to take hold in Larry's life. "One of my favorite chapters in the Bible is Job 29. It expands Micah 6:8 to more detail. Job speaks not only of just

caring for widows and orphans, but also 'breaking the teeth of the wicked,'" says Larry. "As I looked at how to implement this in my life, I noted the US Air Force delivered humanitarian aid, protected people with no-fly zones, kept the peace, and, when needed, defended freedom. It was the Air Force where I could best use my skills and education to accomplish goals of service, both spiritual and civil."

Joining the Air Force was an informed decision. "I knew what challenges and lifestyle were going to be like before I joined," says Larry. "I understood military culture, both what it is and what it isn't. The Air Force provided the best opportunity to utilize my flying skills in a professional career where I could serve God and Country."

### EARLY TRAINING AND CAREER

"I completed training on the B-52 and took leave to get married. One week later we were put on 6-ring alert. Two weeks later, we deployed to Diego Garcia, exactly half-way around the world," says Larry. Service deployments included support in Operations Southern Watch, Desert Fox, and Allied Force. "As a Squadron, we deployed

continuously, (seemingly every holiday) until after Allied Force. This created a tight bond among our group and our families.”

Balancing career, family, and personal life is a challenge in any profession. For an Air Force pilot, the demands are even heavier. A duty day flying a heavy bomber is 14-16 hours. “The next morning is not a day off, but mission planning for the next sortie or working your other duty, such as scheduling,” says Larry. “We alternated day and night weeks for training. Trying to have a routine was almost not possible.

Larry credits the example of his Chaplain father for helping him find balance in his own career. “Dad managed a career, which included deployments, TDYs, being on-duty/on-call, and completed both military and required civilian education, then balanced family life and supported local churches,” says Larry.

Larry maintained a PT regimen, worked on a master’s degree, and completed his military education by correspondence. Life was busy as Larry balanced his career with a wife, baby, household chores, and volunteering time for church and other charities.

“Looking back, I’m not sure how everything was accomplished. A huge credit goes to my wife, Barbie. She managed many of the details for our personal life. When I deployed, Barbie took on all the chores that I did, in addition to having the kids non-stop, without getting a break. Military spouses don’t get enough credit for all the responsibilities they shoulder.”

## A GOD-LED CAREER

In 2001, Larry received an assignment to a Navy training squadron. “It was an incredible opportunity,” says Larry. “I trained students from each service and many international partners as well. Those friendships and being able to speak other service languages have always been helpful. For aviators, it’s only a matter of time, and it was there I first lost friends to accidents.

Larry returned to the B-52 for his second assignment at Barksdale Air Force Base (AFB) in Louisiana. With several more deployments, he completed his required flying requirements. A selection for a joint staff assignment seemed like it would end before it began when the Air Force froze all moves for funding.



Larry Councill actively participates in his local church.



Deployments and missions have taken Larry to far-flung parts of the world.





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“Somehow, I received orders anyway and was assigned to USSTRATCOM,” says Larry. “We bought a house that was one mile from the local Adventist church and discovered that we were one of the oldest couples there. To our surprise, Omaha was one of our favorite locations.”

