God and man, at campfire, sat down

By Chaplain Norbert Karava

Anyone who has tried to follow the torturous and windy road of paleoanthropology's quest for the origin of homo sapiens, or the story of man: Ramapithecus lufagensis, Australopithecus africanus, Australopithecus aferensis – to mention but a few, finds himself bewildered by the sizes of molars, cranial volume and brain size and the presence or lack of a sagittal crest on a skull that is either "robust" or "hyper-robust." How small does a tooth have to become, how great the volume of cranium, to cross over into the realm of man? At one point does a hominid become a homo?

Things seem to clear up when come upon homo sapiens, or even the archaic homo sapiens, sometimes called Homo helmei, who in the Middle Stone Age, left artifacts in his wake. The artifacts of the Middle Stone Age reach back to a time before the Middle Stone Age itself, according to some, up to 550,000 years ago. All the contemporary efforts to see the difference between man and mere animal as one of degree and not quality notwithstanding, we have yet to witness even the most advanced primates manufacturing tools.

In this context, we have come upon a startling discovery: In the northwestern Botswana Tsodilo region, a polygraph-rich oasis of rock hills in the middle of the Kalahari desert, a six-meter long serpentine carving was unearthed together with the tools with which it was carved, 70,000 years ago. Although certainly not being something on the order of the temple of Gobekli Tepe, reaching back 11,600 years, the artifact was located in what was the most ancient recognizable place of worship discovered to date. With this, the archaeological evidence for religious rite and cult was pushed back 30,000 years.

And so, it seems that the more deeply we dig into the past, the more we find the story of ourselves at the dawn of our rational, self-reflective and homo-sapient existence as not only motivated and driven by the all too familiar desires of hunger, thirst, shelter, fear and sexual need but also as inspired by the awareness of something wonderful and mysterious, "outside" not only of ourselves, but the entire cosmic order. It is the awareness and experience of this mysterious and wonder-inspiring "something/someone outside of" that is the kernel of religious experience and root from which religion sprouts.

Those who would enforce secularism as the dogmatically normal state of affairs for society and culture must presuppose a secularist anthropology: Society and culture are by default secular because man is sufficient unto himself, or self-explanatory without reference to God or the divine. Our history mightily suggests the contrary: As long as man has been man, he has been having this experience, which he has found hovering on the foggy peaks of mountains, flittering in the branches of trees and lurking at the feet of staircases. Again and again, man has been confronted with an inescapable necessity: He cannot tell the story of himself, historically, artistically, philosophically, or lately, even paleontologically, without referring to this mysterious "something/someone outside of."

And then, there is no lack of critics who all too eagerly contrast the primitive spirituality of our ancestors with the laborious constructs of modern organized religion, which, they argue, inevitably have become engines of division and war, and therefore, something that the human race needs to grow out of. A possible tongue-in-cheek answer to this: The sexual attraction of males to females has been and continues to be a cause of countless divisions, conflicts, or micro-wars, (at various bars in Honolulu) if not, sometimes, wars in the proper sense of the word (on the shores of Troy). Shouldn't therefore by this logic, the human race "grow out of" sex?

Others would argue that religion happened the first time, not with Abraham or further back, Hinduism, or even further Vedic mysticism and Zoroastrianism, or even sometime during the urbanization occasioned by the agricultural revolution, but when our homo sapient ancestors began to express their experience of the "someone/something outside of" to each other. Religion happened around a campfire-gathering in the temple of the cosmos before it ever flourished in a temple, church or mosque.

Cut and save

Emergency Information

Commander Fleet Activites Yokosuka (CFAY) and Negishi and Ikego Housing Detachment residents are advised to stay tuned to the following mediums for emergency information:

- CFAY Web Site: http://www.cnic.navy.mil/yokosuka
- CFAY Facebook page: http://www.Facebook.com/cfayokosuka
- CFAY Twitter page: http://twitter.com/cfay_yokosuka
- CFAY base Channel 15
- Eagle 810 AM Radio station
- A recorded weather message can be obtained by calling 243-5155.

The information provided will include but is not limited to notification of actions to take for severe weather and the unexpected or early dismissal of schools.

Cut and save

DoD begins prorating Imminent Danger Pay

By Jim Garamone, American Forces Press Service

WASHINGTON – Service members now will receive imminent danger pay only for days they actually spend in hazardous areas, Pentagon officials said Feb. 2.

The change was included in the 2012 National Defense Authorization Act, which President Barack Obama signed into law Dec. 31.

"Members will see the prorated amount in their Feb. 15 pay records," Pentagon spokesman Navy Capt. John Kirby said.

The act called for Department of Defense to pay service members imminent danger pay only for the time they spend in areas that qualify for the pay.

In the past, service members received $225 per month if they spent any time that month in an area where the pay was authorized. "This is a more targeted way of handling that pay," Kirby said.

Now, service members will receive $7.50 a day for days spent in these areas.