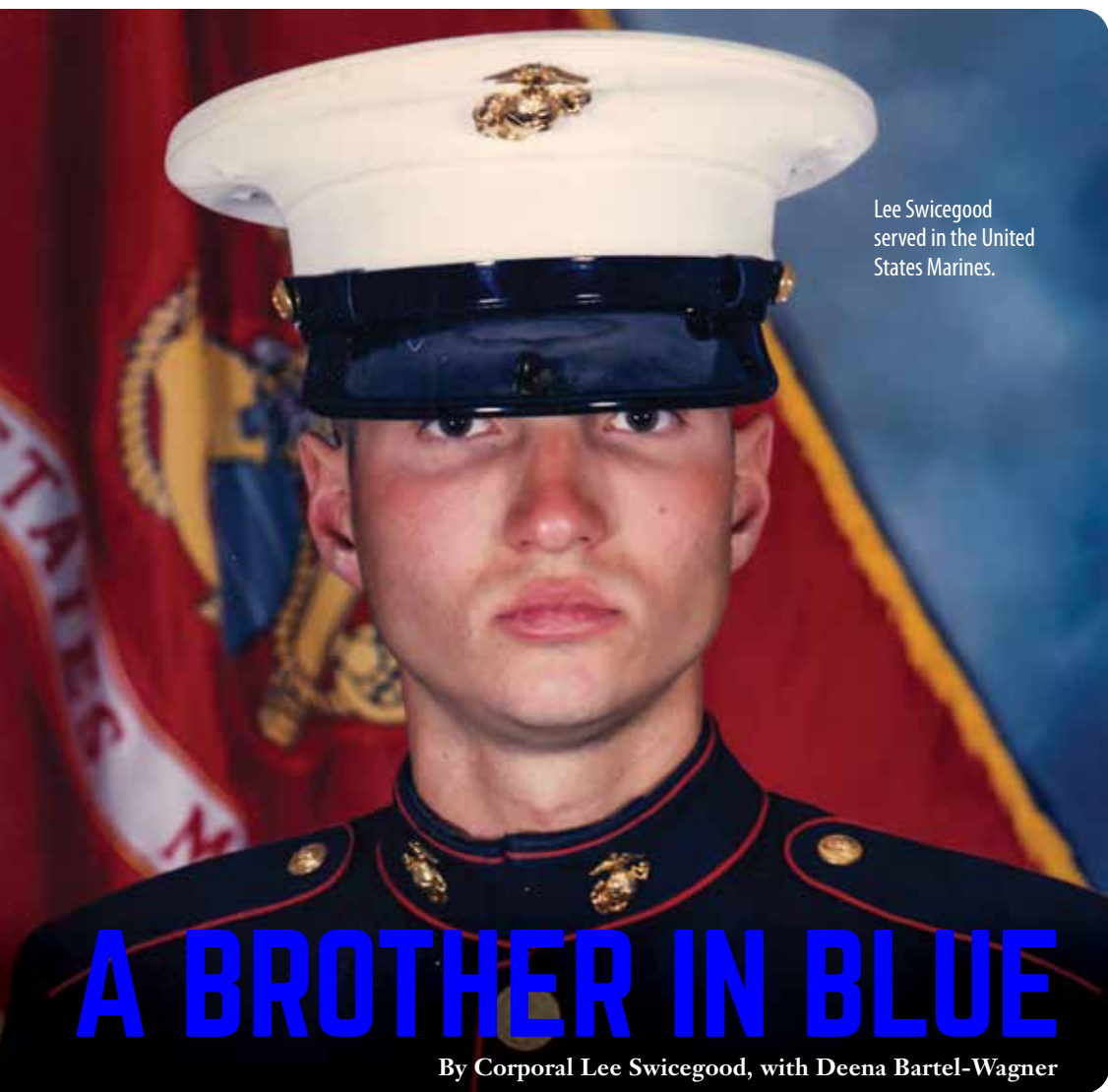
Other opportunities took Larry and family to Florida, Edwards Air Force Base in California, and his third assignment to Barksdale AFB. “It was during my current assignment at Barksdale, that I received a promotion to Colonel,” says Larry.

## WORDS OF ADVICE

Countries worldwide need leaders who can and will make moral judgments and decisions. “I believe Godly men and women can and should serve in civic duties, including the military,” says Larry. “While not for everyone, I can serve God while being a member of an armed service.”

Any religious person who considers military service must have a clear understanding of both themselves and their beliefs. “Unfortunately, I have been required to use deadly force,” says Larry. “But I can do so with a clear conscience that is founded on biblical principles and spiritual guidance in a personal relationship





Lee Swicegood served in the United States Marines.

# A BROTHER IN BLUE

By Corporal Lee Swicegood, with Deena Bartel-Wagner

**L**ee sighed and rubbed his eyes. His personal Bible study opened his mind to new ideas. As a member of the Trinity Baptist Church, he'd worshiped on Sunday all his life. Now it seemed God was calling Lee to investigate worshipping on Sabbath.

"I know that the Jewish observe Saturday, but is there anyone else?" Lee wondered. Turning to the power of the Internet, Lee searched for other groups who worshiped on Saturday.

His online search provided information about Seventh-day Adventists.

Soon Lee visited the Healdsburg Seventh-day Adventist Church and began Bible studies. Baptism for Lee and his wife Stacy followed. But would this decision impact Lee's career as a law enforcement officer (LEO)?

## A PATH TO THE LONG BLUE LINE

Lee Swicegood joined the Marines following his graduation

from high school. “I always wanted law enforcement career,” says Lee. “Military service and training seemed like an excellent opportunity to receive training that would enhance my skill set as a law enforcement officer.”

After specialized training, Lee received Security Forces Specialty designation. He traveled the world, guarding embassies and submarine bases. “I served in Japan, Thailand, Okinawa, Hawaii, and the Republic of South Korea,” says Lee. “During my time in Korea, the situation was very similar to what is happening today.”

Often the job required heightened security, with little-to-no notice of what a job would entail. “One of our duties included providing security for the on-loading and off-loading of equipment and weapons,” says Lee. “We never knew when we would be called to duty or where we would be sent.”

One security detail involved accompanying U.S. and Russian personnel. The Strategic Arms Reduction Treaty or START was a bilateral treaty between the United States and the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics (USSR). Its aim was the reduction and limitation of strategic offensive arms. “When inspections needed to be made of either the U.S. or Russian stockpiles, we would provide a security detail to accompany the inspectors,” says Lee.

Upon completion of his military service, Lee attended the police academy to begin his LEO career.

“Although I had completed my military service, I could be called back to active status if there was an urgent need,” says Lee. “Following 9-11, I even received a stop-loss letter, and was sure I would be called back to active duty.” That never transpired, and Lee began his LEO career.

Today, Lee serves as a police officer for a California State University.

## **LIVING A FAITH-FILLED LIFE**

During his time in the military, Lee encountered individuals who were antagonistic towards Christians and their beliefs. “There always were those who would rag on you for being a Christian,” says Lee. “But there were other Christians who gave encouragement and support.”

While he was in boot camp, Lee received a Bible that he used throughout his military career. “Surrounded by sinful things and a rough crowd, it’s easy to get caught up in going along with others,” says Lee. “The highlights and notes in my Bible often gave me strength to keep from getting into trouble.”

One day a fellow Marine came to Lee. “He told me that he was having a tough time with his girlfriend and asked if he could borrow my Bible,” says Lee. “I gladly loaned it to him.” Today, Lee still uses the Bible that provided him hope and encouragement.

As Lee experienced ridicule for his beliefs, he gained valuable lessons in how to react to people in hostile situations. He uses that

**AS LEE EXPERIENCED RIDICULE FOR HIS BELIEFS,  
HE GAINED VALUABLE LESSONS IN HOW TO REACT  
TO PEOPLE IN HOSTILE SITUATIONS.**

training today, as he engages with the public as a police officer.

“When you deal with the public, and there is conflict, you must set aside your personal beliefs,” says Lee. “My job as an officer of the law is to provide equal protection under the law. An officer wears many hats, including counselor, intermediary, rescuer, and confronter. Most people will see you as either someone coming to rescue you or someone who is going to confront you.”

Compassion is part of Lee’s interaction with others. “When I am dealing with a person on drugs, I ask myself what has brought them to this point in their lives,” says Lee. “When I’m dealing with intoxicated individuals, I remind myself that they aren’t in control of themselves. I try to be a calming, stable force.”

## **GUARDIAN ANGELS WATCHING OVER ME**

During the early days of his career, an incident that ended peacefully could have been tragic. It was July 4<sup>th</sup> and an oncoming car almost collided with Lee’s patrol car. As the car careened erratically down the road and finally stopped, Lee began pursuit. The driver jumped out of the car and charged at Lee. “I used every tool at my disposal to try and subdue him,” says Lee. “I used my baton, mace, and even drew my gun, but I couldn’t get him to cooperate.” As Lee wrestled the man to the ground, the passenger was yelling, and Lee worried that he might attack also.