According to officials, personnel who travel to the designated areas for periods less than 30 days should keep track of the number of days they are in the area to verify that they are paid for the correct number of days.

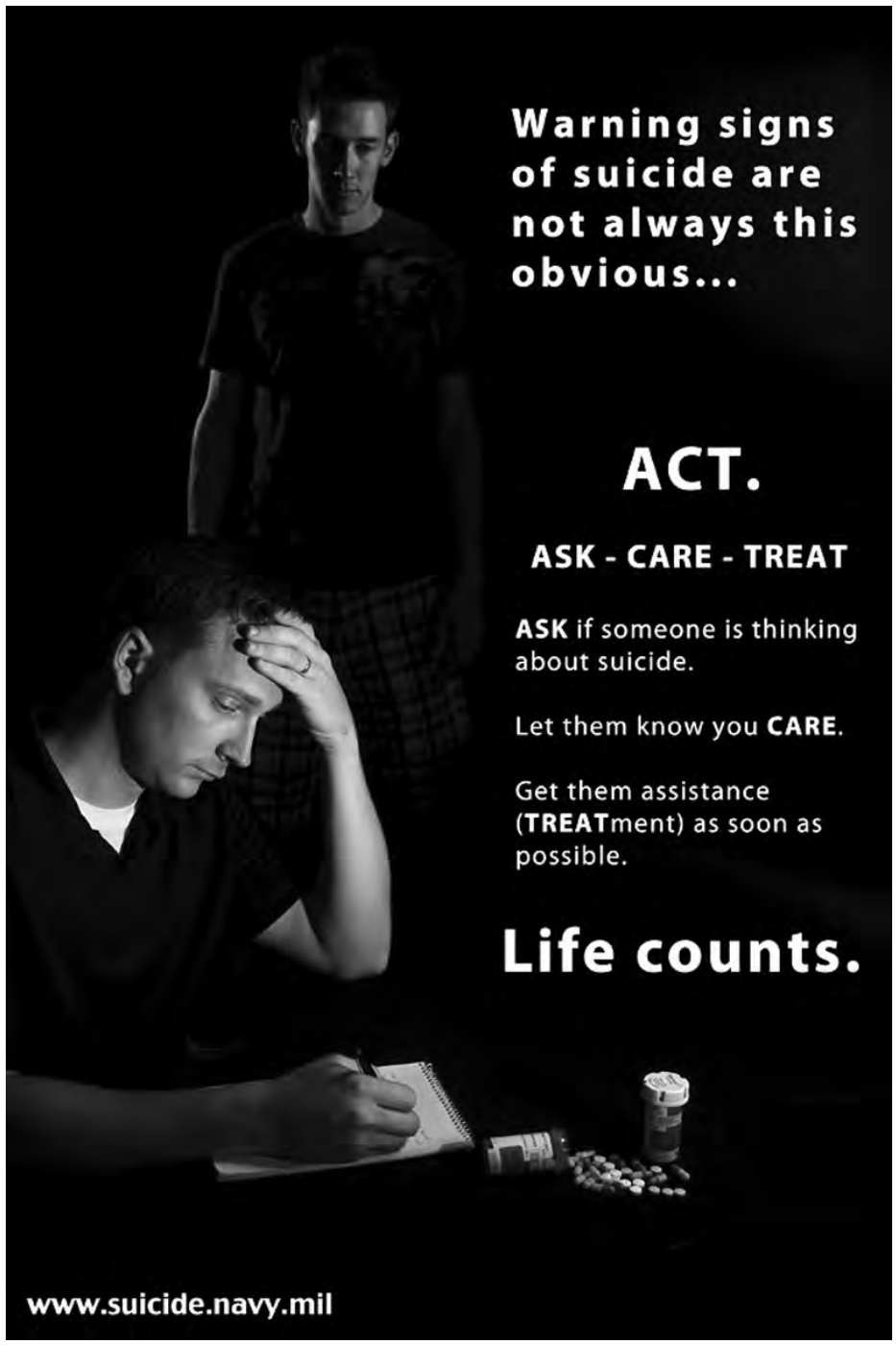
The military services are working to waive or remit debts for members who may have been overpaid for January, officials said.

The services can waive this "when there is no indication of fraud, fault, misrepresentation, or when members were unaware they were overpaid," Pentagon spokeswoman Eileen Lainez said.

The proration is based on a 30-day month, which translates into a rate of $7.50 per day.

It does not matter if the month is 28 or 31 days long, officials explained; if service members serve in affected areas for the complete month, they will receive the full rate of $225 per month.

The Defense Department defines imminent danger pay areas as places where members are subject to the threat of physical harm or imminent danger because of civil insurrection, civil war, terrorism or wartime conditions.

Service members who come under fire, regardless of location, will receive the full monthly hostile-fire pay amount of $225.

Service members will receive notification of the change via emails, on the MyPay system, on social media sites and via the chain of command.