Finally, with both passengers cuffed and secured in the back of the patrol car, Lee learned there were arrest warrants out for both individuals. “Later that night, I listened to the tape that recorded the prisoners’

conversation as they sat in the back of the car,” says Lee. “I was shocked to hear them discuss how they should have killed me when I first detained them. It was a chilling moment. I know it was only through God’s protection that I survived that skirmish.”

Each day, as Lee puts on his uniform, he employs a ritual. “I reflect and pray as I dress for work,” says Lee. “I ask God to watch over my family while I’m away. I ask for safety for myself and for those I will meet that day.”

## **FAMILY TIES THAT BIND**

Lee’s family, a wife and three children, make sacrifices as the family of a police officer. “I work odd hours, nights, weekends, and holidays,” says Lee. “Our time together during Sabbath is important and sacred to us as a family.”

Being members at the Healdsburg Seventh-day Adventist Church is part of family life for the Swicegood family. “When we first became Adventists, I had a chief who was very understanding about my need for Sabbaths off,” says Lee. “Later, another chief wasn’t as accommodating. Eventually, I needed assistance from the Conference Religious Liberty Department to assist me in my request for Sabbath’s off. My employer’s Human Resources department stepped in and take care of the necessary accommodations. Today, I no longer face an issue and my current chief is very supportive.”

## **MAINTAINING THE EDGE**

Since Lee became a LEO 13 years ago, he sees an increase in the tensions and stresses between society and the officers who serve to protect them. “People are more engaged in situations that previously they would have passed by,” says Lee. “When





Above: Lee Swicegood with his patrol car. Inset: The Lee Swicegood Family.

one officer makes a poor decision, it affects all officers.” On the flip side, Lee observes that people who are supportive of LEO’s are much more vocal in their support.

In Police Academy, one of Lee’s training officers told the class that serving as officers they would experience hours of boredom, which would be punctuated by moments of sheer terror.

Coping with the boredom and the terror can take a toll. Lee believes that maintaining physical, emotional,

and spiritual health are important to be effective on the job. “As a Christian, I know I’m supported by my church family,” says Lee. “I make it a point to have friends who aren’t involved in law enforcement. It keeps me from talking shop all the time. I find ways to step away from my job when I’m off-duty and engage in hobbies and doing things with my wife and children.”

And Lee takes time for his friendship with the God who led him to the knowledge of the Sabbath.

**“I ASK GOD TO WATCH OVER MY FAMILY WHILE I’M AWAY. I ASK FOR SAFETY FOR MYSELF AND FOR THOSE I WILL MEET THAT DAY.”**

## NAD DIRECTOR'S MESSAGE



On January 20, 2017, we witnessed a modern miracle. In Gambia, one elected leader refused to step down and yield the reins of power while the newly-elected leader was sworn into office in a foreign country. West African nations were poised to execute military force to remove the obstinate leader, who refused to accede to the will of the

electorate in his nation. Tension was high. Spirits were low.

But, in the United States of America, after a protracted and bitter campaign, the inauguration of the 45<sup>th</sup> President of the United States occurred, peacefully and with great pageantry. Four past presidents attended the ceremony. Millions of people around the world tuned in to watch this august and time-tested rite of passage. Indeed, it was the most watched inauguration in American history, period!

After the inauguration program ended, President and Mrs. Trump escorted former President and Mrs. Obama to the helicopter that ferried them to Joint Base Andrews. There, they boarded Flight 2800 that delivered them to their chosen destination as civilians, once again.

The enduring power of the United States Constitution was on display for the world to see. Also ratified was a periscope of prophetic parlance found in the Book of Daniel. The second chapter of the book prophetically outlines the panoply of history.

Prior to laying out God's plan of history before King Nebuchadnezzar, the Prophet Daniel declares that it is God who "changes times and seasons; he deposes kings and raises up others. He gives wisdom to the wise and knowledge to the discerning."<sup>1</sup>

There is more, but suffice it to say, that God knows what God is doing! By directing and/or allowing the trends of politics and history to play out, His will on Earth is unfolding. Every election cycle is a test of faith in the principle of scriptural inerrancy. Most elections are binary. The selection of one candidate often leaves many citizens, who preferred the other, disaffected. Protests and obstructionism often follow. Sometimes economic recession also follows. This election, more than others I have participated in, seems to have ignited an emotional recession.

Now is the time to exercise the strength of value in the proverb that says “Trust in the Lord with all your heart and lean not on your own understanding; in all your ways submit to him, and he will make your paths straight.”<sup>2</sup> This mindset is the antidote to the emotional recession that is permeating the American culture

In the United States, citizens enjoy the right to speak freely and to protest against their government. Freedom of speech and to assemble are salient elements that made America great and prosperous. Spirituality, civil discourse, and cooperative engagement are among other elements that made America great. Prayers for the leaders is also essential to the greatness of a nation.

We who are and have been privileged to serve God and Country as politicians, diplomats, bureaucrats, military service members, and civil servants understand that the mission to serve transcends the extant leader. We serve/served at the “pleasure of the President” or the will of the electorate. But our greater service, as “believers,” is as unto God.

Daniel prayed for wisdom and for Nebuchadnezzar, the king of his era. United States Senate Chaplain Barry C. Black prayed a memorable prayer for President Trump at the post-inauguration luncheon. I submit the text to you as a model of how we, too, should pray for our leaders. He said:

*“Eternal Lord God, our refuge and strength. We praise you that we have nothing to fear. We can stand fearlessly during this season of peaceful transition because we know that your providence will prevail.*

*Lord, we are grateful for this inaugural luncheon and for your providence that has brought President Donald J. Trump to this milestone moment. You have admonished us to pray for leaders and governments, so we pray for our new President.*

*Lord, crown his labors with success. Leading him to the destination you have chosen. Surround him, his family, and the members of his cabinet with the shield of your divine protection and favor.*

*May President Trump seek your wisdom, justice, and grace, leading with your strength, which reaches out to those on life’s margins, the lost, lonely, last, least, and left out. May he remember that those who would leave a legacy of greatness must strive to become servants of all.*

*Lord, inspire our president to perform his God appointed duties with such reverence for you, that his tenure will be like the sun shining forth on a cloudless morning; like a rainbow after a storm and like the singing of the birds at dawn.*

*Bless our food and fellowship we pray in your sovereign name, Amen.”*

As Chaplain Black has done, let us also do. Pray for the success of your leaders. Pray that their initiatives will lead to the success of the nation and the prosperity of its citizenry.

<sup>1</sup>Daniel 2:20–21 NIV

<sup>2</sup>Proverbs 3:5–6 NIV

*Paul S. Anderson*

## 2016 UNITY DAY

### for Yokosuka AMCWG

As the members worshiped and fellowshiped together, they also discovered solutions to shared common issues.

Thirty-three members of the Yokosuka Adventist Military Chapel Worship Group participated in their 3<sup>rd</sup> Annual Unity Day event in mid-December 2016. The joint service was held in the Yokosuka Base Chapel.

Originally designed as a Unity Day and Retreat in 2014, the event united the military SDA groups from Misawa, Yokota, Yokosuka, and Sasebo, to withdraw from the press of the world. As the members worshiped and fellowshiped together, they also discovered solutions to shared common issues. These include disconnection from their home church, and Sabbath-keeping in military service. Due to scheduling conflicts and other matters, members from Misawa and Yokota were unable

to attend the 2017 retreat.

Months of planning by committee members Chaplain LCDR Michael Tagaloa, Major Jongsung Kim, CPO Willie Scott II, and MSgt Justin Smith were instrumental in the successful event. "We were excited that Dr. Paul S. Anderson, Director of the North American Division Adventist Chaplaincy Ministries/ National Service Organization, joined us. This was his first visit to Japan following his appointment by the North American Division," says CPO Willie Scott II, Distinctive Faith Group Leader (DFGL) of the 33-member Yokosuka congregation.

Weekend activities included a



Left: (L to R) LCDR Michael Tagaloa, EMC Willie Scott II, LT Bekim Austin, Dr. Paul Anderson, FN Krisanne Foreshaw, UT2 Nakarla Houghton, BM1 Lawrence Cerezo.

Right: The group who attended the 2016 Yokosuka Unity Day.



Left: Michele Smith plays as her husband Ryan leads Song Service.

Right: Willie Scott III, age 11, works the mixing board inside the A/V room.



Meet and Greet, Adult and Children's Sabbath School, Divine Worship Service, with Dr. Anderson, potluck style luncheon, bowling, and a Sunday brunch to round out the short weekend. During his visit, Anderson toured Commander, Fleet Activities, Yokosuka Chapel of Hope and its facilities.

"I could tell Dr. Anderson sees the Forward Deployed Naval Forces (FDNF) in Japan and the Adventists here as a high priority, and it's comforting to know that," says Scott. "I think it's important for our North American Division leadership to recognize what we are doing out here in Japan, how disconnected we truly are from our home church stateside, and the challenges we face at times to observe Sabbath. It meant a lot to us for the NSO/ACM-NAD Director visit and personally share his vision for military members."

For the first time in seven years, Yokosuka will be without a Seventh-day Adventist Chaplain. As the DFGL for the group, Scott will continue to lead out in the ministry. "My greatest challenge is to consistently create meaningful sermons, since I have

formal theological training. But I thank God for surrounding me with Adventist Chaplains like Robert Mills, Wilking Jean, and Michael Tagaloa during my time in Japan. Their presence here definitely poured out leadership qualities," says Scott. "I observed how they plan, prepare, and lead church services. When they had to be absent (due to deployments or TAD status), it allowed me to exercise my spiritual muscles and write a few dozen sermons. Ultimately, it was their trust and support that inspired me to oversee this group. All the while Jesus Christ has been at the center of it all. I pray that He increases my ability to preach and teach His love. I want to be able to provide deeper, down-to-earth messages that our group can relate to."



Left: Children's Sabbath School led by Lexie Tagaloa and Donesha Scott

Right: The children enjoyed their special Sabbath School class.

Bottom: Dr. Paul Anderson, Director, National Service Organization-North American Division, illustrates a sermon point with the assistance of Chaplain Michael Tagaloa.

## NEVER FORGET

By Colonel (CH) Dick Stenbakken, U.S. Army, Retired

The 2016 Campion Academy Homecoming in Loveland, Colorado focused on honoring veterans for their contribution to the myriad of freedoms we enjoy.

Friday vespers helped set the tone for the *Honoring Veterans* theme. Dick Stenbakken, retired Chaplain (Colonel), U. S. Army, presented the story of the Nuremberg Chaplain, Henry Gerecke.

The German High Command military, who were on trial for war crimes, asked for spiritual support. The Army assigned Gerecke to be their chaplain for the final eleven months of their lives before many of them received the death sentence by hanging. Stenbakken told Gerecke's story while wearing an authentic World War II uniform. Recently, Hope TV filmed the same presentation for future programming.

The Academy Alumni Board

energetically pursued ways to honor veterans in general, but specifically Campion graduates who have served in the military. Rear Admiral Darold Bigger, former Deputy Chief of Chaplains, U. S. Navy Reserves, spoke for the Sabbath worship service. Dr. Bigger is currently Assistant to the President of Walla Walla University.

In his military role, Bigger was responsible for ministry to 100,000 Navy, Marine Corps, Coast Guard, and Merchant Marine reservists. His abundant wealth of knowledge and experience helped enhance the theme of the weekend.

The worship service began with a posting of the colors by the Mapleton Public Schools Stealth Squadron Color Guard from Thornton, Colorado, under the direction of LTC Bill Arrington, a member of the Campion Seventh-day Adventist Church.

As part of the worship service,



veterans and active duty military personnel in attendance received appreciation coins. The coins were designed and provided by the National Service Organization and the Adventist Chaplaincy Ministries Department of the North American Division.

Sabbath School featured former Campion students Larry Austin ('65), Mark Drake ('66), and Erik Stenbakken ('86), in a panel discussion about military life. Both Drake and Austin told of their experiences in Vietnam and how those events impacted the rest of their lives. Erik Stenbakken shared what it was like growing up as an "Army brat," giving insight into the reality that while family members may not be in uniform, they are deeply involved in military issues as well as their uniform-wearing family members.

Sabbath evening's vespers was a hymn fest led by Devon Howard

('99) using patriotic poetry, songs, and readings.

During mealtimes, visitors saw a visual reminder of the cost of service and freedom. A "Missing Member" table featured a single plate, silverware, an inverted glass, candle, Bible, rose, slices of lemon, and salt. These items are symbolic of the tears shed, and memories, for those military personnel who are not with us. Military caps from the Army, Navy, Air Force, and Marines also adorned the table. At the sides of the table, the Christian and U. S. flags were displayed with a large black and white prisoner of war flag forming a dramatic backdrop.

The homecoming was a reminder of the time when we will all go home with Christ, to reunite with those who have faithfully served both God and Country.

## CODE CHANGES for RELIGIOUS PREFERENCE

**W**hen an individual enters the United States military service, they are asked to declare their religious preference. Religious faiths are assigned a code for brevity to be entered into the service person's military personnel file and on their identification tags. In the event a religious ministry is needed, commanders and the chaplain will know the religious preference of the service member. This allows the chaplain to perform or provide the religious ministrations in accordance with the beliefs and practices of the service member.

The code for Seventh-day Adventist was formerly **02**. Coding changes were Seventh-day Adventist military personnel should be aware that the code is now **AS**, which stands for Adventist, Seventh-day.

Often, new recruits are unaware of the code, and when processing into the military the clerk also does not know it. Past reviews suggest that many service members' records

indicate "No religious preference" or simply "Christian" or "Protestant."

Each person serving in the military should check their personnel records and identification tags to determine if the correct code is listed. In the event of hospitalization or death, having the correct code would help insure ministry is performed or provided in accordance with Seventh-day Adventist beliefs and practices.

For further information, contact the National Service Organization-North American Division at 301-680-6786 or email at [acm@nadadventist.org](mailto:acm@nadadventist.org)





**CAST ALL  
YOUR ANXIETY  
ON HIM BECAUSE  
HE CARES FOR YOU.**

1 Peter 5:7 New International Version

*continued from page 17*

with God,” says Larry. “You must very clearly understand what the purpose of the military is and what you will be asked to do. Additionally, look at the culture and lifestyle.

I have served with great non-commissioned officers and junior ranking soldiers/sailors/airman.”

Sabbath observance is an aspect of military service not to be overlooked. “As an officer, I, personally, have not had an issue with being able to observe Sabbath. I have flown combat sorties and been on the ground in combat on Sabbath. Based on my understanding and my knowledge of scripture, before I joined I determined what I was and was not able to do,” says Larry. “Those looking to join the military should have a very clear understanding of what each service position is on Sabbath observance and what church positions are. Though anything is possible, don’t expect to be a sailor at sea on Sabbath and be able to sit in a bunk all day.”

During his years of service, Larry has often been the only Adventist in

deployed locations. “I’ve integrated with Protestant fellowship and met incredible Christians, who are very Godly men and women. I would highly encourage Adventist members to get involved with the local chapel and activities.”

## THE GOD-LED PATH

“It’s been my privilege to train and serve with members from all branches. I’ve been on an aircraft carrier at sea and stationed with Navy flying squadrons,” says Larry. “I worked with Coast Guard, Marine and international instructors training Naval Flight Officers (NFO’s). I’ve served on the ground with Marine units in combat, sleeping in unheated hangers, eating cold MRE’s, and being shot at. I’ve also lived with the Army in tents, and worked with special ops. While each one of these opportunities has been an incredible experience, looking back, the Air Force was the right choice for me. I have not always know where my choice would lead, but that’s not for me to worry about. God has unequivocally led in my life and blessed me beyond measure.”



Chapel services are an important part of military life.



Larry's family always look forward to reunions following deployments.

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The National Service Organization is the official military-relations office of the Seventh-day Adventist Church. Its primary mission is to provide pastoral care and religious resources to support the spiritual well-being of Seventh-day Adventist military-related personnel.

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“As we pour out our bitterness,  
God pours in His peace.”

— F.B. Meyer



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God & **Country**

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